

The Floating Hat

by Steve Hauk

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Characters

Granville Redmond

Charlie Chaplin

Gottardo Piazzoni

Act One

For the beginning, an indeterminate location.

Spot on Granville Redmond at his easel, paintbrush in hand, working on a large landscape. Very intent. He is a large, powerfully built man, about fifty, a bit overweight, a mane of dark hair beginning to gray, penetrating blue eyes, handsome. He wears a smock over a tweed sport coat over a white shirt open at the neck.

Charlie Chaplin comes on. He is impeccably dressed

in a gray suit, pressed white shirt and silver tie. He's young, in his early thirties, vigorous, his dark hair and mustache impeccably groomed. He carries a cane in his left hand, black derby hat in the right. He stops, studies Redmond, puts the hat on his head, approaches Redmond from behind. Stops several feet from him, taps the cane hard on the floor several times. Only a very slight movement by Redmond indicates he picked up on this at all, but he does not turn.

Chaplin taps the cane more aggressively. The same from Redmond. Chaplin studies the painting from several angles, holds his hands up to "frame it," etc.

Redmond leans back to study the painting, flipping brush back in his painting hand _ his left hand. Chaplin pantomimes being hit in eye by paint. Redmond leans forward to paint.

Chaplin pounds the floor with cane. Redmond pulls back, puzzles, chin in free hand. Chaplin moves closer, puts free hand on Redmond's shoulder, watches him paint.

Gottardo Piazzoni , Redmond's age of fifty, appears dressed in suit, shirt and tie, wears a gray porkpie hat. He carries a cane. He has a mustache. He is somewhat like Chaplin in general appearance and size and the fastidious way he dresses. He comes and goes as he is written to by Redmond or Chaplin, or writes to Redmond and Chaplin, and while on stage he can roam, but he is always kept in his own light. When dialogue is assigned to "Piazzoni's Voice," he is heard but not seen. He announces his presence with a little Swiss-Italian tune he will sing often, but usually just a few bars. It is a Ticinese dialect, from the Swiss province of Canton.

PIAZZONI: La-fi de-la/
Foo-yah yu-sca/
De-la-digah de-goon/
Doo-ya de-la-mash/
Don-gui-na don-yu-sca/

Ba-boo ba-boo ba-boo/
Ba-boo ba-boo ba-boo.

Dear Charlie, I introduce Granville Seymour Redmond, friend and artist. He recently located in Los Angeles. I think you two will get along. You might like his work.

(On back scrim, a moody Redmond landscape appears.)

He loves and paints the land. People say they feel a silence in his work. I don't know if that's true. Perhaps they are simply reading what they know about him into his painting . . . In any case, he is attracted to the Southern California landscape and dreams of building a studio someday ``at the foot of rolling hills.” *(Pause.)* Do you think you might find some parts for him in your films? He is a talented pantomimist.

By the way, don't tell him you feel or sense a silence in his work _ it irritates him.

Sincerely, Gottardo Piazzoni.

(Piazzoni goes off, singing his song.)

*(Redmond gestures dramatically at painting.
Chaplin nods, studies painting intently.)*

*(Redmond stands, takes Chaplin's cane from him,
and, as Chaplin, preoccupied, continues to
study the painting, Redmond twirls cane, pulls
off many stunts and routines, expertly, while
improvising dance steps, totally in his own world.)*

*(Piazzoni returns; as will always be the case, he
is in his own light.)*

PIAZZONI: Dear Charles, what do you think of Granville?

He can be a real card, don't you think? He is the most animated man I know. I'm not sure if that's because he's deaf and mute, or if it is simply his personality. What do you think? . . . I hope you are becoming friends.

Sincerely, Gottardo Piazzoni.

P.S. In some ways it is fitting Granville's deaf _ he's very stubborn and wouldn't listen to anyone if he *could* hear, as you will see. But he hardly seems mute to me. He's much too . . . I don't know . . . busy!

*(Redmond loses grip on cane and it goes
flying off. This does not bother him. He does not
hear crashing sound. Chaplin does and jumps.*

Redmond goes off as Chaplin gives him a look.)

CHAPLIN (*Pause*): Dear Gottardo, despite some rough patches, we are getting along famously. Twice Granville's invited me to his house to see his work, which is breathtakingly beautiful. He paints in cramped quarters, with his children running through the room _which has terrible light and is not much larger than a broom closet _ whenever they please . . . His wife, Carrie, tries to control them but, well, they're children and it's a home, after all, not a studio . . .

(Redmond returns, twirling cane.)

Granville can read my lips most of the time, but it's difficult for me to make myself understood without pencil and paper . . . (*Abruptly gestures.*) I found myself yelling at him to make myself heard in a restaurant the other day, very stupid and rude of me, and he looked at me with those blazing blue eyes of his . . .

(Redmond fixes Chaplin with a stare.)

CHAPLIN (*Uncomfortable*): Well, we made it up . . . By the way, you won't believe how well Granville can spin a cane. He even showed me a walk the other day _

(Redmond does a character walk while twirling the cane. He looks at Chaplin and breaks into a broad smile.)

_ that I think I might refine into something a little better, if I thought my Little Fellow could put it to good use . . .

(Chaplin follows Redmond, imitating the walk. pantomimes twirling a cane, then comes to a stop.)

Well, vanity aside, I'd have to do it better than Granville _ the man's a bear, twice my size.

(Redmond comes up behind Chaplin, lifts him in a joyous bear hug, twirls him around, then sets him down, sits at easel and works. Chaplin catches his breath, straightens his clothing.)

Speaking of which, his bear hug is lethal. The next time I have a crying scene *(Dabs at his eyes.)*, I think I'll have Granville hug me. That should do the trick.

Sincerely, Charlie.

(Chaplin studies Redmond, comes up behind and taps him on shoulder. Redmond looks at him quizzically.)

CHAPLIN *(Mouthing words, trying too hard)*: That . . . is . . . a . . . nice . . . picture. Nice . . . California hills.

(Redmond looks at him blankly.)

CHAPLIN (*Worried, too quickly*): No? . . . Not California? Then France? It's France, is it?

(Trying to read Chaplin's lips, Redmond is bewildered, looks at painting, back at Chaplin, perhaps worried he doesn't like it.)

