

FIRST DATE

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 MALES; 2 FEMALES)

PETER GILLESPIE—About forty-five
ANN GILLESPIE—About forty, wife of Peter
LOUISE GILLESPIE—Seventeen, daughter of Peter
JIMMY MORELLI—Eighteen, good-looking athlete

SCENE: A living room.

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DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

PETER GILLESPIE: About 45 years old, slightly paunchy, hair graying. Wears wrinkled white shirt and baggy gray pants at beginning but changes to fresh shirt and tie and neatly pressed pants during play.

ANN GILLESPIE: Peter's wife, about forty, plump, neat and clean looking, dignified but pleasant. Wears conservative evening dress, pearls and bracelet.

LOUISE GILLESPIE: Seventeen, pert and lively, pretty but not flashy. Wears bright evening dress, buttons at back.

JIMMY MORELLI: Eighteen, tall, dark-haired, athletic. Wears fashionable though cheap clothes.

First Date

Time: Evening in spring of the present.

Scene is laid in the living room of the Gillespie family, with furnishings of a middle class home. Door Right is entrance to home, door back Center is exit to bedrooms and door Left is exit to kitchen.

At Curtain, PETER GILLESPIE is seated Left Center in an easy chair reading a newspaper. ANN looks in from arch Left. She is wearing an apron and drying a dish.

ANN. Peter, you'd better put on a tie and tidy yourself up a bit. Louise's young man will be here soon and you don't want to look sloppy.

PETER. What's the matter with the way I look now? ANN. I don't have to tell you—you're just being stubborn and I definitely do not feel like arguing with you tonight.

PETER. OK, OK, but when I was single and calling at a girl's home, I thought I was supposed to make the impression, not the girl's family.

ANN. And didn't you notice whether they were neat or not?

PETER. I was too nervous.

ANN. And after you got over being nervous?

PETER. I—well—I got interested in another girl and went to her home and got nervous all over again.

ANN. Oh, you! I can never out-argue you.

PETER. But you still win every argument.

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ANN. (Firmly) Don't argue with me any more—go right upstairs and make yourself presentable.

(PETER mumbles.)

What did you say?

PETER. I said a man can't rest in his own home. I work all day in the butcher shop trying to wring out a living from a cruel world and when I get home all tired out from the battle, expecting to be treated with a little respect and love, hoping only for some peace and quiet while I lick my wounds and recover my strength for the next day's fight, I find I have to dress up for some fool kid that's going to take out my daughter on her first date. No wonder the saloons are doing such a good business. A man is driven there for some relaxation.

ANN. You talk as though we were asking you to put on a full dress suit when all we want you to do is put on a fresh shirt and a tie. Please, Peter, don't make such a big fuss over nothing at all. It won't hurt you to dress up once in a while. You never dress for work. And on Sundays as soon as you're back from church your coat and tie are off and you're slouched in that chair reading. (Sighing) You look so handsome dressed up, too.

PETER. (Gratingly) Alright, alright, just to keep peace in the family I'll dress like a dude and make Louise's boy-friend think I'm someone I am not. (PETER leaves Center to bedroom.)

(ANN straightens out the room a little. LOUISE, sweet, saucy and seventeen, enters from Center door.)

LOUISE. Mother, will you please button me up?

ANN. Of course, darling. You look very pretty tonight.

LOUISE. Thanks, Mom. Do you think Jimmy will like this dress?

ANN. I should hope so, if he has any taste at all.

LOUISE. Well, don't you think he had taste when he chose me for his date? This is a very important dance, you know.

ANN. He proved he had the best of taste when he picked you.

LOUISE. Mother, I believe you are prejudiced.

ANN. Why, Louise, what makes you say that?

LOUISE. Just a hunch. Mother, wait'll you see him. He's awfully good-looking, a lot like Gregory Peck. Made All-Scholastic in football, too.

ANN. I bet the girls from his school are jealous of you. He bypassed all of them to ask my daughter.

LOUISE. Oh, I do hope I don't pull any boners! I want to be suave and sophisticated like—like Elizabeth Taylor. But I'm all trembly inside and feel weak at the thought of walking into that dance with him and hardly knowing anyone there.

