

## AUDITION SCENES

### INTERVIEW - CLARA and LULU

LULU: I said to myself, “Lulu, if Mrs. Webb’s social secretary is available, you simply must hire her.” Ah, the pressures that we women of Old New York face. The dinner parties, balls, social calls, the opera, traveling to Paris to have our gowns made. Then the season here in Newport.

CLARA: And your children, of course.

LULU: Oh yes, and my two darling children. Without the nurse, the nanny and the governess, I’d have no idea what I’d do. *(a beat)* Clara, I heard that Mrs. Webb was beside herself when she discovered her husband’s...indiscretions.

CLARA: Oh, I couldn’t say, Mrs. Monroe. I never discuss my patroness’s personal affairs.

LULU: Oh, of course you don’t, very good. And Clara, I wish to say, and should’ve said years ago, it was such a shame about your late father and his...financial woes. How troubling it must be to work for your former peers.

CLARA: *(diplomatically)* You’re so gracious to say so.

LULU: Oh, it’s nothing, dear girl. I always make an effort to pity the less fortunate. I’ll be in touch, ta ta.

### MEET SCENE - CLARA and ELI

CLARA: But I received a calling card for Mrs. Elijah Boyd.

ELI: I had those cards printed last week.

CLARA: You had cards printed on the finest vellum money can buy for a woman who doesn’t exist?

ELI: Only the best for my wife.

CLARA: You’re not married.

ELI: Minor detail.

CLARA: I manage a *woman’s* social affairs and I don’t have time for games.

ELI: Please let me explain. I’ll pay you handsomely if you help me.

*Clara takes a moment, then offers Eli a chair.*

ELI: *(Eli sits)* So, I’ve built a wildly successful international shipping business from scratch. But I haven’t been received by any society family. Not a single one.

CLARA: Money alone is not your entrance into good society, sir.

ELI: That I know. *(He pulls out a newspaper clipping)* But I found this list. Can you get me on it?

CLARA: The Four Hundred are the top tier of high society. If you wish to raise your social position, the easiest way to begin is to marry well.

ELI: Hmph. All the debutantes are marrying penniless dukes. It’s in the papers every day.

CLARA: The best option would be a woman of quality with... reduced circumstances.

ELI: I see. *(He stands.)* I need to find me some nice knickerbocker girl who’s hard up for cash?

CLARA: I wouldn’t put it that way but—

ELI: If I need that sort of woman, that’s basically you, Miss Rutherford.

CLARA: Mr. Boyd I—

ELI: We could be married this afternoon.

CLARA: I didn’t mean-

ELI: *(Ignoring her.)* Quite bold of you really, but if you insist. *(He gets down on one knee, makes a dramatic gesture)* Will you do me the honor of becoming my wife—

CLARA: Please stand up, sir.

ELI: It’s a no, then? *(Eli stands back up, sits back in his chair.)*

CLARA: If you’ll restrain from wild outbursts, I may be willing to arrange a few introductions.

ELI: How would I even know if she liked me in the least?

CLARA: Men in high society rarely marry for love.

ELI: Hmph. I won’t either. Love is for poets, not men like me. If I ever marry, it’d be a respectful arrangement between equals.

CLARA: Then I can’t help you

COMFORTABLE - IONA and SIMPSON

SIMPSON: But ma'am, Mrs. Peters just wants to make sure you're comfortable.  
IONA: The bed is too soft, and the sheets are slippery.  
SIMPSON: They're charmeuse silk, Mrs. Boyd.  
IONA: Tell Mrs. Peters that all I need are plain cotton sheets. And a stiff board for the bed.  
SIMPSON: But, ma'am—  
IONA: Or I'll just keep sleeping on the floor. I don't mind. *(She exits SR)*.  
SIMPSON: Mrs. Boyd— *(Simpson follows after her and exits)*

NEW WARDROBE - ELI and SIMPSON

ELI: It's been a long few days, Simpson and now Miss Rutherford insists I learn golf? Aiming a ball at a tiny hole across a field doesn't strike me as a leisure activity.  
SIMPSON: I'm not sure why it's so popular, sir. A portion of your new wardrobe will arrive this afternoon.  
ELI: *(muttering)* New wardrobe. *(then to Simpson)* Do you think there's anything wrong with my clothes?  
SIMPSON: *(He's lying.)* No, sir.  
ELI: *(He gasps, melodramatically.)* You're on her side, aren't you? I can't believe it. I'll remember this, Simpson, I will, and I'll be very boring, so I won't be embarrassing you.  
SIMPSON: *(He's smiling, he can't help it.)* Yes, sir.

FLOWERS – CLARA and FAYE

FAYE: That office will have fresh flowers from now on. Got a weekly order for all of Stonecliff.  
CLARA: From Mr. Boyd?  
FAYE: Mrs. Peters on his request. For your office –Cretian Irises and Forrel Canary Roses.  
CLARA: Are those actual flowers?  
FAYE: Yes they are, to the society types. But not to locals, no fancy names, and much cheaper.  
CLARA: I can't have fresh flowers in my office. I'll talk with Mrs. Peters this morning.  
FAYE: Couldn't you give it a few weeks before you said something?  
CLARA: Fresh flowers. For me?  
FAYE: Oh, all right. There's plenty for the rest of the house. But it could have become a new trend. Flowers in the servant's quarters. Flowers in the kitchens. Flowers in the stables.  
CLARA: Good bye, Faye. *(Clara exits SL.)*  
FAYE: *(calling out to Clara)* It could have caught on!

