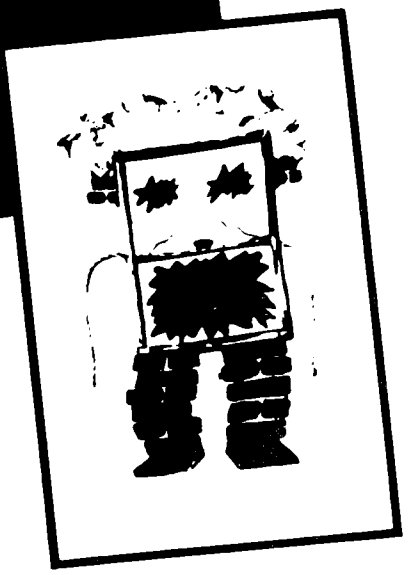
MARIONETTE PLAY
ENTITLED

"The HOUSE That JACK'S BUILDING"



FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY

UNITED STATES HOUSING AUTHORITY

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE HOUSE THAT JACK'S BUILDING.

By Bertram M. Gross

Federal Works Agency
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THE HOUSE THAT JACK'S BUILDING

A Marionette Play in Three Acts and One Interlude

By Bertram M. Gross

Characters -- In Order of Their Appearance

Jack Brown, an Unemployed Bricklayer

Mary Brown, his Wife

Lummox, the Landlord

Slug the Stove

Windy the Window

Toughy the Termite

Clarence the Cockroach

Oscar the Outhouse

Swede Swenson

Uncle Sam

Telegram

An Angel

The Devil

ACT ONE

Scene I

Scene: A one-room apartment in Tumbledown Alley. The room contains a bed on the point of collapse (extreme right), a Pisa-angled chair (at left) and a rickety stove (against back wall). Near the stove is a tiny window, just large enough for a puppet's head to squeeze its way through. The wall is patched with newspapers and cardboard.

As the curtain rises, Jack bounds in from the left, bows cavalierly — nose almost scraping ground — to Mary, who enters after him, bridal drapes flowing from her head.

Jack: Welcome, Mrs. Brown.

Mary: Thank you, Mr. Brown.

Jack: D'ja ever see a love nest sweeter? Didja ever?

Mary: Never.

Jack: D'ja ever see a palace neater? Didja ever?

Mary: Never.
(They dance)

Jack: You're the Queen and I'm your King-O

Mary: All we'll do is play and sing-O

Jack: We'll fox-trot, waltz and truck and swing-O

Mary: And every Tuesday night play bingo!
(They stop suddenly)
I'm tired.

Jack: Will the Queen sit down?

Mary: The Queen will do so, Mr. Brown.
(She sits down on the rickety chair. It collapses with a crash beneath her.)
Ouch!

Jack: (running to help her up):
That broken chair — I should have warned you —
Is my lovey-dovey hurt?

Mary (refusing to be picked up):

You nasty worm, I should have scorned you!
I'm black and blue and full of dirt!

Jack:

Can Mrs. Brown be black and blue?
That, my dear, will never do.
(Picks her up and sets her down on bed,
which squeaks beneath her.)
I'll brush you off and sing your pain away.

Mary: (half-sobbing)

I won't listen to one word more --
Broken chair and dirty floor --
I hate this place -- I'll leave you yet today!

Jack:

Why be so grouchy,
So angry, so ouchy,
Because a poor chair fell for you?
He just met you tonight --
It was love at first sight --
At your very first touch
You thrilled him so much
That the poor chair split right in two!
Everything in this place
Should bring smiles to your face
For everything here's made for love!

Mary:

Made for love? You're full of soup!
See that leaky ceiling?

Jack:

Oop!
Humph, humph -- it's dripping -- uh -- (thinks
for a moment, then continues mock heroically)
to a beautiful tune --
Like the dreamy rippling of a brook in June.

Mary: (Her sobs vanish. One can tell that she likes Jack's romantic ways. Now she's pert.)

What a horrible wall -- all full of holes
And covered with papers!

Jack:

Good for our souls!
The wall paper carries the news of the nation --
It's as good as a college education.

Mary:

See that window? It has no glass,
No curtain or shade.

Jack: The latest style, lass --
In window making the newest wrinkle.
All night long we can see the stars twinkle!

(At "twinkle" Landlord Lummox pops head through window and chuckles in falsetto.)

Lummox: Twinkle, twinkle -- I'm a star.

Mary: How I wonder who you are!

Jack: (knocked off his feet by the surprise):
The landlord!