CHAPLIN (*Sensing that*): Oh no, it's lovely! . . . But not France! Well, Piazzoni said you and he were in France together, so I assumed . . . (*Pauses, laughs to himself.*) He said you lost a lot of money, to a priest, in a poker game.

(Redmond becomes very alert, jumps up, gestures vigorously, holds hands together prayerfully but his eyes blazing, gestures to Chaplin to repeat himself.)

Yes _ well, a priest . . . Piazzoni said he . . . (*Angelic gesture or pose.*) . . . blessed you!

(Redmond, reading Chaplin's lips correctly, indicates he knows this is a lie. Indicates impatiently he wants the truth.)

CHAPLIN (*Sighs*): Very well. (*Puts hands together praying.*) Priest . . . (*Deals cards.*) Poker game . . . (*Pulls a pocket inside-out*) . . . You lose your last franc. (*Sniffles, wipes his eyes.*) All gone.

(Redmond, embarrassed, blushes, is furious,

mouths the name ``Piazzoni,’’ followed by an expletive.)

I shouldn't have brought it up. What I really meant to express is . . . *(Quickly, gesturing to fit, `holding' a paint brush): What the hell _ you _ are _ a _ great _ artist!*

(Redmond, still angry, thinks about that a moment, is mollified, `deals cards,' prays sorrowfully, laughs at himself, jumps up, pantomimes cranking a film camera, indicates Chaplin is a great filmmaker. Chaplin bows, Redmond bows back.)

CHAPLIN: Thank you! Very nice of you to say so! I mean, well, not say . . . gesture, rather! *(Not liking that either.)* With talent, mind you!

(Redmond indicates he should relax, not try so hard, smiles graciously and sits back down to paint.)

PIAZZONI'S VOICE: Dear Charlie, have Granville teach you American Sign Language. It will make things easier if you are going to be friends. Besides, you would be a natural . . . Oh, and don't bring up the story of Granville losing his last franc to a priest in a poker game _ it infuriates him.

Sincerely, Gottardo Piazzoni.

(Chaplin, after submerging his irritation, approaches Redmond.)

CHAPLIN *(With gestures and exaggerated enunciation)*: Will _
you _ teach _ me _ to _ sign?

(Redmond puzzles.)

CHAPLIN *(Kind of signing)*: Sign! _ Sign! . . . *(Salutes, to a few bars of ``The Star-Spangled Banner'' from off.)*
American . . . Sign . . . Language!

(Redmond laughs. It is clear he knows what Chaplin wants, but enjoys drawing it out. Chaplin senses this, too. Redmond finally relents.)

(Redmond signs, then points to himself.)

CHAPLIN: Me!

(Redmond signs, then points to Chaplin.)

CHAPLIN: You!

(During following sequence Redmond's `voice' is heard from off as he signs the words and moves his lips. It is distant, metallic, as if coming from a

steel drum _it is Redmond's inner voice.)

REDMOND (*Signs*): No!

CHAPLIN: No!

REDMOND: Yes.

CHAPLIN: Yes!

REDMOND: World!

CHAPLIN: Round!

REDMOND: *World!*

CHAPLIN: World!

(They pick up the pace, their intensity building, to the rhythm of a quickening strobe light. Redmond holds up a brush as he signs the object, cranks a camera, etc., also pointing to the object if it is present. Both say following, Chaplin repeating _ or trying to repeat _ Redmond.)

Brush! Brush!

Film! Film!

Painting! Canvas!

Painting! Picture!

Painting! Painting!

(Redmond beams, then is off again, beginning with waddle walk and sign.)

Little Fellow! Little Fellow!

Artist! Artist!

Star! Star!

(They both laugh. Crescendo.)

Love! Love!

God! God!

(Clash of cymbals. Strobe ceases, they fall back from each other.)

CHAPLIN (*Exhausted, signs, saying*): Well, well.

REDMOND (*Always signing, nodding _ Redmond the character onstage speaks*): You're a fast learner! . . .

(For a while, Redmond's voice retains that metallic quality. We should understand we are hearing what he is thinking and signing. His voice eventually becomes `natural.`)

CHAPLIN (*Signing, beaming*): Thank you.

REDMOND: Oh, one more _

(Hand under his chin, palm down, he waves his fingers.)

CHAPLIN (*Trying it*): Hello?

REDMOND: No _ frustrating. Frustrated.

(Does it again.)

CHAPLIN: Goodby?

REDMOND (*Frustrated, making the sign*): No _ frus-trat-ing.
(Sign spelling, Chaplin repeating the letters.) F - r - u - s - t
- r a - t - i - n - g.

CHAPLIN: . . . u - s - t - r - a - t - i - n - g. Ah! Frustrating!

(Chaplin comically ``pulls a face,’’ looking frustrated, makes sign. Redmond nods, grins. Chaplin grins. It is a sign they will use often.)

REDMOND *(Relaxes)*: Now we can . . . talk!

CHAPLIN: Talk?

REDMOND *(Signing unsurely)*: Yes . . . you know . . .

CHAPLIN *(Signing unsurely)*: Yes . . .

REDMOND: . . . Get to know each other . . . better.

CHAPLIN: Oh, yes?

REDMOND: Well . . .

(They both pause, considering the possibilities, pro and con, of this commitment, and showing it in their expressions.)

(From here on, the signing is just suggested _ unless specifically directed _ and may become

almost negligible. But it is understood that that is how they are communicating, along with Redmond's lip reading. When Chaplin is looking directly at Redmond, and the thought being expressed is not a difficult one, he does not even attempt to sign.)

(After some initial clumsiness, Chaplin's signing becomes very graceful and animated; he enjoys it as much as a character walk or creating a scene. He is not as proficient at 'reading,' and sometimes stumbles a bit. Redmond's signing is also graceful and animated, but second nature to him; occasionally he catches himself and slows down.)

CHAPLIN *(After thinking hard)*: Well, what the hell. I know _ let's do a walk!

REDMOND *(A little disappointed)*: A walk?

CHAPLIN: We can always talk later. I do walks, you do walks.
(Pause.) Can't we? Walk now, talk later?

REDMOND *(Giving in, grins)*: A walk _ fine! Other people *go* for a walk, we *do* one.

CHAPLIN: Follow me!

