

Suppressed Desires

BY SUSAN GLASPELL

A COMEDY IN TWO SCENES

(In Collaboration with George Cram Cook)

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ORIGINAL CAST

HENRIETTA BREWSTER SUSAN GLASPELL STEPHEN
BREWSTER GEORGE CRAM COOK MABEL MARY PYNE

SUPPRESSED DESIRES

SCENE I: *A studio apartment in an upper story, Washington Square South. Through an immense north window in the back wall appear tree tops and the upper part of the Washington Arch. Beyond it you look up Fifth Avenue. Near the window is a big table, loaded at one end with serious-looking books and austere scientific periodicals. At the other end are architect's drawings, blue prints, dividing compasses, square, ruler, etc. At the left is a door leading to the rest of the apartment; at the right the outer door. A breakfast table is set for three, but only two are seated at it--HENRIETTA and STEPHEN BREWSTER. As the curtains withdraw STEVE pushes back his coffee cup and sits dejected.*

HENRIETTA

It isn't the coffee, Steve dear. There's nothing the matter with the coffee. There's something the matter with *you*.

STEVE

[*Doggedly.*] There may be something the matter with my stomach.

HENRIETTA

[*Scornfully.*] Your stomach! The trouble is not with your stomach but in your subconscious mind.

STEVE

Subconscious piffle!

[*Takes morning paper and tries to read.*]

HENRIETTA

Steve, you never used to be so disagreeable. You certainly have got some sort of a complex. You're all inhibited. You're no longer open to new ideas. You won't listen to a word about psychoanalysis.

STEVE

A word! I've listened to volumes!

HENRIETTA

You've ceased to be creative in architecture--your work isn't going well. You're not sleeping well--

STEVE

How can I sleep, Henrietta, when you're always waking me up to find out what I'm dreaming?

HENRIETTA

But dreams are so important, Steve. If you'd tell yours to Dr. Russell he'd find out exactly what's wrong with you.

STEVE

There's nothing wrong with me.

HENRIETTA

You don't even talk as well as you used to.

STEVE

Talk? I can't say a thing without you looking at me in that dark fashion you have when you're on the trail of a complex.

HENRIETTA

This very irritability indicates that you're suffering from some suppressed desire.

STEVE

I'm suffering from a suppressed desire for a little peace.

HENRIETTA

Dr. Russell is doing simply wonderful things with nervous cases. Won't you go to him, Steve?

STEVE

[*Slamming down his newspaper.*] No, Henrietta, I won't!

HENRIETTA

But, Stephen--!

STEVE

Tst! I hear Mabel coming. Let's not be at each other's throats the first day of her visit.

[He takes out cigarettes. MABEL comes in from door left, the side opposite STEVE, so that he is facing her. She is wearing a rather fussy negligee in contrast to HENRIETTA, who wears "radical" clothes. MABEL is what is called plump.]

MABEL

Good morning.

HENRIETTA

Oh, here you are, little sister.

STEVE

Good morning, Mabel.

[MABEL nods to him and turns, her face lighting up, to HENRIETTA.]

HENRIETTA

[Giving MABEL a hug as she leans against her.] It's so good to have you here. I was going to let you sleep, thinking you'd be tired after the long trip. Sit down. There'll be fresh toast in a minute and *[Rising]* will you have--

MABEL

Oh, I ought to have told you, Henrietta. Don't get anything for me. I'm not eating breakfast.

HENRIETTA

[At first in mere surprise.] Not eating breakfast?

[She sits down, then leans toward MABEL who is seated now, and scrutinizes her.]

STEVE

[*Half to himself.*] The psychoanalytical look!

HENRIETTA

Mabel, why are you not eating breakfast?

MABEL

[*A little startled.*] Why, no particular reason. I just don't care much for breakfast, and they say it keeps down--[*A hand on her hip--the gesture of one who is "reducing"*] that is, it's a good thing to go without it.

HENRIETTA

Don't you sleep well? Did you sleep well last night?

MABEL

Oh, yes, I slept all right. Yes, I slept fine last night, only [*Laughing*] I did have the funniest dream!

STEVE

S-h! S-t!

HENRIETTA

[*Moving closer.*] And what did you dream, Mabel?