PETER. (PETER walks in as she is talking. He has changed shirt and tie.) How did you meet this fellow, by the way?

ANN. Louise told me all about it, Peter. She met him at the Sugar Bowl. He's Rosa Morelli's cousin and Rosa introduced Jimmy to Louise. It was all quite proper.

PETER. I didn't say it wasn't. Just wanted to know. But why did he pick on Louise? (He sits on arm of his easy chair Left Center.)

ANN. You should be proud to have your daughter affect someone that way, especially someone as popular as he is.

PETER. I don't mean it that way. If he's so popular, he could have his pick of a dozen girls. Why should he ask someone he hardly knew from a different school?

ANN. Take a good look at your daughter and you'll see.

(ANN turns LOUISE towards PETER. He stands up, astonished.)

PETER. Wow! Lipstick and high heels and a permanent! What a difference! Is this my daughter? (He embraces her.)

LOUISE. How do I look, Dad?

(She turns around slowly to show her young adorned beauty as he sits slowly into his chair, his eyes on her.)

PETER. (Sadly) It seems like only yesterday we were married, and look at this! My baby is grown up already. Only a little while ago I was happy to see her take her first step, only a little while ago she tried to catch Santa Claus coming down the chimney on Christmas—and now look at her!

LOUISE. (LOUISE goes over to PETER, sits on arm of chair and puts her arm around him.) Dad—when I marry, I don't want Van Johnson or Clark Gable or Alan Ladd. I want someone like you.

PETER. Thank you, sweetheart. Is this fellow Jimmy like me?

LOUISE. No, he's tall and handsome and has dark curly hair. He's nice.

PETER. (Lightly smiling at her unintended arrow) Oh. (Pauses.) Is he a gentleman?

LOUISE. (Not hearing his question) All the girls are crazy to go out with him, so you can imagine what a thrill it was to have him ask me.

PETER. (Shakes his head, worrying) Ann, you better talk to this girl. She's giddy. Louise, I don't know whether or not you ought to go with him. Why did he pick on you? (Stands suddenly.) Come to think of it, maybe none of the girls that know him would go out with him. (Very worried.) Talk to the girl, Ann. Don't you let him get fresh with you, Louise.

ANN. Now Peter, don't get silly. He wants to take our daughter to the dance because she's desirable.

PETER. That's what I'm afraid of, dammit.

ANN. (Patient, as with a child) You don't understand me. I mean because he'll be proud to be seen with her, because she's pretty and because she is nice company.

PETER. You'd better talk to her anyway. I'm going to

fix myself a drink. Louise, you mind what your mother tells you.

Louise. (*On brink of tears*) Dad, you still think I'm a little child.

Peter. Not at all. I just noticed you aren't. (*Exit Left, agitated.*)

Louise. What's Dad getting so excited about? He's getting me all upset and I'm trying to be calm and collected for the date.

ANN. (*Soothingly*) Don't mind Father, Louise. He's only thinking of you and doesn't know how to say it right.

Louise. He certainly said nothing I could understand.

ANN. (*Trying*) It's—I—it's a hard thing. I mean you just can't—I mean—well—

Louise. (*Sharply*) Mother, don't you go upsetting me, too.

ANN. I'm sorry, dear. What your father was trying to say was that you're pretty and if Jimmy is not a gentleman he might be tempted to get fresh and take, or rather try to take liberties with you, because I'm sure you would tolerate nothing of the sort. We've tried our best to bring you up right and the sisters at St. Johns have taught you what's right and wrong and from now on you have to apply what you were taught in regards to social conduct. A good girl does not allow herself to get into places or with people leading into temptation. I want you to have a good time and enjoy yourself, darling, but you can do that without resorting to necking or that sort of thing.

Louise. Mother, I do believe you're as old-fashioned as Father.

ANN. Louise!

Louise. (*Teasing*) What's wrong with a kiss?

ANN. Louise! I hope you don't make a practice of kissing every Tom, Dick and Harry!

Louise. (*Still teasing*) Of course not, Mother. I'm fussy whom I kiss.