Mary: What's he want?

Lummox: The rent!
(He withdraws his head.)

Mary:(whispering):
Have you got it?

Jack (whispering): Not a cent!

(Enter Lummox)
Lummox: Good day, my children.

Jack (aside): Not when you're around.

Mary (Curtsying): Good day.

Lummox: D'ya know what day this is? (Aside -- giving Mary the once-over) Hmm....

Jack: Tuesday.

Mary: Our wedding day.

Lummox: Wrong! Rent's due -- at exactly five o'clock!
(Aside - looking at Mary) Hmm....

Mary: Kind sir, we have a few complaints.

Lummox: Complain away, my pretty one.

Mary: The leaky ceiling --

Lummox: I see, I see.

Jack: The wallpaper's peeling —

Lummox: Ah me, ah me.

Mary: The window's broken —

Lummox: Quit your jokin'.

Jack: We have no water —

Mary: And we oughter.

Lummox: That's so, that's so.

Mary: Not fit for bears —

Jack: It needs repairs.

Lummox: Oh no, oh no!

Jack: No what?

Lummox: No repairs!
(Lummox struts across stage, declaiming in recitative)
I'll listen to each and every complaint —
I don't even care if it's just or it ain't.
There's only one thing that I care about:
(Extends one hand toward Jack)
The rent!
If you don't pay it, I'll kick you out —
(Extends other hand toward Mary)
The rent!
For all I care it can fall to bits —
If you want something better, there's always the Ritz.
(Extends one hand toward Mary, the other toward Jack)
THE RENT!

Jack: Haven't got it.

Mary: Won't you wait?

Lummox: No, it's already ten minutes late.

Jack: I'll have it next week.

Mary: Be kind enough
To wait — for my sake.

Lummox: Humph -- (eyes her) -- hot stuff --
For your sake -- yowsah-h, but you better raise
The whole month's rent in the next seven days.

Mary: Oh, thank you.

Jack: I'll get it.

Lummox: I'll be here again.
Next week promptly at half past ten!

(Exit Lummox at Left)

Mary: Suppose you don't get it?

Jack: My darling, forget it.
(Recitative)
Love laughs at slums
And at landlords -- the bums! --
So tho' this room is what it oughtn't
Yet it's our love nest
Our own lovey-dove nest
And love is all that's important!
(They sing.)

Jack: Every minute I'm working I'll miss you.

Mary: But I'll miss you more, I insist.

Jack: Oh, I'm in the mood to kiss you.

Mary: And I'm in the mood to be kissed!
(They embrace feverishly.)

Mary (upon breaking the clinch):
Ring the bells --

Jack: Beat the drums!

Mary: Love laughs --

Jack: At slums!

Blackout

Interlude

Scene: Same as Act One.

Time: After midnight.

Jack and Mary are in bed. The stage is semi-dark. A light snore is heard. Through the window can be heard the sound of the wind blowing through the alley outside. In the distance a clock tolls the early hours of morning.

"Brr" we hear someone say. Another "Brr." At first we can't imagine who it is. Then we hear a shifting of feet and we see it is no other than "Slug" the Stove.

Stove: Brr! I got da chills like an ice-box. (He rubs his hands together, hops toward center of stage.) It's day Windy da Winder. I got halfa mind ta bat'im inna eye.

Window (jumping down out of the wall and squaring off with his fist): Nobody can talk 'bout me like dat 'n get away wid it.

Stove: (Sneering) Look who's talking! Scram -- before I close ya.

Window: (Backing down) Aw, you gimme a pain.

Stove: Dat's jest watcha need -- ya lousy, little broken-down hole'n dal wall -- a pane.

Window: Aw, yer bugs.

(Enter Termite, a huge ant-like insect with prominent teeth, crawling down wall at left. He's evidently been drinking and is a little belligerent.)

Termite: Who's bugs? Hic -- I'll beat -- hic -- any bug in da house!

Stove: Keep yer pants on, punk. We're gonna hold a meetin'.

(Enter Clarence the Cockroach, crawling down the wall at Right.)

Cockroach (in marked Oxford accent): Pawdon me. Why all the uproar? I find it blawsted hawd to sleep, doncha know?

Termite: I'll beat -- hic -- any bug in da house.
(Termite pitches into Cockroach and knocks him sprawling.)

Cockroach (groaning): Oh me, oh my! Oh my, oh me!

Window: Attaboy!