(To music, Chaplin does "a walk," looking

over his shoulder at Redmond, who is following him step for step. Chaplin tries to throw him off with sudden moves, successful half the time, the other, Redmond negotiates the move successfully. They cross the stage several times, then Redmond cuts in front of Chaplin.)

(Redmond indicates Chaplin should follow him.)

(Chaplin bows. Redmond strides, twirling the cane, Chaplin pantomimes twirling the cane. Redmond sneaks a look.)

(Redmond leans on the cane, looks back to see how Chaplin will handle this. Chaplin pantomimes leaning on the cane, his body at an acute angle. Redmond applauds. Chaplin nods, nearly falls.)

(They laugh.)

(Redmond looks at his easel, breaks off, something in the painting riveting his attention. Music stops. Redmond sits in front of easel, picks up brush, begins to paint quickly, intently.)

(Chaplin has seen this before, shrugs, picks up cane, experiments with walks and twirls, gets a little tired of this, looks at Redmond, who is still engrossed in his painting. Chaplin approaches so Redmond can see him.)

CHAPLIN: Very nice.

(Redmond nods, a little absently.)

CHAPLIN *(Begins to rattle on, pointing with cane perilously close to canvas, which alarms Redmond)*: Lovely sky! Gorgeous hills! . . . Look at those trees! Reminds me of a short film I once considered doing, about two men lost in the Sierra . . . which reminds me of something I've always wanted to ask you, Granville _

(Redmond is becoming exasperated, quickly and on the sly does frustrated sign.)

_ which is, why don't you put people in your paintings? People are in *everything* I do! Come to that, *I'm* in everything I do!

(Redmond stands, a plea _ indicates his hands are full, so he can't talk.)

Oh, yes! Of course! . . . Sorry. What was I thinking?

(Walks in a circle. Redmond resumes painting, watches Chaplin suspiciously from the corner of his eye.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, you won't believe how Charlie can go on! He has a theory on everything. And to think I taught him to `speak'! He signs to complete strangers. And sometimes these people _ *hearing* people _ understand him! Of course, he's used to communicating without sound. No one's better. What a waste he wasn't born deaf! It wouldn't have stood in the way of his career at all!

(Chaplin, as if he understood that Redmond is up to mischief, takes off his hat, perches it on Redmond's head.)

(Takes off his jacket, hangs it on Redmond's easel.)

(Pulls off his mustache _ for the first time we realize it is false _ sticks it to Redmond's upper lip.)

(Looks at Redmond for a reaction. Redmond sets down palette.)

REDMOND *(Continuing letter)*: But he keeps me stimulated, and that's a good thing.

(Redmond removes hat and sails it offstage.)

(Chaplin quickly puts jacket back on.)

(Redmond stands, removes mustache from his upper lip and sticks it to the plain end of his brush, dips it in paint, and tries painting with it. Chaplin stands behind him to see the result. He frowns, as does Redmond, who removes the mustache, now orange, from the brush, and hands it to Chaplin, who sticks the mustache back onto his upper lip.)

(Chaplin sniffs the mustache, twitching his nose, grows faint from the oil paint fumes, rolls his eyes, faints, falling to the floor.)

REDMOND *(Concluding letter, alarmed)*: Your friend, Granville!

(Redmond jumps up, kneels by Chaplin, takes him in his arms. Chaplin opens his eyes, bats them.)

CHAPLIN *(Signing weakly with one hand)*: My friend . . .

REDMOND *(Signing fervently with one hand)*: Yes?

CHAPLIN *(Batting his eyes)*: Will you please . . .

REDMOND: Anything!

CHAPLIN: Remove this damn mustache! I can't breathe!

(Redmond rips off mustache with a flourish, hurling it away. Chaplin jumps to his feet, excited. Signs:)

Granville, I just had an. . . . uhm . . .

REDMOND: Revelation?

CHAPLIN: No. How do you say _ ?

(Does frustrated sign, then begins playing Charades.)

REDMOND: Inspiration? . . . Inclination? . . . Slow down. Don't panic. Think.

(Chaplin pauses, thinks, finally points to his head, ``pulls a light switch.'')

REDMOND *(Signs)*: Idea!

CHAPLIN: What?

REDMOND *(Signs)*: Think! Yes?*(Signs.)* I-de-a!

CHAPLIN (*Sheepishly*): Yes. (*Signs.*) I - de - a?

REDMOND (*Nods*): Which is? . . .

CHAPLIN: Which is? . . . Which is? . . . Oh, yes! I wonder if you would consider . . .

REDMOND: Yes?

CHAPLIN: . . . doing some scenery painting for us now and then for _

REDMOND (*Excited*): Your . . . moving pictures?

(*Chaplin nods.*)

I'd be honored!

CHAPLIN: Really? You wouldn't think it . . . beneath your talent?

REDMOND: Of course not, but . . . I'd be paid?

CHAPLIN: Of course. (*Signs and mumbles vaguely.*)
But not much . . .

REDMOND (*Peering, trying to read his lips*): Not what? I missed that.

CHAPLIN (*Clearer*): Not much. Economy's a little slow. You know.

REDMOND: Oh, well, yes. But _ (*Signing with emphasis:*)
_ *something?*

CHAPLIN: Of course!

REDMOND: Because I have a family and money's important.

CHAPLIN: Naturally. (*Too nonchalant:*) And you might want to . . .

REDMOND: Yes?

CHAPLIN: . . . move your studio into my studio _ you know, the movie lot.

REDMOND: An artist's studio in a film studio? (*Thinks about it.*) Thank you, but no thank you, Charlie.

CHAPLIN: Why not?

REDMOND: I wouldn't get anything done! Making moving pictures is a process including a lot of people, art is done

alone. . . My dream is a studio at the foot of rolling hills. To be able to step outside my door whenever I want and take in nature all around me. Someday that's what I will have.

CHAPLIN: But I wouldn't bother you! And rent would be free.

REDMOND: Free?

CHAPLIN: Well, negligible.

REDMOND (*Difficulty with the word*): Neg- li _

CHAPLIN (*Irritated, but . . .*): Well, free! And you can visit the sets whenever you like. And, and _ and this just occurred to me _ you might even act a part now and then. You'd like that, wouldn't you?

REDMOND (*Interested but cautious*): Well, depends if it's a good role, of course. . .

