

thirteen bodies in the cellar got around? And now he's starting a Yellow Fever scare. Cute, ain't it?

MORTIMER. (*Greatly relieved, with an embarrassed laugh.*) Thirteen bodies. Do you think anybody would believe that story?

ROONEY. Well, you can't tell. Some people are just dumb enough. You don't know what to believe sometimes. About a year ago a crazy guy starts a murder rumor over in Greenpoint, and I had to dig up a half acre lot, just to prove that—

(*There is a knock on R. door.*)

MORTIMER. Will you excuse me? (*He goes to door and admits Elaine and Mr. Witherspoon, an elderly, tight-lipped disciplinarian. He is carrying a briefcase.*)

ELAINE. (*Briskly.*) Good morning, Mortimer.

MORTIMER. (*Not knowing what to expect.*) Good morning, dear.

ELAINE. This is Mr. Witherspoon. He's come to meet Teddy.

MORTIMER. To meet Teddy?

ELAINE. Mr. Witherspoon's the superintendent of Happy Dale.

MORTIMER. (*Eagerly.*) Oh, come right in. (*They shake hands. Mortimer indicates Rooney.*) This is Captain—

ROONEY. Lieutenant Rooney. I'm glad you're here, Super, because you're taking him back with you today!

WITHERSPOON. Today? I didn't know that—

ELAINE. (*Cutting in.*) Not today!

MORTIMER. Look, Elaine, I've got a lot of business to attend to, so you run along home and I'll call you up.

ELAINE. Nuts! (*She crosses to window seat and sits.*)

WITHERSPOON. I had no idea it was this immediate.

ROONEY. The papers are all signed, he goes today!

(*Teddy backs into room from kitchen, speaking sharply in the direction whence he's come.*)

TEDDY. Complete insubordination! You men will find out I'm no mollycoddle. (*He slams door and comes down to below table.*) When the President of the United States is treated like that—what's this country coming to?

ROONEY. There's your man, Super.

MORTIMER. Just a minute! (*He crosses to Teddy and speaks to him*

*as to a child.*) Mr. President, I have very good news for you. Your term of office is over.

TEDDY. Is this March the Fourth?

MORTIMER. Practically.

TEDDY. (*Thinking.*) Let's see—OH!—Now I go on my hunting trip to Africa! Well, I must get started immediately. (*He starts across the room and almost bumps into Witherspoon at c. He looks at him then steps back to Mortimer.*) Is he trying to move into the White House before I've moved out?

MORTIMER. Who, Teddy?

TEDDY. (*Indicating Witherspoon.*) Taft!

MORTIMER. This isn't Mr. Taft, Teddy. This is Mr. Witherspoon—he's to be your guide in Africa.

TEDDY. (*Shakes hands with Witherspoon enthusiastically.*) Bully! Bully! I'll bring down my equipment. (*He crosses to stairs. Martha and Abby have entered on balcony during last speech and are coming downstairs.*) When the safari comes, tell them to wait. (*As he passes the aunts on his way to landing, he shakes hands with each, without stopping his walk.*) Goodbye, Aunt Abby. Goodbye, Aunt Martha. I'm on my way to Africa—isn't it wonderful? (*He has reached the landing.*) CHARGE! (*He charges up the stairs and off.*)

(*The aunts are at foot of stairs.*)

MORTIMER. (*Crossing to aunts.*) Good morning, darlings.

MARTHA. Oh, we have visitors.

MORTIMER. (*He indicates Rooney at c.*) This is Lieutenant Rooney.

ABBY. (*Crossing, shakes hands with him.*) How do you do, Lieutenant? My, you don't look like the fussbudget the policemen say you are.

MORTIMER. Why the Lieutenant is here—You know, Teddy blew his bugle again last night.

MARTHA. Yes, we're going to speak to Teddy about that.

ROONEY. It's a little more serious than that, Miss Brewster.

MORTIMER. (*Easing aunts to Witherspoon who is above table where he has opened his briefcase and extracted some papers.*) And you haven't met Mr. Witherspoon. He's the Superintendent of Happy Dale.

ABBY. Oh, Mr. Witherspoon—how do you do?

MARTHA. You've come to meet Teddy.

ROONEY. (*Somewhat harshly.*) He's come to *take* him.