Stove: (To Termite) Cut da roughhouse or I'll t'row ya out da winder. We gotta job ta pull fer da boss.

Cockroach: What jawb?

Stove: Day guy an' da dame wot lives here.

Window: Dey're bats about each odder.

Termite: Bats -- hic --? I'll fix dat.

Stove: Da boss wants us ta break it up between 'em. He's gotta crush on da skoit. Catch on?

Termite: Yeah, yeah -- I'll fix it up.

Stove: Wise guy, huh? Wot's yer racket?

Termite: (Staggers and hiccups as he declaims)
I'll swipe der bread and take dere meat --
I'll eat da floor beneat' dere feet!
Dere's nottin' stronger dan my teet' --
I'll eat an' eat!

Stove: How 'boutchu, Windy?

Window: I'll keep da sun out when it's shinin'
An' give 'em halitosis --

Cockroach: (Interrupting)
Pawdon me, I think you've erred.

Window: Aw, I mean tuberculosis.
I'll keep da air out when it's hot
An' make da sweat drip down der knees --
I'll let da wind in when it's cold
An' make 'em wheeze an' cough an' sneeze!
(They all cough or sneeze)

Stove (suppressing cough):
Me — I'll take 'em for a ride —
I'll fill da smelly place wit smoke,
An' when day want dere bacon fried,
I'll play off cold — wow, wot a joke!

Termite: (To Cockroach) How 'boutchu, sport?

Cockroach: My dear sir, were you addressing me?

Stove: Can da high-hat stuff.

Window: Yeah, wotcha gonna do?

Cockroach: I jolly well don't fawncy engaging in this bloody affair. I'd rawther leave the bally place. When I was at Oxford —

Termite: Whoops my deah!

Stove: Dis is Tumbledown Alley, punk! (Knocks Cockroach across floor) Ya gotta play ball or we'll drop ya down a sewer.

Cockroach: (Covering)
I — oh, oh — I jolly well don't know —
But something — yaws — as you have said —
Something bloody nawsty, no?
Ah, yes, I'll infest their bed!
(Heavy footsteps are heard off-stage at Left)

Stove: Who's dat?

Window: Cheese it, da cops.
(They retreat confusedly to various parts of the room, try to hide.)

(Enter Oscar the Outhouse.)

Stove: O.K. gang. It's only Oscar da Outhouse.

Outhouse: (Lumbering in slowly and speaking in a heavy, stupid drawl) Why must I always be left out in da cold?

(Gang returns — all except Termite. They hold their noses.)

Cockroach: I daresay, my man, you are a little hawd on the nostrils, doncha know?

Termite: (Scurrying up wall):
Goo'night -- hic -- dis gives me a sick stomach -- hic -- where's a pail? -- hic -- Goo'night!

(Exit Termite)

Stove: Well, pal -- are ya wit us or aincha?

Outhouse: I'm widja, gang.
(Declaims)
I'm one guy dey can't escape --
I'll make dose babies hang out crepe --
Me met'ods are very superior!
Ev'ry time dat he or she
Comes outside ta visit me
I'll douse 'em wit bacteria!

Window: Attakid!

Stove: Let's get inna huddle on dis, gang. (They form a huddle)

All: (Singing eerily -- a la Macbeth)
Double, double, boil an' bubble,
We shall make a lotta trouble.
Termite's teeth, eyes of rat,
Broken glass, cockroach's hat --
Fire burn an' cauldron bubble,
We'll make an <u>awful</u> lotta trouble!

Stove: Dat's all, gang.

Cockroach: Nighty night, gentlemen. (Slips down behind bed.)

Outhouse: (Lumbering off stage.)
Why must I always have to go out in da cold?

(Exit Outhouse)

Stove (to Window): Wotcha waitin' fer? Hop back dere or I'll close ya.
(Window hops back into place. Stove struts once or twice across stage to see if everything is all right, then returns to his place and yawns.)
Brr!
(Another yawn. Another "Brr!" Then silence. Stage grows darker and the curtain falls.)

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Scene: Same as Act One.

Time: Exactly one week later.

Mary is puttering around at the stove. A black shawl is draped around her shoulders to keep her warm. Jack is sitting on bed, polishing his shoes with black brush. Behind the bed -- unseen -- is Clarence the Cockroach. The rising curtain discloses a torrentious argument that seems to have been in progress for days.

Jack: I will.

Mary: You won't.

Jack: I will.

Mary: I'll stop you.

Jack: Who -- you?

Mary: Yes -- me.