SAMPLE MENUS – CLARA and VALENTIN

CLARA: Mr. Boyd will be hosting a ball late in the season for about five hundred, if all goes according to plan.  
VALENTIN: *(dryly)* Releasing me from my prison of bourgeois slop for one night. How kind of you.  
CLARA: If you could put together some sample menus, I'd like to review them.  
VALENTIN: I don't need your approval for the cuisine I create. You insult me with this request.  
CLARA: Valentin, it's an important event for Mr. Boyd. It's my job to make sure—  
VALENTIN: Isn't food food? Or are these Americans too simple to appreciate fine cuisine? And why do I only cook for this family? I'm not a cook. I am a chef. Mrs. Boyd requests haggis for dinner at least once a week. Do you know how disgusting haggis is?  
CLARA: There might be a dinner party at some point. But I can't promise anything.  
VALENTIN: If I can't make fine cuisine for fine guests soon, I'll hold you responsible. You!

SCOLDED – SIMPSON and MRS. PETERS

MRS. PETERS: Is it true? Miss Rutherford scolded Mr. Boyd about going below stairs?

SIMPSON: Mrs. Peters, listening to such gossip.

MRS. PETERS: Well, out with it.

SIMPSON: Miss Rutherford is a force to be reckoned with. I heard her myself.

MRS. PETERS: Eavesdropping, Simpson?

SIMPSON: I'm a butler, Mrs. Peters. Eavesdropping is practically my life's work.

MRS. PETERS: Well, praise the maker. Maybe there's some hope for this household after all. *(They exit SR.)*

LEDGERS - RUTH and WESLEY

WESLEY *(enters carrying a bouquet of flowers)* Ruth—

RUTH: Wesley, dear. I wasn't expecting you this early.

WESLEY: I couldn't wait until Friday to see you.

RUTH:*(she's not buying it)* You need me to look at the ledgers again?

WESLEY: Some of these transactions aren't making sense and you're the only one I really trust.

RUTH: If anyone knew I assisted with your business affairs, we'd be dropped from the Four Hundred by morning.

WESLEY: Why? Who wouldn't want to be married to a brilliant woman with a head for numbers?

RUTH: So unfashionable, dear. It's a good thing we didn't marry for love, then we'd really be in trouble.

WESLEY: *(he knows the truth)*. Your secret is safe with me.

RUTH: I'd hope so. Or else you'd lose your most valued employee.

WESLEY: Partner, my darling. Partner. *(They exit SL.)*

FINAL TOUCHES – RUTH and DORIS

RUTH: Looks as if Clara is putting the final touches on Eli's ball.

DORIS: It's too bad that it will be poorly attended.

RUTH: We may go.

DORIS: Are you serious?

RUTH: Wesley and Eli have been thick as thieves recently. They spent hours at the Reading Room the other day.

DORIS: Someone invited Eli?

RUTH: Wesley did. Oh, some of the nobs were miffed at first, but Eli won them over. Wild tales from his youth on the high seas.

DORIS: The Reading Room used to be more dignified.

RUTH: I don't think they ever debated the merits of Chaucer.

DORIS: At least they had the dignity to pretend that they did.

TOWN TOPICS – BETH and KATE

BETH: "Town Topics has learned Mrs. Astor won't arrive in Newport until later this season, but she wishes all the debutantes well." Oh, how gracious of her.

KATE: What kind of newspaper is this?

BETH: It's Colonel Mann's paper. Town Topics is a must read. Has all the news of the society set.

KATE: *(to Beth)* Do you think Mr. Boyd will marry one of those debutantes?

BETH: He's new money, who'd want to marry him?

KATE: I would. *(Kate and Beth laugh.)*

BETH: Look at this juicy tidbit. "Mrs. W. may put up a brave front, but Mr. W. was caught in a compromising situation with—"

THE QUADRILLE – NIKOLAY and ELI

NIKOLAY: I'm thrilled to introduce you to the elegant and sophisticated world of social dance.

ELI: There have to be more important things to do. *(to Nikolay)* No offense.

NIKOLAY: Mr. Boyd, dance is essential to the high society gentleman all across the globe.

ELI: I don't like to dance. Especially with men I don't know.

NIKOLAY: Let's try something different. Maybe if you watch me. *(He demonstrates the waltz gracefully while he counts.)* One, two, three. One, two, three. Now you try.

ELI: I think I've got it. *(He doesn't, but he tries.)* One, two, three. One, two, three. There!

NIKOLAY: *(he's not impressed)* Let's work on the quadrille instead.

ALREADY MARRIED – HAZEL and PHILIP

HAZEL: *(to Eli)* I'd marry you in a heartbeat. It's too bad I'm already married.

PHILIP: I'm sitting right here.

HAZEL: I didn't think you were paying attention.

PHILIP: *(dryly, mostly to himself)* That doesn't make it better.

*(ELI: I have no plans to marry.)*

PHILIP: I'm envious Eli. I'd love a chance to start over.

HAZEL: *(laughing)* Listen to his outrageous jokes.

PHILIP: It's the truth.

HAZEL: Eli, you're rubbing off on my dear husband.