STEVE

Look-a-here, Mabel, I feel it's my duty to put you on. Don't tell Henrietta your dreams. If you do she'll find out that you have an underground desire to kill your father and marry your mother--

HENRIETTA

Don't be absurd, Stephen Brewster. [*Sweetly to MABEL.*] What was your dream, dear?

MABEL

[*Laughing.*] Well, I dreamed I was a hen.

HENRIETTA

A hen?

MABEL

Yes; and I was pushing along through a crowd as fast as I could, but being a hen I couldn't walk very fast--it was like having a tight skirt, you know; and there was some sort of creature in a blue cap--you know how mixed up dreams are--and it kept shouting after me, "Step, Hen! Step, Hen!" until I got all excited and just couldn't move at all.

HENRIETTA

[*Resting chin in palm and peering.*] You say you became much excited?

MABEL

[*Laughing.*] Oh, yes; I was in a terrible state.

HENRIETTA

[*Leaning back, murmurs.*] This is significant.

STEVE

She dreams she's a hen. She is told to step lively. She becomes violently agitated. What can it mean?

HENRIETTA

[*Turning impatiently from him.*] Mabel, do you know anything about psychoanalysis?

MABEL

[*Feebly.*] Oh--not much. No--I--[*Brightening.*] It's something about the war, isn't it?

STEVE

Not that kind of war.

MABEL

[*Abashed.*] I thought it might be the name of a new explosive.

STEVE

It *is*.

MABEL

[*Apologetically to HENRIETTA, who is frowning.*] You see, Henrietta, I--we do not live in touch with intellectual things, as you do. Bob being a dentist--somehow our friends--

STEVE

[*Softly.*] Oh, to be a dentist!

[*Goes to window and stands looking out.*

HENRIETTA

Don't you see anything more of that editorial writer--what was his name?

MABEL

Lyman Eggleston?

HENRIETTA

Yes, Eggleston. He was in touch with things. Don't you see him?

MABEL

Yes, I see him once in a while. Bob doesn't like him very well.

HENRIETTA

Your husband does not like Lyman Eggleston? [*Mysteriously.*] Mabel, are you perfectly happy with your husband?

STEVE

[*Sharply.*] Oh, come now, Henrietta--that's going a little strong!

HENRIETTA

Are you perfectly happy with him, Mabel?

[*STEVE goes to work-table.*

MABEL

Why--yes--I guess so. Why--of course I am!

HENRIETTA

Are you happy? Or do you only think you are? Or do you only think you *ought* to be?

MABEL

Why, Henrietta, I don't know what you mean!

STEVE

[*Seizes stack of books and magazines and dumps them on the breakfast table.*] This is what she means, Mabel. Psychoanalysis. My work-table groans with it. Books by Freud, the new Messiah; books by Jung, the new St. Paul; the Psychoanalytical Review--back numbers two-fifty per.

MABEL

But what's it all about?

STEVE

All about your sub-un-non-conscious mind and desires you know not of. They may be doing you a great deal of harm. You may go crazy with them. Oh, yes! People are doing it right and left. Your dreaming you're a hen--

[Shakes his head darkly.]

HENRIETTA

Any fool can ridicule anything.

MABEL

[Hastily, to avert a quarrel.] But what do you say it is, Henrietta?

STEVE

[Looking at his watch.] Oh, if Henrietta's going to start that!

[During HENRIETTA'S next speech settles himself at work-table and sharpens a lead pencil.]

HENRIETTA

It's like this, Mabel. You want something. You think you can't have it. You think it's wrong. So you try to think you don't want it. Your mind protects you--avoids pain--by refusing to think the forbidden thing. But it's there just the same. It stays there shut up in your unconscious mind, and it festers.

STEVE

Sort of an ingrowing mental toenail.

HENRIETTA

Precisely. The forbidden impulse is there full of energy which has simply got to do something. It breaks into your consciousness in disguise, masks itself in dreams, makes all sorts of trouble. In extreme cases it drives you insane.

MABEL

[*With a gesture of horror.*] Oh!

HENRIETTA

[*Reassuring.*] But psychoanalysis has found out how to save us from that. It brings into consciousness the suppressed desire that was making all the trouble. Psychoanalysis is simply the latest scientific method of preventing and curing insanity.

STEVE

[*From his table.*] It is also the latest scientific method of separating families.