Jack: Ho-ho!

Mary: I'll bop you.

Jack: I'll do it at once.

Mary: You're all wet.

Jack: You'll see.

Mary: (Pauses a moment -- puzzled)
Just what will you do?

Jack: (Puzzled himself)
I forget.

Mary: Me too.

Jack: Altho' we forgot what we're fighting about,
Dont' worry --
We'll have something else to quarrel about
In a hurry --
It's "Fix the stove" or "I haven't got
A cent"
Or "Clean the Outhouse" or --

Mary: (Harshly) Where, or where's
The rent?

Jack: Here she is, lovey-dovey! (Emphasizing the last word sarcastically, he slaps rent down on table.)

Mary: (Sharply)
Where's the money to pay the grocer?

Jack: That's all I have.

Mary: Oh no, oh nossir,
You can't squeeze out that way.

Jack: If I only were back at my job of bricklaying ---
This shoeshine business isn't paying.

Mary: How many shines today?

Jack: Only three.

Mary: Can't fool me.

Jack: What do you think?

Mary: Your dough goes to drink --
Or else you're lazy.

Jack: You'll drive me crazy --
Cut the naggin.

Mary: I'll bet you're tagging
After some other woman!

Jack: (Sarcastic)
As a special prize
For being so wise
I award you the cat's pajama!

Mary: (singing plaintively)
I never know when to believe you --

Jack: You'll be driving me soon to theft

Mary: Oh, I'm in the mood to leave you

Jack: And I'm in the mood to be left!

Mary: Wotta life!

Jack: Wotta wife!
(Leaving -- drearily)
Back to work.....
(Exit Jack at Left. Outside we can hear him calling "Shoe shine, polish fine -- slick 'em up for a dime! Shine, Mister?" His voice dies away.)

Mary: "She sits down on bed and coughs) Brr!
(Plaintive recitative)
We used to be happy --
Now it sounds sappy
The way that we thought things would go.
Love dies in slums --
When poverty comes
Love flies out the window -w-w!

(Lummox pops his head through window.)

Lummox: Love comes in the window-w -- hi-de-ho!

Mary (startled): Who's that?

Lummox: Me. Are you all alone?

Mary: Yes.

Lummox: Boy, oh boy!
(He withdraws his head.)

Mary (suspicious): I don't like his tone.

(Enter Lummox)
Lummox (swaggering toward Mary):
Hiya babe! How 'bout a kiss?

Mary: Nothing doing! I'll give you this!
(She gives him a resounding slap.)

Lummox: (Laughs evilly)
Heh, heh, fair lady, you'll rue this day!
Where's the rent?

Mary: (Points to table)
There.

Lummox: (Taking the rent)
Heh, heh, you'll have to pay
Five dollars more from now on.

Mary: Five
Dollars more! Land's sakes alive,
We can't.

Lummox: Tsk, tsk, then you'll be thrown out in the street.

Mary (Half-crying): Oh-h-h, your heart's like stone.

Lummox: Like ice.

Mary (Crying): Will nothing, nothing melt it?

Lummox: Something.

Mary: What?

Lummox: You, tootsie.

Mary (Aside): I smelt it.

Landlord:
Come live with me and be my cutie --
I have a penthouse, my proud beauty,
On Fifth Avenoo!

Mary:
Never, never, never, never!
I love my hubby -- I wouldn't sever
Our holy bonds for <u>you</u>!

Lummox:
I have a bathtub made of gold --
The water runs both hot and cold --
I've a garden full of flowers.

Mary:
Take your money -- take your hat --
Get out of here! To talk like that
In a hovel such as ours!

Landlord:
(Leaving)
(Exit Lummox)
I go -- but the rent will be five bucks greater.
If you change your mind, you can see me later.

Mary:
(Muses plaintively)
Ah me, ah me . . . . . a garden in flower . . .
A golden bathtub . . . . . perhaps even a shower . .
(Stamps her foot)
I hate this place -- I'm gonna go!
(Paces back and forth)
I won't! I will! Oh, I don't know!
(Flounces down upon bed with a sob, burying head in arms.)

Cockroach:
(From under the bed)
I say now, woman, cawn't a fellow sleep?
(Comes out)

Mary: (She leaps to top of bed in alarm and draws up her skirts, shrieking)
What a horrible bug -- it makes me creep!
This is too much! Goodbye, my Jack!
Goodbye forever -- I'll never come back!
(Exit Mary at Left)

Cockroach: (Offended)
Did you hear what she called me -- a horrible bug!
(Sits down on bed, buries head in arms)
Such language lays me out like a rug.