CHAPLIN: Granville, there are *only* good roles in my moving pictures . . . You want to do some acting, don't you?

REDMOND: Sometimes I think so.

CHAPLIN: Piazzoni says you do. And you're a great pantomimist. They say in Paris you made Manet laugh, and he doesn't laugh at anything.

REDMOND: That's because he'd been dead for years. It was *Monet* _ and he laughs at everything, particularly other artists.

CHAPLIN (*Not listening, excited, begins pacing and signing quickly*): And film is, come to think of it, a natural avenue of acting open to people who can't speak _ in fact, it's the only kind of acting in which they *can* `speak.' Why, you're probably a natural! (*Strides back and forth, signing with flair*) Think about it, Granville. . . You move your lips . . . (*Pauses to do so.*) . . . and people in the audience will think you are speaking. . . Imagine that sensation! . . .

(*Redmond is noncommittal.*)

And you were talking about money _well, you'd *be paid* for your acting _ I did say that, didn't I? . . .

REDMOND: But not much? Because of hard times?

CHAPLIN: More. More than . . . And there would be . . . compensations, in other ways. I'd bring in _ when you're not painting, of course _ movie people who could become clients. *Would* become clients!

REDMOND: *Could? Would?*

CHAPLIN (*Easily, smiling charmingly, showing off*): I can be very persuasive.

(Redmond nods in agreement, suddenly beams, but then puzzles.)

REDMOND: But why?

CHAPLIN (*Thinks about it*): I like you, Granville. I like visiting your studio. It's a refuge from, well, something. I'd like to have you and it nearby.

REDMOND: I'd be gone a lot. In the outdoors, painting.

CHAPLIN: Oh, yes. I realize that.

REDMOND: Because while I can paint from memory, it's also important to paint from nature.

CHAPLIN: Understood.

REDMOND (*Pause*): Well . . .

CHAPLIN: Well?

(They agree with a look, clasp hands. Redmond kicks up his heels, pantomimes cranking a camera, 'focusing' it on Chaplin as Chaplin _

followed by a spot _ moves Redmond's easel and painting to the other side of the stage. He follows Chaplin during the following, Chaplin playing to the 'camera.')

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, guess what! I'm in show business! Charlie has given me the most wonderful studio _ *on his film lot* _ at La Brea and Sunset. . . Soon I will have that studio near the hills I've always dreamed of, but for now . . . Well, this space is everything I could ask for until then.

(Studio space comes dramatically alive. Shafts of sunlight from skylights. Suggestion of paintings and color from the walls.)

Skylights that make me feel out of doors and in the fresh air . . . a large easel, cabinets for my paints and brushes . . . There's even a little refrigerator, and a hot plate, to make coffee. I'm in the old property room building. A little musty, but open windows and the smell of oil paints will change that. . . I walk across a little plaza _ which looks like an English village _ to watch Charlie's crew shoot moving pictures. *Or to act in them* . . . If I want, I have lunch in the commissary with the actors and crew. Many of them, with Charlie's help, have learned to sign! . . . the best is Charlie's chief camera man, Rolland _ he picked it up so quickly . . . We have a joke between us about Charlie _ Roland and I. When Charlie's inspired he becomes very excited and changes from graceful to terribly clumsy. Today he tripped over a cable and had to hobble through a scene. Naturally, Charlie made the hobble a funny character note.

CHAPLIN (*Hobbles, then suspiciously*): Granville, were you and Rolland making a joke behind my back this morning? I thought I saw you signing and laughing.

REDMOND: Not at all _ we were saying how wonderfully the scene went.

CHAPLIN: I went *where*?

REDMOND (*More emphatic signing*): *The scene _ how wonderfully it went.*

CHAPLIN: Oh. . . So it had nothing to do with my little accident?

REDMOND: Accident? What accident?

CHAPLIN (*Suspiciously*) : I thought I saw Rolland signing ``two left feet.’’

REDMOND: Two what?

CHAPLIN: I wouldn't take that kindly because, you know, I am lefthanded!

REDMOND (*Sits at easel, picks up brush, cozying into the space*): Well, so am I.

CHAPLIN: Oh?

REDMOND (*Hoisting brush*): How long have you watched me paint, oh great observant director?

CHAPLIN (*Confidence shaken*): Well . . .

(Chaplin grimaces, resumes preparing Redmond's studio.)

REDMOND (*Continuing letter*): And despite a few rocky patches, Gottardo, all goes well. Couldn't be better, actually. I'm an artist, actor, scene painter and _

(Redmond suddenly thinks of something, jumps up, circles in front of Chaplin, excited.)

REDMOND: Charlie, Charlie, an idea for a film just came to me!

REDMOND (*Continuing to Piazzoni*): _ and, and an aspiring moving picture writer!

Your friend, Granville.

CHAPLIN (*Groans*): Not another! This is your third `idea' this month! Granville, I don't tell you what to paint.

(Chaplin puts his hands over his ears.)

REDMOND *(Signing excitedly)* : It's a story about spies! I don't know where these ideas come from, but the hero is a deaf mute _

(Chaplin, looking at Redmond, still 'hears' him, pulls his hands away, looks at them, then Redmond.)

REDMOND *(Posing)*: _ who's gallant, self-assured and can read lips a mile away!

(Chaplin figures it out, hits himself on the head, then clasps his hands over his eyes. Redmond, stalking an unseen presence as he signs, doesn't notice.)

REDMOND: He's closing in on a circle of enemy espionage agents who . . . who _

(Chaplin peeks through his fingers, makes frustrated sign.)

REDMOND: _ to stymie our hero and his brilliant lip-reading abilities, meet in caves, pitch black rooms, on moonless nights . . . and . . . and . . . *(Improvising as he goes.)* . . . in carnival fun houses! . . . Yes, carnival fun houses, requiring _ *(Just coming to him.)* _ Imagine this effect, Charlie! _ requiring, requiring our hero to read lips in distorted fun house mirrors! . . .

(He's not sure about this, turns to Chaplin who, sensing Redmond is turning toward him, drops his hands and pretends interest.)

Well? Well? What do you think?

CHAPLIN: What do I what?

REDMOND: *Think!*

CHAPLIN: Think? I think I'll have to think about it . . . Who did you have in mind for the lead?

REDMOND: Somebody darkly handsome, perhaps with a mustache . . .