HENRIETTA

[*Mildly.*] Families that ought to be separated.

STEVE

The Dwights, for instance. You must have met them, Mabel, when you were here before. Helen was living, apparently, in peace and happiness with good old Joe. Well--she went to this psychoanalyzer--she was "psyched," and biff!--bang!--home she comes with an unsuppressed desire to leave her husband.

[*He starts work, drawing lines on a drawing board with a T-square.*]

MABEL

How terrible! Yes, I remember Helen Dwight. But--but did she have such a desire?

STEVE

First she'd known of it.

MABEL

And she *left* him?

HENRIETTA

[*Coolly.*] Yes, she did.

MABEL

Wasn't he kind to her?

HENRIETTA

Why yes, good enough.

MABEL

Wasn't he kind to her.

HENRIETTA

Oh, yes--kind to her.

MABEL

And she left her good kind husband--!

HENRIETTA

Oh, Mabel! "Left her good, kind husband!" How naïve--forgive me, dear, but how bourgeoisie you are! She came to know herself. And she had the courage!

MABEL

I may be very naïve and--bourgeoise--but I don't see the good of a new science that breaks up homes.

[*STEVE applauds.*]

STEVE

In enlightening Mabel, we mustn't neglect to mention the case of Art Holden's private secretary, Mary Snow, who has just been informed of her suppressed desire for her employer.

MABEL

Why, I think it is terrible, Henrietta! It would be better if we didn't know such things about ourselves.

HENRIETTA

No, Mabel, that is the old way.

MABEL

But--but her employer? Is he married?

STEVE

[*Grunts.*] Wife and four children.

MABEL

Well, then, what good does it do the girl to be told she has a desire for him? There's nothing can be done about it.

HENRIETTA

Old institutions will have to be reshaped so that something can be done in such cases. It happens, Mabel, that this suppressed desire was

on the point of landing Mary Snow in the insane asylum. Are you so tight-minded that you'd rather have her in the insane asylum than break the conventions?

MABEL

But--but have people always had these awful suppressed desires?

HENRIETTA

Always.

STEVE

But they've just been discovered.

HENRIETTA

The harm they do has just been discovered. And free, sane people must face the fact that they have to be dealt with.

MABEL

[*Stoutly.*] I don't believe they have them in Chicago.

HENRIETTA

[*Business of giving MABEL up.*] People "have them" wherever the living Libido--the center of the soul's energy--is in conflict with petrified moral codes. That means everywhere in civilization. Psychoanalysis--

STEVE

Good God! I've got the roof in the cellar!

HENRIETTA

The roof in the cellar!

STEVE

[*Holding plan at arm's length.*] That's what psychoanalysis does!

HENRIETTA

That's what psychoanalysis could *un-do*. Is it any wonder I'm concerned about Steve? He dreamed the other night that the walls of his room melted away and he found himself alone in a forest. Don't you see how significant it is for an architect to have *walls* slip away from him? It symbolizes his loss of grip in his work. There's some suppressed desire--

STEVE

[*Hurling his ruined plan viciously to the floor.*] Suppressed hell!

HENRIETTA

You speak more truly than you know. It is through suppressions that hells are formed in us.

MABEL

[*Looking at STEVE, who is tearing his hair.*] Don't you think it would be a good thing, Henrietta, if we went somewhere else? [*They rise and begin to pick up the dishes. MABEL drops a plate which breaks. HENRIETTA draws up short and looks at her--the psychoanalytic look.*] I'm sorry, Henrietta. One of the Spode plates, too. [*Surprised and resentful as HENRIETTA continues to peer at her.*] Don't take it so to heart, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA

I can't help taking it to heart.

MABEL

I'll get you another. [*Pause. More sharply as HENRIETTA does not answer.*] I said I'll get you another plate, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA

It's not the plate.

MABEL

For heaven's sake, what is it then?

HENRIETTA

It's the significant little false movement that made you drop it.

MABEL

Well, I suppose everyone makes a false movement once in a while.

HENRIETTA

Yes, Mabel, but these false movements all mean something.

MABEL

[*About to cry.*] I don't think that's very nice! It was just because I happened to think of that Mabel Snow you were talking about--

HENRIETTA

Mabel Snow!