(Enter Jack at Right)
Jack:
Wotta day -- I made only a dime.
Now where's Mary?
(Looks around) A fine time for her to go shopping!

Cockroach:
Shopping, my fellow! The woman has jolly well gone for good.

Jack:
And who may you be?

Cockroach:
No reason to bellow, I'm Clarence the Cockroach.

Jack:
Perhaps you would explain?

Cockroach:
She left -- she said "Farewell Jack,
I bloody well don't think I'll ever come back."

Jack:
Never come back? Where did she go?

Cockroach:
I'm just a cockroach - not a mind-reader.

Jack:
I've lost her -- I've driven her from me, I know,
I've chased her away just when I need her.
(Sits down on bed, weeps)

Cockroach:
This atmosphere certainly is very lugubrious,
The dirt in the room is scarcely salubrious,
I'm going back to Oxford.

Jack:
My dear Mr. Cockroach, don't leave me, please.

Cockroach:
I'm used to better rooms than these.

Jack: (Sobbing)
You're the only friend I've left in creation.

Cockroach: Ah yes, but your room has no cross ventilation. I'm going back to Oxford. (Exit Cockroach.)

Jack: (Mournfully) What a worthless fellow I am! Couldn't even afford a decent place for my wife. Can I blame her for leaving me? Not even the cockroach would stay here. What shall I do? (Paces up and down. Stops suddenly, reads headline from one of papers pasted on wall.) What's this? "Deserted Husband Blows His Brains Out!" Just the thing! But what can I blow them out with? I haven't a gun. (Kneels down to read another headline) "Unemployed Man Found Dead in Gas-Filled Room!" Excellent! I'll turn on the gas! (Stops suddenly) But we have no gas . . . How in the world can I kill myself?

(Enter Termite, creeping down ceiling)

Termite: Kill yourself? Dat's my meat. I'll bump ya off fer a flat ten spot.

Jack: (Scarcely aware that he has a visitor) Haven't got a ten spot. (Suddenly realizes that he's been talking to someone---jumps to his feet) Who are you?

Termite: (Throwing out his chest)
I'm Terrible Toughy the Great Termite --
I've eaten half of your floor and your roof,
And if you think you need some proof,
(Sticks his head in Jack's face)
I'll snap you in two in one bite!
What's wrong here?

Jack: My wife left me.

Termite: Aincha got sex appeal?

Jack: What woman would want to live with a fellow in a place like this?

Termite: So dat's it! You know wot ta do 'bout it, doncha?

Jack: What do you mean?

Termite: When a mug gives me da double-cross, I take 'im fer a ride -- fill 'im fulla lead, see? It's da same wit anyt'ing else, catch on?

Jack: (Wondering) Fill this room with lead?

Termite: Wreck it, ya dope -- wreck it! Get even wit it -- tear it down!

Jack: (Excited) Swell! Tear it down! Knock down all the slums! (kicks the bed) Whoopee!

Termite: Lemme do the doity woik, kid. I been plannin' dis fer weeks. (Kicks one foot of the bed. It collapses with a bang) I'm an expoit! (kicks the table. It sails off stage) Now fer da roof! Pull in yer necks!

Jack: (Hopping from one leg to another)
Let 'er go! Rip 'er down!
(Exit Jack running)
Amid cries of Termite and sound of falling walls a sudden

Blackout

Scene 2

Scene: A street corner near Tumbledown Alley. A zig-zag wooden fence. A crooked lamp post.

Time: A few minutes later.

Enter Jack, followed by Termite.

Jack: (Breathless) Whew! Wotta close shave -- it almost fell on my head!

Termite: Dat woodwoik left a bad taste in me mout'. T'ink it wuz a little stale.

Jack: Now that that horrible place has fallen to pieces, my troubles are over.

Termite: All ya need now is a new house.

Jack: I'll get a beautiful new apartment and then Mary will come back to me. Real glass in the windows and no newspaper on the wall and no outhouse and -- (Falters, then moans) Oh, Oh, Oh-h-h!

Termite: Wuzzamatta?

Jack: I just realized it -- I'm worse off than ever before.

Termite: Why?

Jack: Before -- I at least had a bed to sleep in. Now I'll freeze to death in the streets. What shall I do?

Termite: Dat's easy kid. One juicy stick-up will settle all yer worries.

Jack: Stick-up?

Termite: Yeah. Yer not yeller, are ya?