CHAPLIN *(Musing)*: Somebody darkly handsome . . . *(Pulls a fresh mustache from his pocket, sticks it on.)* Perhaps with a mustache . . .

REDMOND: Barrymore, Powell.

CHAPLIN: *Barrymore?! Powell?!*

(Rips mustache off _ has some pain from the action and shows it _ puts it in his pocket.)

REDMOND (*Wide grin*): Chaplin!

CHAPLIN (*Grimly, still tending upper lip*): Better. . . (*Thinks about it, reconsiders.*) Maybe.

(Looking front so Redmond can't see him, Chaplin rolls his eyes.)

CHAPLIN (*Not signing, jamming his hands into his pockets*): Maybe not.

(Turns back to Redmond.)

REDMOND (*Cheerily*): When you're ready, I'll put together a treatment. It's all in my head.

CHAPLIN (*Forcing a smile*): Wonderful. (*Turns away again.*) That's a good place for it.

(Smiling, content, Redmond sits down before his easel and paints.)

CHAPLIN (*Coming front*): Dear Gottardo, it's amazing how much Granville talks since I have learned to listen. He's an undammed brook! An unleashed torrent! An Asian monsoon! . . . He has suggestions for everything, including how I should make films! . . . He stands behind Rolland as he shoots and suggests different angles! . . . He has advice on makeup and costuming! . . . And he

keeps coming up with the most absurd _ though oddly touching _ scenarios.

(Chaplin returns to watch Redmond paint. Redmond leans back, studies painting, scratches his head. Chaplin mimics this unconsciously, scratching his own head.)

But, all in all, he's settled in nicely.

Your friend, Charlie.

(Redmond senses Chaplin is mimicking him. He scratches his side _ Chaplin mimics this.)

(Redmond looks around suddenly. Chaplin pretends indifference, looks away.)

(Redmond resumes painting, but as he holds brush he is self-conscious; he tries to pick up if Chaplin is imitating him. He can't. He tries to paint, he can't.)

(Chaplin senses the turmoil, buries his hands deep into his pockets, whistles. Redmond looks around suddenly.)

(Chaplin smiles broadly at him. Redmond smiles back. Chaplin waves at Redmond. Redmond

grimaces, turns back to his easel.)

(Redmond turns again suddenly. Chaplin waves again _ a coy fingertips wave.)

REDMOND *(Sourly)*: Dear Gottardo, I don't know if this is going to work. Charlie watches my every move! Mind you, he's very kind, and he collects my paintings and helps find collectors for me. He's been wonderful. But he can also be irritating. For one thing, he mimics me. . . If I ponder . . .

(Redmond ponders. Chaplin sees this, he ponders)

. . . Charlie ponders. It's really rather distracting, and makes pondering, which is among the most difficult of affectations anyway, even more so.

(He sneaks a look at Chaplin, who has moved downstage and ceased to ponder. Chaplin's interest is now elsewhere _ Chaplin has become fascinated with his right foot. He holds it out, wiggles it, does a little dance with it, considering the creative possibilities. The foot seems to take on a life of its own.)

He's a prisoner to his craft! *(Stands, mesmerized, holds foot out, mimics Chaplin as well as he can.)* It's really rather sad.

(Subconsciously, Redmond does whatever Chaplin does. Chaplin, who senses this, makes a sudden movement to regain control of his foot, then turns quickly, stands normally.)

CHAPLIN *(Looks at Redmond)*: Do you know how irritating that can be?

(Redmond needs a moment to stabilize himself.)

REDMOND: What?

CHAPLIN: Don't play dumb.

(Redmond glares.)

CHAPLIN: Sorry. Mimicking me, of course!

REDMOND *(Surprised)*: *Me* mimicking *you*?

CHAPLIN *(Pointing with his cane)*: Well, what would you call that? You look like a dog about to pee.

REDMOND *(Balancing precariously, he looks down at his extended foot, sets it down quickly)*: Well . . .
You mimic me!

CHAPLIN: For my art _ *for film!*

REDMOND (*Ironically*): Oh?

CHAPLIN: It's a different thing, Granville.

REDMOND: Is it?

CHAPLIN: Don't be this way. Of course it is. My films are about people, your paintings are about . . . (*Mildly dismissive.*) . . . well, nature.

REDMOND: I don't like the way you say "nature." It's not a disease, though the way people abuse it you might . . . well, never mind . . . And did you ever think that if I don't do people, it's because I don't want to, not that I can't? That I just might *prefer* nature?

CHAPLIN: Well, of course, I understand that. Let's not argue, shall we? (*Pause _ and an arresting hand movement.*) Granville, what's the worst thing about being deaf?

REDMOND: Not being able to hear. And people saying "How are you?" and moving on quickly.

(Chaplin nods, moves off, returns.)

CHAPLIN: How old were you when you got scarlet fever?

REDMOND: Two.

CHAPLIN: Were you speaking by then?

REDMOND: I can't recall _ I was two.

CHAPLIN: You can't recall? I remember when I was two. A gaunt little boy living in a tenement on East Lane, Walworth. Did you know I lived in a tenement?

REDMOND: Of course.

CHAPLIN: How did you know?

REDMOND: I read about you.

CHAPLIN: You do?

REDMOND: All the time. It's hard not to, Charlie. Newspapers, magazines _ you're everywhere. Do you mind?

CHAPLIN: No. Just don't believe it all. There are some things . . . People make assumptions.

REDMOND: You lived in an orphanage. You overcame a lot to become a great man.

CHAPLIN : Thank you. You overcame a lot, too. Did your family have a butler?

REDMOND: A *butler*? My family?

CHAPLIN: Just curious. Your family had some money.

REDMOND: We had enough to get by, but a *butler*? Hardly. Why do you ask?

CHAPLIN: Well _

(Lighting change.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, Chaplin has offered me a movie role as a . . . *butler* _ if you can believe it! I said no, but he persisted. I have trouble saying no to him.

CHAPLIN: Why won't you? Is it a class issue?

REDMOND: No.

CHAPLIN: You want to play the cop _that's it, isn't it?

REDMOND: No.

CHAPLIN (*Turns away, makes frustrated sign, turns back*): The supervisor?

REDMOND: Heavens no!

CHAPLIN: You just like saying no?

