
3RD OPERATOR. Your call, please?

MRS. STEVENSON (*very annoyed and impertious*). Hello. Operator. I don't know what's the matter with this telephone tonight, but it's positively driving me crazy. I've never seen such inefficient, miserable service. Now, look. I'm an invalid, and I'm very nervous, and I'm *not* supposed to be annoyed. But if this keeps on much longer . . .

3RD OPERATOR (*a young sweet type*). What seems to be the trouble, madam?

MRS. STEVENSON. Well—everything's wrong. The whole world could be murdered, for all you people care. And now—my phone keeps ringing. . . .

OPERATOR. Yes, madam?

MRS. STEVENSON. Ringing and ringing and ringing every five seconds or so, and when I pick it up, there's no one there.

OPERATOR. I am sorry, madam. If you will hang up, I will test it for you.

MRS. STEVENSON. I don't want you to test it for me. I want you to put through that call—whatever it is—at once.

OPERATOR (*gently*). I am afraid that is not possible, madam.

MRS. STEVENSON (*storming*). Not possible? And why—may I ask?

OPERATOR. The system is automatic, madam. If someone is trying to dial your number, there is no way to check whether the call is coming through the system or not—unless the person who is trying to reach you complains to his particular operator—

MRS. STEVENSON. Well, of all the stupid, complicated . . . ! And meanwhile I've got to sit here in my bed, *suffering* every time that phone rings—imagining everything. . . .

OPERATOR. I will try to check it for you, madam.

MRS. STEVENSON. Check it! Check it! That's all anybody can do. Of all the stupid, idiotic . . . ! (*She hangs up*). Oh—what's the use . . . (SCENE: 3RD OPERATOR *fades out of spotlight, as*) (*Instantly MRS. STEVENSON'S phone rings again. She picks up receiver. Wildly*). Hello. HELLO. Stop ringing, do you hear me? Answer me? What do you want? Do you realize you're driving me crazy? (SCENE: *Spotlight goes on R. We see a MAN in eye-shade and shirt-sleeves, at desk with phone and telegrams*). Stark, staring . . .

MAN (*dull flat voice*). Hello. Is this Plaza 4-2295?

MRS. STEVENSON (*catching her breath*). Yes. Yes. This is Plaza 4-2295.

WESTERN UNION. This is Western Union. I have a telegram here for Mrs. Elbert Stevenson. Is there anyone there to receive the message?

MRS. STEVENSON (*trying to calm herself*). I am Mrs. Stevenson.

WESTERN UNION (*reading flatly*). The telegram is as follows: "Mrs. Elbert Stevenson, 53 North Sutton Place, New York, New York. Darling. Terribly sorry. Tried to get you for last hour, but line busy. Leaving for

Boston eleven p. m. tonight on urgent business. Back tomorrow afternoon. Keep happy. Love. Signed. Elbert."

MRS. STEVENSON (*breathlessly, aghast, to herself*). Oh . . .
no . . .

WESTERN UNION. That is all, madam. Do you wish us to deliver a copy of the message?

MRS. STEVENSON. No—no, thank you.

WESTERN UNION. Thank you, madam. Good night. (*He hangs up phone.*) (SCENE: *Spotlight on WESTERN UNION immediately out.*)

MRS. STEVENSON (*mechanically, to phone*). Good night. (*She hangs up slowly. Suddenly bursting into*). No—no—it isn't true! He couldn't do it! Not when he knows I'll be all alone. It's some trick—some fiendish . . . (SCENE: *We hear sound of train roaring by outside. She half rises in bed, in panic, glaring toward curtains. Her movements are frenzied. She beats with her knuckles on bed, then suddenly stops, and reaches for phone.*) (*She dials operator*). (SCENE: *Spotlight picks up 4TH OPERATOR, seated L.*)

OPERATOR (*coolly*). Your call, please?

MRS. STEVENSON. Operator—try that Murray Hill 4-0098 number for me just once more, please.