Jack: But I never . . . .

Termite: S'easy. Foist ya bat some mug over da head wit a club. Den ya frisk 'im fer his dough-re-mi.

Jack: (Repeats -- scarcely knowing what he is saying) Bat 'im -- frisk 'im -- dough-re-mi.

Termite: Dat's da stuff, sport. Well, so long. I'm gettin' hungry fer anodder piece uv ceiling.

(Exit Termite at Right)

Jack: (Arguing with himself)
A stick-up? Never. But then ...

(Enter Swede Swenson at left -- big, blonde and gawky.)
Swenson: (Walks slowly across stage humming an inprovised tune interspersed with half-mumbled words such as:) I'm bleedin' . . . an' needin' ... to go speedin' . . . back to Sweden . . .

Jack: (Aside) "Foist I bat 'im on da head" -- this shoe brush will do.
(Jack stalks along in back of Swenson, then swings shoe brush viciously and hits Swenson a loud thump on the head.
Swenson continues to walk along unperturbed.
Jack hits him again. Same result.)
Well-l-l!
Next "I frisk 'im fer his dough-re-mi."
(Jack steps up in front of Swenson, speaks in tough gangster language.)
Where's yer dough-re-mi, sport?

Swenson: If you bane referring to my money -- it be sitting in upper right hand coat pocket.

Jack: Too bad, Swede, I gotta frisk ya.
(Searches Swenson's coat pocket)

Swenson: (Giggling) Yumpin' Yiminy, stop friskin' me. It tickles.

Jack: Stand still or I'll hit ya -- uh, uh -- or I'll be very, very angry.

Swenson: (Giggling) It tickles.
(Jumps back.)
Who you be? Vot you vant?

Jack: (To himself) Didn't work. No use.
(To Swenson -- resigned.) I wanted to steal your money. Are you gonna call the police?

Swenson: For vot you vant my money?

Jack: So I could get a home to live in.

Swenson: Vy you not vork to get money?

Jack: No jobs for bricklayers.

Swenson: So all you tink uff doing is stealing money from me, huh?

Jack: (Ashamed) Yes, I admit it.

Swenson: (Laughs uproariously)
Ho, ho, ho! Dot's a joke!
So funny dot I almost choke!
Tho' my head is hard, I'm not so drumb --
I can teach you a lesson -- and them some!
Gofferment housing is vot you're needin' --
Dot's the vay it's done in Sweden.

Jack: What do you mean?

Swenson: Der gofferment lends der city money to build vot houses you vant.
Den you can vork at laying the bricks.
And earn enough for der rent each mont'.
You can live vit you vife and --

Jack: (Enthralled) Live once more with my own dear wife!
That's my only aim in life --
Say, Swede, that sounds swell!

Swenson: It may be no Eden back in Sweden,
But it vorks out pretty vell.

Jack: (Excited) What shall I do? Tell me quick!

Swenson: Quick, Quick -- vot you t'ink I am?
Who runs this country? You should know.
Speak vit him --

Jack: (Triumphant) With Uncle Sam!

Blackout

ACT THREE

Scene 1

Scene: Near the Capitol in Washington.

In the center of the stage is a large desk. Dressed in his traditional costume, Uncle Sam is sitting with his feet stretched out on top of the desk.

Uncle Sam: (Yawns) Now what'll I do today -- go to the ball game or pitch a few horseshoes?

(Enter Jack, running, breathless.)

Jack: Whew! Thought I'd never get here in time. Is that you, Uncle Sam? Please to meetcha. I --

Uncle Sam: (Drawling)
Pleased to meetcha, Jack Brown.

Jack: (Speaking at rapid-fire pace)
Lissen here, Uncle, there's somethin' terrible going on all over the country with millions of people without decent homes and houses collapsing and wives leaving their husbands and if you lend us a few million smakers we'll be able to build a ---

Uncle Sam: (Removing feet from desk)
Whoa, son -- I know all about it.

Jack: (Belligerent)
Then why did'ncha do something?

Uncle Sam: I was waitin' for you to come to me, son.

Jack: I've come, Uncle. Can we get going now?

(Enter Lummox at Left.)

Uncle Sam: Soon's we find out what the rest of the country thinks.

Lummox: (Waiving his fist frantically)
Rest of the country? That's me! I'm against your lendin' this money!

Jack: (To himself) This will be really funny.

Uncle Sam: Why?

Lummox: Why? Ho, ho! (Stops to think Uh -- don't you see there's enough good homes in every town? More than enough to go around.