MABEL

Snow--Snow--well, what was her name, then?

HENRIETTA

Her name is Mary. You substituted *your own* name for hers.

MABEL

Well, *Mary* Snow, then; *Mary* Snow. I never heard her name but once. I don't see anything to make such a fuss about.

HENRIETTA

[*Gently.*] Mabel dear--mistakes like that in names--

MABEL

[*Desperately.*] They don't mean something, too, do they?

HENRIETTA

[*Gently.*] I am sorry, dear, but they do.

MABEL

But I'm always doing that!

HENRIETTA

[*After a start of horror.*] My poor little sister, tell me about it.

MABEL

About what?

HENRIETTA

About your not being happy. About your longing for another sort of life.

MABEL

But I *don't*.

HENRIETTA

Ah, I understand these things, dear. You feel Bob is limiting you to a life in which you do not feel free--

MABEL

Henrietta! When did I ever say such a thing?

HENRIETTA

You said you are not in touch with things intellectual. You showed your feeling that it is Bob's profession--that has engendered a resentment which has colored your whole life with him.

MABEL

Why--Henrietta!

HENRIETTA

Don't be afraid of me, little sister. There's nothing can shock me or turn me from you. I am not like that. I wanted you to come for this visit because I had a feeling that you needed more from life than you were getting. No one of these things I have seen would excite my suspicion. It's the combination. You don't eat breakfast [*Enumerating on her fingers*]; you make false moves; you substitute your own name for the name of another *whose love is misdirected*. You're nervous; you *look* queer; in your eyes there's a frightened look that is most unlike you. And this dream. A *hen*. Come with me this afternoon to Dr. Russell! Your whole life may be at stake, Mabel.

MABEL

[*Gasping.*] Henrietta, I--you--you always were the smartest in the family, and all that, but--this is terrible! I don't think we *ought* to think such things. [*Brightening.*] Why, I'll tell you why I dreamed I was a hen. It was because last night, telling about that time in Chicago, you said I was as mad as a wet hen.

HENRIETTA

[*Superior.*] Did you dream you were a *wet* hen?

MABEL

[*Forced to admit it.*] No.

HENRIETTA

No. You dreamed you were a *dry* hen. And why, being a hen, were you urged to step?

MABEL

Maybe it's because when I am getting on a street car it always irritates me to have them call "Step lively."

HENRIETTA

No, Mabel, that is only a child's view of it--if you will forgive me. You see merely the elements used in the dream. You do not see into the dream; you do not see its meaning. This dream of the hen--

STEVE

Hen--hen--wet hen--dry hen--mad hen! [*Jumps up in a rage.*] Let me out of this!

HENRIETTA

[*Hastily picking up dishes, speaks soothingly.*] Just a minute, dear, and we'll have things so you can work in quiet. Mabel and I are going to sit in my room.

[*She goes out left, carrying dishes.*]

STEVE

[*Seizing hat and coat from an alcove near the outside door.*] I'm going to be psychoanalyzed. I'm going now! I'm going straight to that infallible doctor of hers--that priest of this new religion. If he's got honesty enough to tell Henrietta there's nothing the matter with my unconscious mind, perhaps I can be let alone about it, and then I *will*

be all right. [*From the door in a low voice.*] Don't tell Henrietta I'm going. It might take weeks, and I couldn't stand all the talk.

[*He hurries out.*

HENRIETTA

[*Returning.*] Where's Steve? Gone? [*With a hopeless gesture.*] You see how impatient he is--how unlike himself! I tell you, Mabel, I'm nearly distracted about Steve.

MABEL

I think he's a little distracted, too.

HENRIETTA

Well, if he's gone--you might as well stay here. I have a committee meeting at the book-shop, and will have to leave you to yourself for an hour or two. [*As she puts her hat on, taking it from the alcove where STEVE found his, her eye, lighting up almost carnivorously, falls on an enormous volume on the floor beside the work table. The book has been half hidden by the wastebasket. She picks it up and carries it around the table toward MABEL.*] Here, dear, is one of the simplest statements of psychoanalysis. You just read this and then we can talk more intelligently. [*MABEL takes volume and staggers back under its weight to chair rear center, HENRIETTA goes to outer door, stops and asks abruptly.*] How old is Lyman Eggleston?