ANN. Louise, you shock me!

Louise. (*Seriously*) Don't you want me to kiss anyone? Is it a sin to let a boy kiss you?

ANN. It isn't that it's a sin to let a boy kiss you, but one kiss leads to another and then another and in the long run there is the temptation to go further as kisses lose their novelty.

Louise. (*Annoyed*) In other words, I might as well be a nun and go live in a cloister.

ANN. I don't mean that and you know it. I'm sure you're a perfect lady and I have all the confidence in the world in your good judgment, but I'm trying to impress you with the fact that you cannot be too careful. If you don't play with fire you don't get burned. That's why your father is worried—for your sake. I know all these things from experience.

Louise. (*Pretending to be shocked*) Oh, Mother!

ANN. Don't get fresh, now. Pay attention.

Louise. Have no fears, Mother. Ten minutes after I die people will start a petition to have me canonized.

ANN. I'm sure they will. Now you go upstairs and wait for Jimmy there. Never wait for a date downstairs. It might give him the idea you are anxious to go out with him and we women can't let a man think that.

Louise. OK, Mom. Give me a call when you want me to come down. (*Leaves through Center door.*)

ANN. (*Loudly*) Peter.

Peter. (*Offstage*) Yes, Ann, coming. (*Enters with two glasses. Gives one to ANN.*) Something to steady your nerve.

(*They BOTH sit; he in easy chair, she Center.*)

ANN. Why do young people always think parents are old-fashioned? Don't they understand we're made of the same materials, the same desires, the same aches, the same passions? But, I guess I felt the same way towards my father and mother.

PETER. What's the matter with you?

ANN. Nothing. Nothing. Just thinking out loud. I wish I could remember how my mother talked to me before my first date.

PETER. Do you think you made an impression on Louise?

ANN. I hope so, but if I did it was in spite of what I said.

PETER. Maybe we shouldn't let her go with someone we don't know. This worries me.

ANN. It's too late now. And I hated to say "No" to her when she asked if it were alright to go with him. We spoil our children to make them happy and—and—it's not the right thing to give them their way all the time.

PETER. Why didn't you let me know about this sooner?

ANN. What's the use? I did tell you but you were so engrossed in your paper that all you did was mumble "Yes, yes, just as you say," and you didn't even know what I was talking about.

PETER. I guess you're right. I get so tired of hearing women tell me their silly troubles and aches and pains at the butcher shop that it's a relief to escape to more important things in the newspaper every night. But there are no more important things than my family. I'm glad the other two are boys.

ANN. (*Sarcastic*) Yes, boys are not expected to act morally correct.

PETER. Now you know I don't mean it that way. I've always tried to act like a good Christian and I want the boys to do the same.

ANN. (*Sad*) I know, dear. I'm sorry.

PETER. I guess we're both on edge. I wonder if your father and mother were this way when I started to court you, bless their souls? They didn't seem worried at all. Could see I was the cream of the crop, I imagine, so they were anxious to snag me for you.

ANN. My, such conceit! Maybe they didn't have

much of this world's goods, but what makes you think they were honored to get a young butcher for a son-in-law? And you didn't even have your own shop at the time!

PETER. Well, they must have seen my character. They could see I was a good-living, honest, hardworking, ambitious young man and so forth. Old people understand those things.

ANN. You're as old as they were then, so now you should be able to see what kind of a young man Jimmy is.

PETER. Don't be so sarcastic—can't you see I'm really worried? And I don't intend to let them leave before I see what I can see. Don't call Louise down until I give you a sign.

ANN. Yes, you can psychoanalyze him. Shall I prepare the couch for him, Doctor?

PETER. Here I try to do something and you mock me. You should be trying to help. You know, when I think back, your father asked me a lot of questions when I first called on you. (*Brightens.*) Hey, I think I'm on the right track. Remember all the questions your father asked that night? Pretty soon I was wondering if I came to take you out or give him my life's history. When I first went in I was really nervous, but by the time I left with you I was boiling mad. Now I see his purpose.

ANN. You're not going to do that to Jimmy, are you? You'll not only get him angry, but Louise, too.