REDMOND: No!

CHAPLIN: Then play the butler!

REDMOND: No!

CHAPLIN: Do it!

REDMOND (*Signs*): No!

(Redmond shoves his hands deep into his pockets _ effectively ``sealing his lips'' _ and glowers.)

CHAPLIN (*Pause*): So _ the silent treatment. You don't know how ridiculous you look _ sulking like a child.

REDMOND (*Considers not responding, but instead pulls his hands free and signs*): I learned it watching your

moving pictures.

(Then jams his hands back into his pockets.)

CHAPLIN: Charming. Two can play at this game.

(Chaplin shoves his hands into his pockets and purses his lips.)

(Pause. They glare at each other, hands jammed forcefully into their pockets. Redmond paces, Chaplin watches him, then whistles a tune, rising on his toes.)

(This irritates Redmond. He pantomimes whistling, making it appear as absurd as he can, rising on his toes, doing it in a way as to make it appear slightly affected.)

(Chaplin sees this, stops whistling, but can't for several moments make himself stop rising on his toes without a sudden, violent action, which throws him slightly off balance.)

(Redmond grins triumphantly, but doesn't really get much satisfaction from the triumph. He paces back and forth, then suddenly yanks his hands from his pockets.)

REDMOND (*Signs angrily*): Oh _ OK! I'll play the _

(He signs fitfully, something likely obscene.)

CHAPLIN: My my, what language.

REDMOND (*Concluding*): _ butler!

REDMOND (*Continuing letter*): I tell you, Piazzoni, he's like a bulldog! . . . Speaking of which, he's just cast me in another film. It's called ``A Dog's Life.''

REDMOND: I play what?

CHAPLIN: The keeper of a dance hall.

REDMOND: That sounds interesting. What do I do?

CHAPLIN: You keep the dance hall.

(Redmond glares.)

Well, that's what you do do. You also toss the Little Fellow and his dog into the cold _ thus our title. Is that better?

REDMOND: Any empathy for my character?

CHAPLIN: None. Just the dog _ and the Little Fellow, naturally.

REDMOND: Naturally.

CHAPLIN: You're _ *he's* _ a real bastard. After all, if he doesn't like the dog _ *or the Little Fellow!* . . .

REDMOND (*Musing, smiling*): After all . . . Well . . . I'll do it!
Thank you!

(Music. Redmond grins and breaks into a soft shoe.)

CHAPLIN (*Surprised*): Why are you dancing?

REDMOND (*Continuing his soft shoe*): Why ? Well . . . (*Thinks about it as he continues to dance.*) Well, I'm enjoying myself. I've played a butler, a thief, and now I'm going to be a real bastard, giving the Little Fellow the boot, I enjoy our arguments, and . . .

(Chaplin falls in with him, dancing.)

CHAPLIN: And? (*Pause.*) And? Don't keep me in suspense.

REDMOND: Well . . . I have been one of the lucky ones, Charlie . . . In my hearing friends, I mean. . . Gottardo . . . you . . . and many others . . . have taken the time to learn

to speak with your hands. When I was at the School of the Deaf . . . in Berkeley . . . the headmaster was a believer in the arts. That was my good fortune . . . The art teacher, a great sculptor, was himself deaf and mute. He introduced me to the world of hearing and speaking artists, such as Piazzoni . . . How fortunate I have been! . . . How blessed!

(Stops dancing, eagerly sits at his easel, works vigorously as Chaplin continues dancing, deep in thought.)

CHAPLIN *(Continuing dance)*: Dear Gottardo, about Granville. Sometimes I think the silence in which he lives has . . . nurtured in him . . . some sense, some great capacity for happiness . . . which we hearing people lack. *(Pauses in thought and dance, then continues dance.)* If this joy comes through in Granville . . . and in his paintings. . . I don't see why it shouldn't come through in my films, which are also _ of course _ silent.

(Pauses, stops dancing, resumes dancing slowly, thoughtfully.)

(Redmond suddenly pauses in his painting, tries again, stops, tries again, sighs, sets brush down.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, I don't know about this movie making. It is very difficult. Not the doing _ after all, I'm just a bit player, as nothing compared to the Great Charlie, and I know it _ but the leaving of it . . . the parting from a group of people participating in a project _

it's intoxicating, to be truthful _ to the coming back to my studio alone when nearby there is so much comradeship . . . I hadn't anticipated this. It's ruining me for painting. I'm finding it a lonelier thing than it used to be . . .

(On screen upstage, a Redmond landscape of solitude; Chaplin stares at it, transfixed. The music stops.)

And it shows in my paintings. I am losing my way. I know you are shaking your head, but I am not the great artist you are.

Your friend, Granville.

CHAPLIN *(As he looks at painting, moving to where Redmond can see him)*: Granville, do you know what today is? Our fifth anniversary _ it was five years ago today that you moved into this studio.

REDMOND: That long? Has my art progressed? Yours certainly has.

CHAPLIN: Of course yours has! What an odd thing to say. Look at your sales!

REDMOND: Sales don't mean anything. I owe half of them to you.

CHAPLIN: I'm sorry that makes you unhappy.

REDMOND: It's just that sometimes I wonder if this was the best thing for me. Artists should cut themselves off from the rest of the world when they are working.

CHAPLIN: Not if their work is *about* the world. *(Pause.)* I like that painting. Is it a commission? If not, will you sell it to me? It is very quiet. There's a sense of quietude.

REDMOND *(Nettled)*: Charlie, how many times must I tell you? _ people say that about my paintings because . . . well, for obvious reasons.

CHAPLIN: Ohh, if they knew you as I do.

REDMOND: Are your films silent?

CHAPLIN *(A beat, then triumphant)*: No _ they have music!

REDMOND: You know what I mean.

CHAPLIN: Yes, but there is still a difference. My films are set where there is noise _ cities, with trucks and cars and people. I've never seen a truck in a Granville Redmond picture. . . And when you have people, they are farmers, or shepherds, so maybe we can imagine a sheep going ``Baaaaa!" So that's a noise.

(Has trouble signing or getting this across,

Redmond smiling.)

Or farmers cutting wheat, making the soft sound of
``Swoosh!”