MABEL

[*Promptly.*] He isn't forty yet. Why, what made you ask that, Henrietta?

[*As she turns her head to look at HENRIETTA her hands move toward the upper corners of the book balanced on her knees.*

HENRIETTA

Oh, nothing. Au revoir.

[She goes out. MABEL stares at the ceiling. The book slides to the floor. She starts; looks at the book, then at the broken plate on the table.]

The plate! The book! *[She lifts her eyes, leans forward elbow on knee, chin on knuckles and plaintively queries]* Am I unhappy?

(CURTAIN)

* * * * *

SCENE II: *Two weeks later. The stage is as in Scene I, except that the breakfast table has been removed. During the first few minutes the dusk of a winter afternoon deepens. Out of the darkness spring rows of double street-lights almost meeting in the distance. HENRIETTA is at the psychoanalytical end of STEVE'S work-table, surrounded by open books and periodicals, writing. STEVE enters briskly.*

STEVE

What are you doing, my dear?

HENRIETTA

My paper for the Liberal Club.

STEVE

Your paper on--?

HENRIETTA

On a subject which does not have your sympathy.

STEVE

Oh, I'm not sure I'm wholly out of sympathy with psychoanalysis, Henrietta. You worked it so hard. I couldn't even take a bath without it's meaning something.

HENRIETTA

[*Loftily.*] I talked it because I knew you needed it.

STEVE

You haven't said much about it these last two weeks. Uh--your faith in it hasn't weakened any?

HENRIETTA

Weakened? It's grown stronger with each new thing I've come to know. And Mabel. She is with Dr. Russell now. Dr. Russell is wonderful! From what Mabel tells me I believe his analysis is going to prove that I was right. Today I discovered a remarkable confirmation of my theory in the hen-dream.

STEVE

What is your theory?

HENRIETTA

Well, you know about Lyman Eggleston. I've wondered about him. I've never seen him, but I know he's less bourgeois than Mabel's other friends--more intellectual--and [*Significantly*] she doesn't see much of him because Bob doesn't like him.

STEVE

But what's the confirmation?

HENRIETTA

Today I noticed the first syllable of his name.

STEVE

Ly?

HENRIETTA

No--egg.

STEVE

Egg?

HENRIETTA

[*Patiently.*] Mabel dreamed she was a *hen*. [*STEVE laughs.*] You wouldn't laugh if you knew how important names are in interpreting dreams. Freud is full of just such cases in which a whole hidden complex is revealed by a single significant syllable--like this egg.

STEVE

Doesn't the traditional relation of hen and egg suggest rather a maternal feeling?

HENRIETTA

There is something maternal in Mabel's love, of course, but that's only one element.

STEVE

Well, suppose Mabel hasn't a suppressed desire to be this gentleman's mother, but his beloved. What's to be done about it? What about Bob? Don't you think it's going to be a little rough on him?

HENRIETTA

That can't be helped. Bob, like everyone else, must face the facts of life. If Dr. Russell should arrive independently at this same interpretation I shall not hesitate to advise Mabel to leave her present husband.

STEVE

Um--hum! [*The lights go up on Fifth Avenue. STEVE goes to the window and looks out.*] How long is it we've lived here, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA

Why, this is the third year, Steve.

STEVE

I--we--one would miss this view if one went away, wouldn't one?

HENRIETTA

How strangely you speak! Oh, Stephen, I *wish* you'd go to Dr. Russell. Don't think my fears have abated because I've been able to restrain myself. I had to on account of Mabel. But now, dear--won't you go?

STEVE

I--[*He breaks off, turns on the light, then comes and sits beside HENRIETTA.*] How long have we been married, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA

Stephen, I don't understand you! You *must* go to Dr. Russell.

STEVE

I have gone.

HENRIETTA

You--what?

STEVE

[*Jauntily.*] Yes, Henrietta, I've been psyched.

HENRIETTA

You went to Dr. Russell?

STEVE

The same.

HENRIETTA

And what did he say?

STEVE

He said--I--I was a little surprised by what he said, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA

[*Breathlessly.*] Of course--one can so seldom anticipate. But tell me--your dream, Stephen? It means--?

STEVE

It means--I was considerably surprised by what it means.

HENRIETTA

Don't be so exasperating!