PETER. Better they should be angry than me sorry.

ANN. Please, Peter, don't overdo it.

PETER. (*Smiling*) Look, I had to go through with it and now it's somebody else's turn. It didn't hurt me—(*BELL rings.*) There he is. Now, remember, don't call Louise until I give you the sign. I'll pick up a magazine and read it when I want you to call her. If I pick up a newspaper, you go to Louise and see that she has a headache or some excuse for not going. Understand?

ANN. (*Doubtful*) Yes, but you make it sound like a

spy story. Magazine means "OK"—newspaper means "no."

(She goes to door Right and admits JIMMY MORELLI. PETER sits at easy chair with newspaper at his right hand and a magazine rack at his left. He touches a magazine and nods, touches a newspaper and shakes his head to memorize the sign.)

Come in, please.

JIMMY. (Walking into room a few steps) Good evening. I'm Jimmy Morelli and Louise is supposed to go to the Sports Dance with me.

ANN. Good evening, Jimmy. Louise will be ready soon. Will you sit down? This is Mr. Gillespie. This is Jimmy Morelli, dear.

(JIMMY walks over to PETER, who rises and shakes hands with him, and then they BOTH sit, JIMMY in chair Left of easy chair facing PETER.)

PETER. Glad to meet you, Jimmy. Would you like a drink of wine?

JIMMY. (Obviously nervous) No, thank you, sir.

PETER. Do you drink at all, Jimmy?

JIMMY. I drink a glass of beer once in a while. But I'd rather not, just now, thank you.

PETER. (Tapping on magazine) You're better off that way, Jimmy. I understand you play football for Central High.

JIMMY. Yes, sir. Halfback.

PETER. Like sports, do you?

JIMMY. (Brightens) Yes, sir. Very much. Especially baseball.

PETER. Nothing like the feel of a good bat hitting a fast ball solid, is there?

JIMMY. No, sir! That's a thrill that's hard to beat.

(Quiet a few moments as each thinks of something to say.)

PETER. You like dancing, too, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Yes, sir. But I'm afraid I'm not much of a fast dancer, just slow numbers.

ANN. (Who has sat in chair Center) I just love waltzes.

PETER. Me for a polka. Lots of rhythm.

ANN. You're not that young any more, Peter.

PETER. There's still a few corpuscles left in me. But I guess a polka does leave me a bit winded lately.

JIMMY. You don't look that old, Mr. Gillespie.

PETER. (Flattered) I keep well, but when you run a butcher shop for over thirty years, wait on fussy women and listen to their troubles ten or twelve hours a day, six days a week, you're not what you used to be. Don't be a butcher, Jimmy. By the way, what do you want to be after school?

JIMMY. I'm going to college, Mr. Gillespie. I got an athletic scholarship at Kingland College and I'm going to study aeronautical engineering. I like planes and I believe there's a good future in it.

PETER. Glad to hear that. Nothing like a college education to give a man a good start in life. (He reaches for a magazine and is pulling it out of the rack until he hears JIMMY'S answer.)

JIMMY. It's a co-ed school, too, so it's not all work.

(Peter drops the magazine back in the rack.)

ANN. (Interposing) But you won't have time for social activities, will you, Jimmy, with all the studying you have to do?

JIMMY. No, ma'am. But it's nice to look forward to a dance or a party every couple of months so you can forget studying for a little while at least. I like sports, but even that gets monotonous when you do it day after day. I don't mind studying but I like a break in the routine now and then.

PETER. Well, that's a little way off, yet. (Quiet) Are you going to work this summer?

JIMMY. Yes, sir. I've got a life-saver job promised me out at Lake Harvey. That will give me some spending money at school.

PETER. You're a sensible boy, Jimmy. (*Picks magazine half out of rack.*)

JIMMY. And a lot of the girls and boys are renting cabins out there this summer.

(*PETER lowers magazine and taps on newspaper.*)

ANN. They're being chaperoned, of course.

JIMMY. The girls are. The fellows tried to get a cabin close to the girls but they're all reserved months ahead. I'm staying in a room at the boathouse beside the big beach. I don't know the other life guard that will be there so I'm glad the guys and girls are coming out—that way it won't be so lonely evenings.

