

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT INAUGURATED TOMORROW

A sketch from *As Thousand Cheers*

Sketches by Moss Hart • Lyrics & musics by Irving Berlin

Scene: The curtains part to disclose the famous “Oval Room” of the White House, which Mr. and Mrs. Hoover use as a sitting room to their bedroom. Thru the large window at the back can be seen the tall obelisk of the Washington Monument and a little to the side is a glimpse of the Senate Buildings.

It is late in the evening of March 3, 1933 and the last night Mr. and Mrs. Hoover will call the White House “home.” There are visible signs of their leave-taking tomorrow. Two large open trunks stand almost direct center and a number of wooden crates and cartons help give the room the unmistakable atmosphere of a house about to see the last of its present occupants. On one of the large wooden crates downstage is painted in large black letters:

TO HERBERT HOOVER

PALO ALTO

CALIFORNIA

The stage is deserted for a few seconds after the curtain rises—then we hear MR. HOOVER’S voice off-stage:

MR. HOOVER (*off stage*): Lou! Oh Lou! Where do you want this, Lou?

MRS. HOOVER (*enters*): Bring it in here, Herbie.

MR. HOOVER (*enters with pedestal*): What do you want to lug that thing along for, Lou? It’ll cost more than it’s worth to ship it to California.

MRS. HOOVER: Never mind! I’m not going to leave anything for those Roosevelts, I can tell you that. Did you bring that electric toaster up from the kitchen, Herbie?

MR. HOOVER: No!

MRS. HOOVER: Well, go down and get it. I’d like to see myself leaving ’em a perfectly good electric toaster. Like fun.

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MR. HOOVER: All right.

MRS. HOOVER: Oh Herbie. Better take your fruit salts while you're downstairs, Herbie. You know what a long train ride does to you.

MR. HOOVER: All right.

FRANK (*enters*): In here, Mrs. Hoover?

MRS. HOOVER: Yes, Frank. Thank you.

MR. HOOVER: What's that? What's that piece of wire?

MRS. HOOVER: That's the aerial.

MR. HOOVER: Now for goodness sake, you're not going to take the aerial. Now Lou, you go put that back.

MRS. HOOVER: Put it back. I nearly broke my neck taking it down. Thank you, Frank.

(FRANK *exits*.)

MR. HOOVER: What's that?

MRS. HOOVER: This is nothing, Herbie—nothing at all. Just a little souvenir for my room at home.

MR. HOOVER: Let me see it.

MRS. HOOVER: But it's nothing, Herbie.

MR. HOOVER: Then let me see it. (*It is a portrait of George Washington*.)

MR. HOOVER: Now Lou, you go right down and put that back. You can't take that. It's very valuable. It's Government property. You want to be stopped at the train?

MRS. HOOVER: Herbie, they'll never miss it. This house is lousy with pictures of George Washington.

MR. HOOVER: I don't care. You go put that back. Why those Democrats are liable to pick on a thing like that and cause a whole Senate investigation.

MRS. HOOVER: All right, I'll put it back. We'll just go back to Palo Alto with nothing at all to show for your having been President of the United States.

MR. HOOVER: Nobody else in the country has got anything to show for it either.

MRS. HOOVER: That's right. Wise-cracking is going to help us a lot.

MR. HOOVER: Now Lou, things might have been a lot worse. Suppose I'd been re-elected.

MRS. HOOVER: You know what Palo Alto is. It's going to be very nice, isn't it, for me to go to bridge parties and luncheons

and have all my old girl friends saying "Herbie get anything to do yet, Lou? Well, don't worry. Something'll turn up sooner or later." I can just hear 'em.

MR. HOOVER: I've still got my Civil Engineer's License, don't forget that.

MRS. HOOVER: Oh, sure! Now you remember it, after fiddling away a whole four years. I hate to say I told you so, Herbie—but you can't say I didn't warn you.

MR. HOOVER: But it seemed like such a good idea at the time—being President.

MRS. HOOVER: Not to me it didn't. We were doing so well too. Everything was going along beautifully for us. Then you had to go and become President. Herbie, there's a streak in you that makes you do the most simple-minded things sometimes. Had to become President. Couldn't let well enough alone.

MR. HOOVER: Well all I can say is, when as smart a man as Ogden Mills comes to you and says that—

MRS. HOOVER: Ogden Mills! Don't talk to *me* about Ogden Mills! If Ogden Mills was so smart he'd have a job now instead of sitting around writing letters to the *Times* and signing himself "Friend of the American Indian."