STEVE

It means--you really want to know, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA

Stephen, you'll drive me mad!

STEVE

He said--of course he may be wrong in what he said.

HENRIETTA

He *isn't* wrong. *Tell* me!

STEVE

He said my dream of the walls receding and leaving me alone in a forest indicates a suppressed desire--

HENRIETTA

Yes--yes!

STEVE

To be freed from--

HENRIETTA

Yes--freed from--?

STEVE

Marriage.

HENRIETTA

[*Crumples. Stares.*] Marriage!

STEVE

He--he may be mistaken, you know.

HENRIETTA

May be mistaken?

STEVE

I--well, of course, I hadn't taken any stock in it myself. It was only your great confidence--

HENRIETTA

Stephen, are you telling me that Dr. Russell--Dr. A. E. Russell--told you this? [*STEVE nods.*] Told you you have a suppressed desire to separate from *me*?

STEVE

That's what he said.

HENRIETTA

Did he know who you were?

STEVE

Yes.

HENRIETTA

That you were married to me?

STEVE

Yes, he knew that.

HENRIETTA

And he told you to leave me?

STEVE

It seems he must be wrong, Henrietta.

HENRIETTA

[*Rising.*] And I've sent him more patients--! [*Catches herself and resumes coldly.*] What reason did he give for this analysis?

STEVE

He says the confining walls are a symbol of my feeling about marriage and that their fading away is a wish-fulfillment.

HENRIETTA

[*Gulping.*] Well, is it? Do you want our marriage to end?

STEVE

It was a great surprise to me that I did. You see I hadn't known what was in my unconscious mind.

HENRIETTA

[*Flaming.*] What did you tell Dr. Russell about me to make him think you weren't happy?

STEVE

I never told him a thing, Henrietta. He got it all from his confounded clever inferences. I--I tried to refute them, but he said that was only part of my self-protective lying.

HENRIETTA

And that's why you were so--happy--when you came in just now!

STEVE

Why, Henrietta, how can you say such a thing? I was *sad*. Didn't I speak sadly of--of the view? Didn't I ask how long we had been married?

HENRIETTA

[*Rising.*] Stephen Brewster, have you no sense of the seriousness of this? Dr. Russell doesn't know what our marriage has been. You do. You should have laughed him down! Confined--in life with me? Did you tell him that I *believe* in freedom?

STEVE

I very emphatically told him that his results were a great surprise to me.

HENRIETTA

But you accepted them.

STEVE

Oh, not at all. I merely couldn't refute his arguments. I'm not a psychologist. I came home to talk it over with you. You being a disciple of psychoanalysis--

HENRIETTA

If you are going, I wish you would go tonight!

STEVE

Oh, my dear! I--surely I couldn't do that! Think of my feelings. And my laundry hasn't come home.

HENRIETTA

I ask you to go tonight. Some women would falter at this, Steve, but I am not such a woman. I leave you free. I do not repudiate psychoanalysis; I say again that it has done great things. It has also made mistakes, of course. But since you accept this analysis--[*She sits down and pretends to begin work.*] I have to finish this paper. I wish you would leave me.

STEVE

[Scratches his head, goes to the inner door.] I'm sorry, Henrietta, about my unconscious mind.

[Alone, HENRIETTA'S face betrays her outraged state of mind--disconcerted, resentful, trying to pull herself together. She attains an air of bravely bearing an outrageous thing.--The outer door opens and MABEL enters in great excitement.]

MABEL

[Breathless.] Henrietta, I'm so glad you're here. And alone? *[Looks toward the inner door.]* Are you alone, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA

[With reproving dignity.] Very much so.

MABEL

[Rushing to her.] Henrietta, he's found it!

HENRIETTA

[Aloof.] Who has found what?

MABEL

Who has found what? Dr. Russell has found my suppressed desire!

HENRIETTA

That is interesting.

MABEL

He finished with me today--he got hold of my complex--in the most amazing way! But, oh, Henrietta--it is so terrible!

HENRIETTA

Do calm yourself, Mabel. Surely there's no occasion for all this agitation.

MABEL

But there is! And when you think of the lives that are affected--the readjustments that must be made in order to bring the suppressed hell out of me and save me from the insane asylum--!

HENRIETTA

The insane asylum!

MABEL

You said that's where these complexes brought people!