OPERATOR. Ringing Murray Hill 4-0098. (*Call goes through. We hear ringing at other end. Ring after ring.*) (SCENE: *If telephone noises are not used audibly, have OPERATOR say after a brief pause: "They do not answer."*)

MRS. STEVENSON. He's gone. Oh—Elbert, how could you? How could you . . . ? (*She hangs up phone, sobbing pitiingly to herself, turning restlessly*). (SCENE: *Spotlight goes out on 4TH OPERATOR*). But I can't be alone tonight. I can't. If I'm alone one more second . . . (SCENE: *She runs hands wildly through hair*). I don't care what he says—or what the expense is—I'm a sick woman—I'm entitled . . . (SCENE: *With trembling fin-*

gers she picks up receiver again). (*She dials INFORMATION*). (*SCENE: The spotlight picks up INFORMATION OPERATOR, seated R.*)

INFORMATION. This is Information.

MRS. STEVENSON. I want the telephone number of Henschley Hospital.

INFORMATION. Henschley Hospital? Do you have the address, madam?

MRS. STEVENSON. No. It's somewhere in the 70's, though. It's a very small, private and exclusive hospital where I had my appendix out two years ago. Henschley. H-E-N-C—

INFORMATION. One moment, please.

MRS. STEVENSON. Please—hurry. And please—what is the time?

INFORMATION. I do not know, madam. You may find out the time by dialling Meridan 7-1212.

MRS. STEVENSON (*irritated*). Oh—for Heaven's sake! Couldn't you—?

INFORMATION. The number of Henschley Hospital is Butterfield 7-0105, madam.

MRS. STEVENSON. Butterfield 7-0105. (*She hangs up before she finishes speaking, and immediately dials number as she repeats it*). (*SCENE: Spotlight goes out on INFORMATION*). (*Phone rings*). (*SCENE: Spotlight picks up WOMAN in nurse's uniform, seated at desk, L.*)

WOMAN (*middle-aged, solid, firm, practical*). Henschley Hospital, good evening.

MRS. STEVENSON. Nurses' Registry.

WOMAN. Who was it you wished to speak to, please?

MRS. STEVENSON (*high-handed*). I want the Nurses' Registry at once. I want a trained nurse. I want to hire her immediately. For the night.

WOMAN. I see. And what is the nature of the case, madam?

MRS. STEVENSON. Nerves. I'm very nervous. I need sooth-

ing—and companionship. My husband is away—and I'm—

WOMAN. Have you been recommended to us by any doctor in particular, madam?

MRS. STEVENSON. No. But I really don't see why all this catechizing is necessary. I want a trained nurse. I was a patient in your hospital two years ago. And after all, I *do* expect to *pay* this person—

WOMAN. We quite understand that, madam. But registered nurses are very scarce just now—and our superintendent has asked us to send people out only on cases where the physician in charge feels it is absolutely necessary.

MRS. STEVENSON (*growing hysterical*). Well—it is absolutely necessary. I'm a sick woman. I—I'm very upset. Very. I'm alone in this house—and I'm an invalid—and tonight I overheard a telephone conversation that upset me dreadfully. About a murder—a poor woman who was going to be murdered at eleven-fifteen tonight—in fact, if someone doesn't come at once—I'm afraid I'll go out of my mind. . . . (*Almost off handle by now.*)

WOMAN (*calmly*). I see. Well—I'll speak to Miss Phillips as soon as she comes in. And what is your name, madam?

MRS. STEVENSON. Miss Phillips. And when do you expect her in?

WOMAN. I really don't know, madam. She went out to supper at eleven o'clock.

MRS. STEVENSON. Eleven o'clock. But it's not eleven yet. (*She cries out*). Oh, my clock *has* stopped. I thought it was running down. What time is it? (*SCENE: WOMAN glances at wristwatch.*)

WOMAN. Just fourteen minutes past eleven. . . . (*Sound of phone receiver being lifted on same line as MRS. STEVENSON'S. A click.*)

MRS. STEVENSON (*crying out*). What's *that*?