MR. HOOVER: Well he is.

MRS. HOOVER: When you came home that night and told me the Republican Party wanted you, I told you what to tell 'em, didn't I?

MR. HOOVER: Oh Lou, I couldn't tell 'em that.

MRS. HOOVER: And all those other Palo Alto boys have done so well for themselves—every one of them. They were all crazy about me too. You know the chances I had. Why even Eddie Harris—I laughed at him when he proposed—he owns the largest knit-goods factory in Southern California now.

MR. HOOVER: He wouldn't have made any better President than I did.

MRS. HOOVER: I didn't say he would. All I say is, here we are going back to Palo Alto after all these years and what have we got to show for it? A medicine ball, a couple of dozen silver spoons. Yes I took the spoons and I'd like to see the Army and the Navy make me put 'em back. A couple of dozen silver

spoons and some campaign posters you can't hang up any way. That's what we've got.

MR. HOOVER: Why can't you hang 'em up?

MRS. HOOVER: Do you want to look at Charlie Curtis?

MR. HOOVER: No.

MRS. HOOVER: That reminds me. (*At phone.*)

Get me Mrs. Dolly Gann, please.

MR. HOOVER: What are you going to do?

MRS. HOOVER: This is something I've wanted to do for a long time. Hello, Dolly? This is Lou Hoover. For four years, Dolly, you've been upsetting my dinner parties and getting in everybody's hair. How would you like to take a running jump in the lake. I may call up Andrew Mellon and Henry Stimson later. (*Hangs up.*) I may go through the whole gang of 'em. If you were half a man you'd call up Mellon and Stimson yourself and tell 'em what you think of them. God knows, you've belly ached to me long enough about 'em.

MR. HOOVER: Oh Lou, I couldn't do that.

MRS. HOOVER: What have you got to lose? You're never coming back here.

MR. HOOVER: For two cents I'd do it.

MRS. HOOVER: I dare you. I doubly dare you.

MR. HOOVER: I will. (*At phone.*)

Get me Mr. Mellon. Oh boy, oh boy, oh boy.

MRS. HOOVER: Give it to him good.

MR. HOOVER: Hello. I want to talk to Mr. Andrew Mellon. Mr. Hoover calling. Hoover, *Hoover!* H—as in Harry—O—as in Oboe—yes Hoover.

MRS. HOOVER: By the time we get to the coast we'll be lucky if the servants and the dogs know us.

MR. HOOVER: Hello Andy? This is Herbie? Greatest Secretary of the Treasury since Alexander Hamilton, eh? Well how would you like to meet me in Macy's Window.

MRS. HOOVER (*into phone*): And bring Ogden Mills along.

MR. HOOVER: Ambassador to the court of St. James, eh? You know what you looked like in those knee-breeches? Like an old ostrich!

MRS. HOOVER (*into phone*): Yah—you old ostrich!

MR. HOOVER: Go back to Pittsburgh and wipe the soup off your moustache! (*Hangs up.*)

MRS. HOOVER: Doesn't that make you feel good?

MR. HOOVER: Like a new man. What time do they disconnect the telephone, Lou?

MRS. HOOVER: In about half an hour.

MR. HOOVER: We gotta work fast. Who's next?

MRS. HOOVER: Henry Stimson.

MR. HOOVER: We'll both call him.

MRS. HOOVER: All right. I've got a few words I want to say to his wife. (*At phone.*)

Get me Henry Stimson please. Herbie— (*Whispers to HOOVER.*)

MR. HOOVER: You're an angel, Lou.

MRS. HOOVER: Hello, Henry? This is Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Hoover. Is Mrs. Stimson there? No, don't you go away. Put Mrs. Stimson on the extension. We want to talk to both of you. Are you on, Mrs. Stimson? Just a moment. Are you there, Henry? That's fine. (*To HOOVER.*) One, two, three. (*Bronx cheer.*)

(*Business.*)

MR. HOOVER (*singing*):

Tony's wife, the boys are all wild about you,
Tony's wife—

MRS. HOOVER (*singing*):

Fit as a fiddle and ready for love.

(*Both tossing medicine ball.*)

MRS. HOOVER: Herbie!

MR. HOOVER: Yes, Lou.

MRS. HOOVER: The Roosevelts?

(*They both dash for the phone.*)