HENRIETTA

What did the doctor tell you, Mabel?

MABEL

Oh, I don't know how I can tell you--it is so awful--so unbelievable.

HENRIETTA

I rather have my hand in at hearing the unbelievable.

MABEL

Henrietta, who would ever have thought it? How can it be true? But the doctor is perfectly certain that I have a suppressed desire for--

[Looks at HENRIETTA, is unable to continue.]

HENRIETTA

Oh, go on, Mabel. I'm not unprepared for what you have to say.

MABEL

Not unprepared? You mean you have suspected it?

HENRIETTA

From the first. It's been my theory all along.

MABEL

But, Henrietta, I didn't know myself that I had this secret desire for Stephen.

HENRIETTA

[*Jumps up.*] Stephen!

MABEL

My brother-in-law! My own sister's husband!

HENRIETTA

You have a suppressed desire for Stephen!

MABEL

Oh, Henrietta, aren't these unconscious selves terrible? They seem so unlike *us*!

HENRIETTA

What insane thing are you driving at?

MABEL

[*Blubbering.*] Henrietta, don't you use that word to me. I don't *want* to go to the insane asylum.

HENRIETTA

What did Dr. Russell say?

MABEL

Well, you see--oh, it's the strangest thing! But you know the voice in my dream that called "Step, Hen!" Dr. Russell found out today that when I was a little girl I had a story-book in words of one syllable and I read the name Stephen wrong. I used to read it S-t-e-p, step, h-e-n, hen. [*Dramatically.*] Step Hen is Stephen. [*Enter STEPHEN, his head bent over a time-table.*] Stephen is Step Hen!

STEVE

I? Step Hen?

MABEL

[*Triumphantly.*] S-t-e-p, step, H-e-n, hen, Stephen!

HENRIETTA

[*Exploding.*] Well, what if Stephen is Step Hen? [*Scornfully.*] Step Hen! Step Hen! For that ridiculous coincidence--

MABEL

Coincidence! But it's childish to look at the mere elements of a dream. You have to look *into* it--you have to see what it *means*!

HENRIETTA

On account of that trivial, meaningless play on syllables--on that flimsy basis--you are ready--[*Wails.*] O-h!

STEVE

What on earth's the matter? What has happened? Suppose I *am* Step Hen? What about it? What does it mean?

MABEL

[*Crying.*] It means--that I--have a suppressed desire for *you!*

STEVE

For me! The deuce you have! [*Feebly.*] What--er--makes you think so?

MABEL

Dr. Russell has worked it out scientifically.

HENRIETTA

Yes. Through the amazing discovery that Step Hen equals Stephen!

MABEL

[*Tearfully.*] Oh, that isn't all--that isn't near all. Henrietta won't give me a chance to tell it. She'd rather I'd go to the insane asylum than be unconventional.

HENRIETTA

We'll all go there if you can't control yourself. We are still waiting for some rational report.

MABEL

[*Drying her eyes.*] Oh, there's such a lot about names. [*With some pride.*] I don't see how I ever did it. It all works in together. I dreamed I was a hen because that's the first syllable of *Hen*-rietta's name, and when I dreamed I was a hen, I was putting myself in Henrietta's place.

HENRIETTA

With Stephen?

MABEL

With Stephen.

HENRIETTA

[*Outraged.*] Oh! [*Turns in rage upon STEPHEN, who is fanning himself with the time-table.*] What are you doing with that time-table?

STEVE

Why--I thought--you were so keen to have me go tonight--I thought I'd just take a run up to Canada, and join Billy--a little shooting--but--

MABEL

But there's more about the names.

HENRIETTA

Mabel, have you thought of Bob--dear old Bob--your good, kind husband?

MABEL

Oh, Henrietta, "my good, kind husband!"

HENRIETTA

Think of him, Mabel, out there alone in Chicago, working his head off, fixing people's *teeth*--for you!

MABEL

Yes, but think of the living Libido--in conflict with petrified moral codes! And think of the perfectly wonderful way the names all prove it. Dr. Russell said he's never seen anything more convincing. Just look at Stephen's last name--Brewster. I dream I'm a hen, and the name Brewster--you have to say its first letter by itself--and then the hen, that's me, she says to him: "Stephen, Be Rooster!"

