

BARBICANE: It *was*. Now, however, it can be produced for \$9 a pound, which *is* costly-

MASTON: But not prohibitive for our purpose! To aluminum!

CLUB MEMBERS: (*raising their teacups*) To aluminum!

MASTON: Motion carried!

BARBICANE: Adjourned! Splendid work today! I look forward to seeing you all bright and early tomorrow to continue our planning.

(*BILSBY, BLOOMSBURY, and MORGAN exit.*)

BARBICANE: (*to MASTON, with a nod towards PENROSE*) Although I believe you may still have some business to take care of? (*HE pats MASTON on the back and nods toward PENROSE as HE exits.*) Good evening, Miss Penrose.

PENROSE: (*packing her things*) Good evening.

(*PENROSE begins to exit but MASTON crosses to HER quickly.*)

MASTON: (*approaching PENROSE*) Ms. Penrose- uh, Phoebe.

PENROSE: Yes, Maston, J.T.?

MASTON: (*HE laughs nervously.*) I was wondering, that is I was hoping- Would you care to-

PENROSE: (*kindly, understanding*) J.T., would you like to join me for dinner?

MASTON: I- Of course! Yes. That is, if you-

PENROSE: I'd love to.

MASTON: (*with a sigh of relief, returning her smile*) Good.

PENROSE: (*with a smirk*) Good.

MASTON: (*Beat. Then quickly again, nervously.*) It's not an issue, is it? I mean with you being a reporter here, and me...

PENROSE: You mean, is it wise? Mixing business and pleasure?

MASTON: (*a nervous attempt at flirtation*) Could be... dangerous.

PENROSE: (*smirking*) Could be. Could be fun. (*Beat, then playfully persuading.*) We both know we want things from each other professionally, no pretense about that.

MASTON: (*excited, encouraging*) True! So we'll just keep our expectations realistic.

PENROSE: Yes! Think of it as... (*shooting a glance at MASTON's calculations on the chalkboard*) a calculated risk!

MASTON: (*sweetly*) I don't mind the odds, if you don't.

(*PENROSE smiles and takes his arm. THEY exit, sneaking glances at each other. Lights shift. MASTON enters again quickly and the room is reset by BARBICANE, PENROSE, and the CLUB MEMBERS. Lights return as before, indicating the start of a new day.*)

MASTON: (*to audience*) October 13th. The planning continues.

BARBICANE: Now then, let us turn to the question of the cannon. General Morgan, I believe you can enlighten us?

MORGAN: Thank you. I was on the Experiment Committee during the war, and can confirm that the highest velocity cannon shot was achieved by our own Captain Barbicane at the Union testing fields outside of New York City two years ago. Twenty-four hundred feet per second, I believe!

MASTON: However, the Columbiad I designed last year would have bested that by twenty percent, if it hadn't burst... (*HE gingerly feels his head plate.*)

BARBICANE: (*assuaging*) Yes, but it did burst. In any case, we need to achieve an escape velocity of fifteenfold my record.

BLOOMSBURY: What if we scaled up Maston's design?

MASTON: We'd need to make the cannon half a mile long!

MORGAN: Come Maston, you're going too far.

MASTON: An artilleryman is like a cannonball: he can never go too far!

BARBICANE: No, J.T.'s figures are correct-

MASTON: Ha!

BARBICANE: *If* we were trying to go to war with the Moon. However, we merely need our cannonball to make it there, not obliterate its surface.

MASTON: In that case (*grumpily calculating*) a 900-foot Columbiad-style cannon would suffice. But it won't have the same panache!

BILSBY: Given our expensive projectile, I suppose the cannon will be made of platinum?