*(Again trouble with this, Redmond smiling _
Chaplin showing some exasperation.)*

So your painting *is* quiet! And that is why I like it. Quiet
is disappearing from our lives. Paintings _ especially
your paintings _ are the quietest of all. . . *(Pause, twirls
his cane, signs with one hand, all too nonchalantly.)*
Speaking of silence, Granville, did you know they are
experimenting with talking films?

*(A brief lighting change, casting a moving shadow,
as if a cloud had passed swiftly between the earth
and the sun or moon. Redmond starts.)*

REDMOND *(Pause, then also too nonchalantly)*: I’ m sorry,
what did you say?

CHAPLIN: Experimenting _ with talking films.

REDMOND *(Alarmed)*: You are?

CHAPLIN: Not *me* _ *some people*, in the industry.

REDMOND *(Relieved, but only for a moment)*: Oh.

CHAPLIN: Yes. *(Pause.)* It's a year or two away, maybe more, before something really happens. You know how these things are _ it takes a while. There's the technology, and then the question of public acceptance.

(They are both silent, inward.)

REDMOND *(Finally)*: What do you think about it?

CHAPLIN: I don't know. You?

REDMOND: I know I wouldn't be able to get work in films that talk.

CHAPLIN: Don't talk nonsense. I'd use you.

REDMOND: Would *you* make films that talk?

CHAPLIN: I might _ why, do you think I couldn't?

REDMOND: Of course *you could*. You can do anything. You're the master.

CHAPLIN *(Pleased, clears his throat)*: Well, I'm not happy about it _ talking films. Everywhere you go, people are talking. There's noise everywhere. That's the status quo, not like movies, which are quiet.

(Turns away so Redmond can't read his lips.)

And your paintings. *(Turns back.)* Well, they _ movies _ will be quiet for a while longer anyway. But it's inevitable _ talking. Just listen to us! You're mute and I'm . . . reticent, and it doesn't stop us from going on and on.

REDMOND *(Impatient)*: What use would I be in films that talk?

CHAPLIN: What do you mean?

REDMOND: I'd just be there _ like a fence post!

CHAPLIN: Stand up!

REDMOND: Why?

CHAPLIN: To be a fence post!

(Straining to pull him to his feet.)

A big, round one! Just stand, Granville! . . . Piazzoni's right _ you are the most stubborn person. You never do anything without an argument.

(Redmond sighs, stands.)

CHAPLIN: Follow me!

(To music, Chaplin does a character walk. Chaplin gestures _ Redmond, reluctant, hesitates, but his performing instincts take over and he follows Chaplin's lead. Chaplin applauds politely.)

(Chaplin does a dance. Redmond imitates it.)

(Chaplin speeds it up, very vigorous. Music becomes almost frenetic. Redmond keeps up for a few moments, but then falters, tries hard to hang on, but runs out of breath, gasps, bends over. }

(Chaplin, realizing he has gone too far, pretends not to notice Redmond's condition, then slows granduallly _the music winding down with him until both come to a stop.)

CHAPLIN *(Moving away)*: You see? Very few people have your physical gifts.

REDMOND *(Catches his breath, bent over, signing with one hand)*: Or waist line! *(Subconsciously makes frustrated sign.)* I'm old and out of shape, Charlie.

CHAPLIN: I don't understand. You're out all the time on your painting expeditions, walking and climbing. At least that's what you tell me. You'll need to exercise, I guess. Make

yourself more fit. This around here _ (*Indicating his middle.*) _ is all up here _ (*His head.*) you know. Follow me. One two, one two . . .

(Chaplin exercises, making a game of it, touching his toes, but watching Redmond, worried.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, talking films!

(Again the passing 'cloud' casts a moving shadow.)

I'm terrified! I'll be out on my ear. Times are tough, there's a recession on the way. People aren't buying paintings. Art's the first thing to go when the world's not right. Acting brought in some money, but now? . . . How will I support Carrie and the children? . . . We'll end in the poorhouse!

(Piazzoni heard singing a few bars of his song _ 'Lu-fi de-la/foo-yah yu-sca/ de-gon de-yah' _ then he appears in his own light He looks a little older.)

PIAZZONI (*Surprised*): Dear Granville, terrified _ *you?*

REDMOND: Why not _ *me?*

PIAZZONI: Well, am I not addressing *the* Granville Redmond,

who, as a very young man, though he can't hear or speak. . . goes to Paris to paint . . . travels alone in the countryside. . . exhibits at the Official Salon . . . wins more honors than anyone at the Ecole des Beaux Arts?

REDMOND: *But* is denied a medal of recognition by the Paris Salon.

PIAZZONI: *But* is given permission to copy paintings *in the Louvre* as hundreds look on . . . *that* Granville Redmond is terrified?

REDMOND: You're damn right _ *that* Granville Redmond. I _ he _ was terrified in Paris, too, if you must know.

PIAZZONI: The *Granville Redmond in Paris* who balanced wine bottles on his head in front of Cezanne? . . . Challenged Du Abu to a duel to the 'death' _

REDMOND: _ with paint brushes!

PIAZZONI: You could have put out an eye! _ *and* pantomimed a striptease at The Follies? . . . *He was terrified?*

REDMOND: *Him! He* was also in a drunken stupor most of the time. . . Wine weakened his head. Don't forget the priest and the poker game! (*Pause, suddenly laughs.*) Thank God Redmond *pantomimed* that striptease! Otherwise he would never have lived it down.

PIAZZONI: He brought laughter to people. Isn't that what Chaplin does? And doesn't Redmond inspire Chaplin? And doesn't Chaplin borrow bits from Redmond to entertain millions?

Granville's friend, Piazzoni.

(Piazzoni goes.)

(Chaplin approaches as the lighting brightens.)

CHAPLIN: Granville, Raymond Griffith wants to borrow you for a moving picture.

REDMOND: I can be loaned?

CHAPLIN: Well, naturally it's up to you. But we'd been talking about getting you work . . .

REDMOND: What's the moving picture called?

CHAPLIN: "You'd Be Surprised."

REDMOND: Try me.

CHAPLIN: That's the name of the moving picture _ ``You'd Be Surprised."

REDMOND: What would I play?

CHAPLIN (*Makes a face, signing hesitantly*): Well, this is where it gets sticky . . .

REDMOND: Not another butler?!