Jack: (Sarcastically) Oh, yes there's plenty of homes -- There's just too many people.

Lummox: The plan is feeble -- It don't make sense -- If you build more homes it will --

Jack: Lower the rents! Wouldn't that be awful?

Uncle Sam: (To Lummox) Millions of people are living in slums.

Jack: Uncle, you said a jawful.

Lummox: Take it from me -- they're worse than bums -- They positively love the dirt!

Jack: (Angrily) You can't talk that way 'bout me -- Take it back or you'll get hurt!

(Advances threateningly upon Lummox, who retires behind Uncle Sam for protection) Love the dirt! Is that the reason my wife ran away?

Lummox: (Aside) If he only knew!

(Aloud) She must have found a gent more pleasin' to her than you!

(With the last word -- "you" -- Jack and Lummox almost come to blows. Uncle Sam steps in to separate them and sends them sprawling in opposite directions.)

Uncle Sam: If you don't stop actin' like rowdies, I'll beat you both up. Stick to government housing.

Jack: I want it.

Lummox: I don't.

Uncle Sam: What two people want's unimportant -- My job is pleasin' the millions.

Jack: O.K., Uncle -- low-rent housing
Is wanted by billions and trillions.

Lummox: Prove it.

Uncle Sam: Yes, prove it. I come from Missouri.

Jack: Right.
(Faces audience and makes an impassioned plea)
Factory workers, farmers, miners,
Storekeepers, teachers and shoe-shiners,
Raise your voices in fury.
All who hate to live in dumps.
Who hate to pay high rent,
Tell Uncle Sam that you want homes
Built with the aid of the Government!

Lummox: Nobody answers -- hi-di-ho!
And if they did, they'd all say "No!"

Uncle Sam: Nobody answers, Jack. He's right.

Jack: I'll wait for an answer if it takes all night.

Lummox: I'll speak for the millions -- I own three banks.
Waste of taxes -- waste of dough --
Nobody wants it -- you'll get no thanks.
Leave housing to me -- I'll build row after row!

Jack: You're all wet! I --

Uncle Sam: No more speeches.
I've made up my mind.

Jack: Say "Yes."

Lummox: Say "No."

Uncle Sam: (Flatly) The people don't want it. Thumbs down. No go!

Lummox: (Dancing in glee)
Hotsy-totsy, hooray and wow!

Jack: (Tearfully) I'll never get my wife back now.

Enter Telegram, huge and husky-voiced.
Telegram: (At top of voice)
Telegram for Uncle Sam! Telegram for Uncle Sam!

Uncle Sam: That's me. What's on your chest?

Lummox: (Fearfully) What can this mean?

Telegram: (Leaps to top of Uncle Sam's desk and declaims dramatically)
We know what we want -- we're of one mind --
We want decent homes -- no more debates!
Build us low-rent houses! Signed --
"We the People of the United States!"

Jack: (To Uncle Sam -- triumphantly)
That settles it -- you have no choice!

Uncle Sam: The people have spoken -- my master's voice.
(To Telegram)
Telegram, take this proclamation
To every city and town in the nation

Jack: And to my wife!

Uncle Sam: Tell them I will lend them the dough
To build thousands of houses renting low

Jack: And a better life!

Lummox: (Aside) Foiled! heh, heh, but I'll get him yet.
When I'm done with his Mary, he'll regret
That he was ever born.

Telegram: I'm going, Uncle.

Uncle Sam & Jack: (Alternately -- to Telegram)
Get the bricks --
Get the shovels -- get the sticks --
We start tomorrow morn!

Blackout

Scene 2

Time: A few weeks later.

As the curtain rises we see the framework of a new house at the left. Although only a section of the construction can be seen, part of the brick wall is already built. The section running from right to left is quite low. The adjoining wall is quite high.

Jack, with a mason's trowel in his left hand, is kneeling at the lower wall — laying bricks.

Uncle Sam is sitting on the wall beside him.

Uncle Sam: (Jocularly) How does it feel to be working once more?

Jack: (Dully) What? Oh yeah . . .

Uncle Sam: You should feel victorious —,
But something, it seems, is making you sore.

Jack: (Bitterly) Me? Sore? (More bitterly) Why, I feel glorious —
Perfectly, perfectly, perfectly glorious.

Uncle Sam: In a few more weeks these homes will be done.
You should be walking on air.
Then you'll be able to live in one —

Jack: (Harshly) Humph, what do I care?