[HENRIETTA and STEPHEN collapse into the nearest chairs.]

MABEL

I think it's perfectly wonderful! Why, if it wasn't for psychoanalysis you'd never find out how wonderful your own mind is!

STEVE

[Begins to chuckle.] Be Rooster! Stephen, Be Rooster!

HENRIETTA

You think it's funny, do you?

STEVE

Well, what's to be done about it? Does Mabel have to go away with me?

HENRIETTA

Do you want Mabel to go away with you?

STEVE

Well, but Mabel herself--her complex--her suppressed desire--!

HENRIETTA

[Going to her.] Mabel, are you going to insist on going away with Stephen?

MABEL

I'd rather go with Stephen than go to the insane asylum!

HENRIETTA

For heaven's sake, Mabel, drop that insane asylum! If you *did* have a suppressed desire for Stephen hidden away in you--God knows it isn't hidden now. Dr. Russell has brought it into your consciousness--with a vengeance. That's all that's necessary to break up a complex. Psychoanalysis doesn't say you have to *gratify* every suppressed desire.

STEVE

[*Softly.*] Unless it's for Lyman Eggleston.

HENRIETTA

[*Turning on him.*] Well, if it comes to that, Stephen Brewster, I'd like to know why that interpretation of mine isn't as good as this one? Step, Hen!

STEVE

But Be Rooster! [*He pauses, chuckling to himself.*] Step-Hen B-rooster. And *Henrietta*. Pshaw, my dear, Doc Russell's got you beat a mile! [*He turns away and chuckles.*] Be rooster!

MABEL

What has Lyman Eggleston got to do with it?

STEVE

According to Henrietta, you, the hen, have a suppressed desire for *Eggleston*, the egg.

MABEL

Henrietta, I think that's indecent of you! He is bald as an egg and little and fat--the idea of you thinking such a thing of me!

HENRIETTA

Well, Bob isn't little and bald and fat! Why don't you stick to your own husband? [*To STEPHEN.*] What if Dr. Russell's interpretation has got mine "beat a mile"? [*Resentful look at him.*] It would only mean that Mabel doesn't want Eggleston and does want you. Does that mean she has to have you?

MABEL

But you said Mabel Snow--

HENRIETTA

Mary Snow! You're not as much like her as you think--substituting your name for hers! The cases are entirely different. Oh, I wouldn't have *believed* this of you, Mabel. [*Beginning to cry.*] I brought you here for a pleasant visit--thought you needed brightening *up*--wanted to be *nice* to you--and now you--my husband--you insist--

[In fumbling her way to her chair she brushes to the floor some sheets from the psychoanalytical table.]

STEVE

[With solicitude.] Careful, dear. Your paper on psychoanalysis!

[Gathers up sheets and offers them to her.]

HENRIETTA

I don't want my paper on psychoanalysis! I'm sick of psychoanalysis!

STEVE

[Eagerly.] Do you mean that, Henrietta?

HENRIETTA

Why shouldn't I mean it? Look at all I've done for psychoanalysis--and--*[Raising a tear-stained face]* what has psychoanalysis done for me?

STEVE

Do you mean, Henrietta, that you're going to stop *talking* psychoanalysis?

HENRIETTA

Why shouldn't I stop talking it? Haven't I seen what it does to people? Mabel has gone crazy about psychoanalysis!

[At the word "crazy" with a moan MABEL sinks to chair and buries her face in her hands.]

STEVE

[Solemnly.] Do you swear never to wake me up in the night to find out what I'm dreaming?

HENRIETTA

Dream what you please--I don't care what you're dreaming.

STEVE

Will you clear off my work-table so the Journal of Morbid Psychology doesn't stare me in the face when I'm trying to plan a house?

HENRIETTA

[Pushing a stack of periodicals off the table.] I'll burn the Journal of Morbid Psychology!

STEVE

My dear Henrietta, if you're going to separate from psychoanalysis, there's no reason why I should separate from *you*.

[They embrace ardently. MABEL lifts her head and looks at them woefully.]

MABEL

[Jumping up and going toward them.] But what about me? What am I to do with my suppressed desire?

STEVE

[With one arm still around HENRIETTA, gives MABEL a brotherly hug.] Mabel, you just keep right on suppressing it!

(CURTAIN)