PETER. I see what you mean.

(*There is quiet a few moments.*)

JIMMY. What time is it, Mr. Gillespie?

PETER. (*Looking at his wrist-watch*) It's 8:20 by my watch.

JIMMY. We're supposed to meet Bill Linden in ten minutes down on Fourth and Hatten Streets.

PETER. That's only a five minute walk from here. Louise ought to be ready any minute now.

(*JIMMY fidgets. PETER thinks. ANN is impatient.*)

PETER. What time will you bring Louise back, Jimmy?

JIMMY. The dance will be over at 11:30, so we should be back before one o'clock.

(*PETER taps nervously on newspaper.*)

PETER. That's a bit late, isn't it, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Well, the gang is going to meet at the Sugar Bowl after the dance and have a sandwich and a few dances and by the time we're finished there and get home it will be almost one o'clock.

ANN. Of course. I'll go hurry Louise along.

(*ANN exits through Center door. PETER looks angrily after her.*)

PETER. Take good care of our daughter for us, Jimmy. She's our pride and joy. (*WARN CURTAIN.*)

JIMMY. Oh, sure. She's a swell egg. I mean she's sweet. And modest. Not forward like most of the other girls. That's what I like about her. She doesn't show off in front of the guys or put on airs or hang on to you when you're dancing. She's got a personality lot like my mother. That's what I like about her.

PETER. (*Picking up magazine*) We tried to bring her up right.

(*ANN and LOUISE enter. JIMMY brightens and stands.*)

LOUISE kisses mother and father goodnight.)

ANN and PETER. Have a good time. Good night.

JIMMY and LOUISE. Good night.

(*They leave Right.*)

PETER. (*Pointing*) Why did you go for Louise before I gave you the signal? He's alright, but you should have waited for the signal.

ANN. Yes, and I'd still be waiting for the signal tomorrow morning, the way you were changing your mind every two minutes.

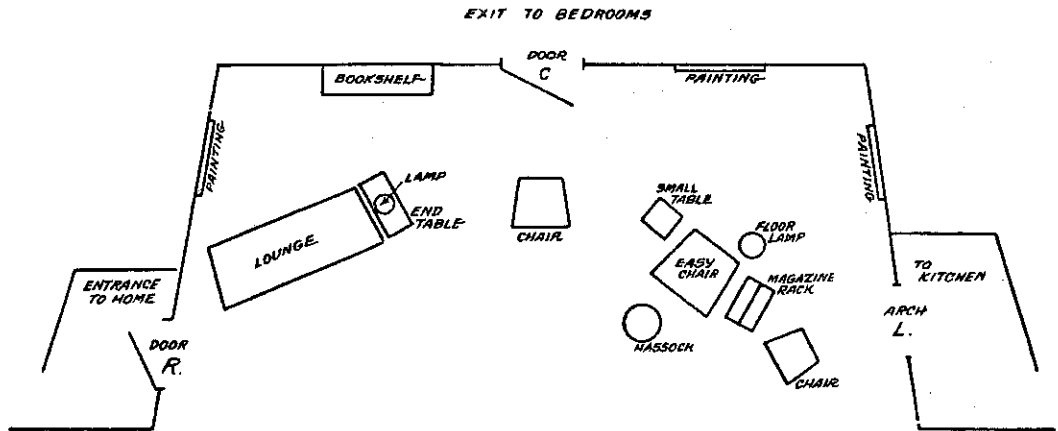
PETER. But I had to make sure.

ANN. If my mother waited for my father to make sure about you he would still be investigating you.

CURTAIN

FIRST DATE
 PROPERTIES

- 1 lounge
- Two small end tables
- 2 wood chairs
- 1 upholstered easy chair
- 1 hassock
- 1 book shelf with books
- 1 table lamp
- 1 floor lamp
- 1 newspaper
- 1 magazine rack with magazines
- Several paintings hung on walls
- 1 dish and dish towel (Mrs. Ann Gillespie)
- 2 drinking glasses



SCENE DESIGN
 "FIRST DATE"