Uncle Sam: They'll all be healthy, attractive and airy.

Jack: A trash heap is better — without my Mary.

Uncle Sam: So that's it.

Jack: I've searched the entire town —
I've followed each clue wherever it led
But haven't seen head or hair of my darling —
Oh-h, I wish I were dead.

Uncle Sam: Buck up, Jack — let's join the bunch.
It's after twelve — you're late for lunch.

(Exist Uncle Sam at Left. Jack straggles after him silently.)

(Enter Lummox at Right, followed by Mary.)

Mary: (Staggering) My fever's mounting — take me back.

Lummox: I hope you freeze.

Mary: (Unable to stand, drops to her knees)
Oh-h, have pity please.

Lummox: Revenge at last upon your Jack!

Mary: (Prone on the ground, she extends her hand pleadingly)
Just one crust of bread and butter.

Lummox: (Exultant) I hope you starve to death in the gutter!
(Exist Lummox at Right).

Mary: Ah me, no place to rest my head —
Goodbye, cruel wurrld! Now I'm paying
For leaving Jack. I'll soon be dead.
(Sound of soft music.)
Is that the angels' harps a-playing?
(Enter Angel at Left — a pink and white cherub with a harp in one hand and a halo for Mary in the other. Angel slowly descends toward Mary.)
I'm dying now — what do I see?
An angel coming down for me.

Angel: (Hovering over Mary)
Peace upon your soul, my dear.
(Mary dies.)
Her sands are run — she feels like ice.
(The Angel holds Mary's halo over her head and together they rise slowly toward Heaven.)
St. Peter's waiting — have no fear —
We're going up to Paradise.

(Enter Jack at Left.)

Jack: (To himself) S'no use — I cannot even eat.
(Suddenly he sees Mary soaring her way up to Heaven.)
What's this? My Mary? Oh, my sweet,
Don't dare to die — come back, I pray.
(Mary continues on her trip skyward.)
Will nothing stop her?
(Suddenly gets an idea, jumps up to lower wall.)
I know the way.
I'll make the angel drop her.
(Jumps to top of the higher wall, reaches over to Mary, who is just soaring past, and pulls her toward him.)
Let her go — this gal's my wife!

Angel: She breathes — she's coming —

Jack: Back to life!

Mary: (On wall beside Jack) Where am I? Who is this?

Jack: It's me!

Mary: I can't believe it —

Jack: Here I be!

Mary: Can you still love me?

Jack: There's no one sweeter.
Than you on earth or heaven.

Angel: (Soaring higher) What in the world shall I tell St. Peter?

Jack: (To angel) Beat it! I'll give you just seven
To go — we want to be alone!

(Exit Angel.

Enter Lummox at Right.)

Lummox: (Looking for Mary) What fun t'will be to hear her moan
Again!

Mary: (Sighting Lummox, shrieks) Oh, husband, there's the brute — he
Did this to me!

Jack: (Jumping down from wall) Watch me do my duty!
Angel, come back — here's another load.
Lummox, say your prayers — you toad!
(Lummox tries to run away, but Jack catches him and hurls him skrieking against wall. Lummox tries to crawl out on hands and knees. Jack hurls him against wall again.)
Angel, stop loafing up there in the sky!

(Enter Devil, dressed in scarlet, pitchfork in hands.)

Devil: (Saturninely) Oh, no! To take care of <u>him</u> — I'm the guy!

(Devil chases the screaming Lummox offstage at the point of his pitchfork.)

Jack: (Ascending wall and leading Mary down)
Come, my darling — no more hovels —
I'm working now with bricks and shovels.

Mary: How did it happen?

Jack: Thanks to me —
Uncle Sam decided to give
A loan to the city to build new homes

Mary: And when they're done, is this where we'll live?

Jack: Yes, my honey, and rent will be low.

Mary: Are you sure there'll be no broken window?

Jack: Not even an outhouse.

Mary: A garden in flower?

Jack: My darling, the house will have even a shower.

Both: (Recitative) Love laughs at slums
When better housing comes —

Mary: Oh, this is nicer than Heaven!

Both: We'll even have some kiddies —
Some cute and dimpled kiddies —

Jack: We'll have rooms enough for eleven!

Mary: (Recitative — facing the audience)
Oh, I never could possibly resist you -

Jack: And I wouldn't want you to resist
Cause I'm in the mood to kiss you —

Mary: And I'm in the mood to be kissed!

(They embrace.)

Curtain.