CHAPLIN (*Laughs*): Another butler? What an idea! No, no . . .
(*Pause; bites his lip.*) Well, to be honest, it's a kind of butler.

REDMOND: A *kind* of butler? (*Repeating signing also, and as if an echo, not emphasis.*) A *kind* of butler.

CHAPLIN (*Angry at being cornered*): Well, dammit, yes _ a valet! Isn't that a kind of butler?

(Redmond hits himself on the head, angrily makes frustrated sign.)

There's one other thing, Granville . . . and you might think of it as the character's character _ the valet's . . . deaf.

REDMOND: A valet _ *and he's deaf*? Why don't they just cast me as a dumb waiter and be done with it?

CHAPLIN: It's not my moving picture.

REDMOND: Why is the valet deaf? Is the romantic lead deaf? . . . Of course not. Only valets and rag pickers are deaf. How stupid of me not to realize.

CHAPLIN: Not artists? Really, Granville.

REDMOND (*Pause; tense _ his signing stiff*): Is it to be a silent moving picture or a talking moving picture?

CHAPLIN (*Pause; tense _ his signing absolutely rigid*): I'm sorry. I didn't ask. I didn't think it mattered.

REDMOND: *Not mattered?* For you, perhaps! I can't say yes or no until I know, can I?

CHAPLIN: Of course you can. Why can't you?

REDMOND: Well, playing a deaf valet _ wouldn't it be more difficult in a talking moving picture?

CHAPLIN: Would it?

REDMOND: *Wouldn't it?*

CHAPLIN (*Nettled*) : I don't know _ I've never done a talking moving picture, *as you well know*. But why should it? Why should it be any different?

REDMOND (*Signing vehemently*): *Because people are talking!*

CHAPLIN (*Also*): *Not the valet! . . .* (Pause.) Anyway, all you do _ (*But freezes; uncomfortable pause.*) It shouldn't make any difference . . .

REDMOND: You've already said that!

(They have both become still, and worried.)

CHAPLIN (*After a pause*): Should it make any difference?

REDMOND: How should I know? You're the movie maker.

CHAPLIN: Yes, but . . .

REDMOND: *Yes?*

CHAPLIN: Well, I may be the movie maker, but you're the deaf person. I have to think about it.

REDMOND: And the deaf person doesn't?

CHAPLIN: I didn't say that. (*Grudgingly.*) Well, maybe something *like* that.

(Redmond allows himself a brief smile of satisfaction, then a silence as they both ponder the problem, fiddle with bits of 'deaf valet pantomime.')

(Chaplin impulsively cups his hand to an ear, realizes this is so wrong he flushes with embarrassment, slyly switches action to pulling thoughtfully on his ear lobe, peeks to see if Redmond was watching, but:)

(Redmond doesn't notice, because _ ``holding'' a ``salver'', bowing at the waist _ he is pretending in an exaggerated way to be reading someone's lips, something he's always done naturally.)

CHAPLIN: No no, Granville _ you're being a butler, not a valet!

REDMOND: A valet can't carry a salver?

CHAPLIN: Is that what you're doing? I couldn't tell.

REDMOND (*Registering some pain*): You couldn't?

CHAPLIN: Don't take it personally. A deaf person playing a deaf person in a talking moving picture is a problem, I admit. It's a first. Let's think about it.

(Chaplin sits cross-legged on floor, cups his chin in his hands, seems to fall into a depression, wearily makes frustration sign.)

(Redmond throws his hands into the air, collapses onto the chair by easel, makes frustration sign simultaneously with Chaplin.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, a new role. You won't believe it. I play something I've never played before _ and never *not* played _ a deaf person! A deaf *valet!* . . . I know it sounds odd . . . but I haven't a clue. . . Charlie said to think of the valet's deafness as a character note . . . I was furious, and later he apologized, but the fact is, I'm stuck on that point . . . Maybe deafness is character . . . Maybe it's *my* character.

(Piazzoni enters, shaking his head.)

PIAZZONI: Dear Granville, you and Charlie are making too much of it. Valets _ those that hear and those that don't _ dust off jackets and shine their masters' shoes, make wise and witty comments, and there you have it. Character would simply determine how well and in what manner the valet in question does it.

REDMOND: Oh, and since when do you know so much

about valets? Did you happen to have one when we were starving in Paris? You must have been hiding him.

PIAZZONI (*Turning front*): I ran out of money and left Paris. Granville also ran out of money but refused to leave. To do so would have signified failure. He took to living among the street people, haunting the darkest corners of the city and trading paintings for bread. For a warm night in a monastery bed he allowed monks to lecture him on his `dissolute ways.' Typical of Granville, he never forgave the monks for that.

(Silence, then faces Redmond.)

Granville, the children ask after you. ``When," Mireille said the other day, ``will Mr. Redmond visit again and perform `The Dance of the Baked Potatoes'?' '(Pause.) Come to San Francisco. It's been too long.

Your friend, Piazzoni.

(Piazzoni sings a few bars of his song, this time as he leaves.)

(Redmond relaxes, paints, likes a brush stroke, gestures in Chaplin's direction, notices Chaplin is glum. He sets down his brush, approaches Chaplin.)

REDMOND (*Signing*): What's the matter, Charlie? Trouble with a new script?

(Chaplin shakes his head, keeps hands in pocket.)

REDMOND (*Signing and gesturing to hands in pockets*): You've been quiet lately. Not yourself, here or on the set. Rolland remarked on it.

(Chaplin keeps hands in pockets.)

Is it something I've done?

(Chaplin thinks about it, plays with this a little bit, has fun with it for a few moments, but his heart isn't in it _ he turns glum again.)

Something I said about talking films?

(Chaplin smiles, pulls hands from pockets, stands slowly.)

CHAPLIN (*Signing and speaking slowly*): No. Sometimes I just get down. You're not the only one who gets (*Makes frustrated sign.*), you know.

REDMOND: It's something I've done.

CHAPLIN: There is one thing, since you mention it _ Carrie said you are thinking of another painting expedition.

REDMOND (Pause): I thought I might take my family north for a few months. And to paint with Piazzoni.

CHAPLIN: You could have said something. I might have a role for you, and there are sets to be painted. This is a business, you know. And Fairbanks wants you for a movie, if you can manage the time.

REDMOND: Fairbanks? *It is?*

CHAPLIN: ``The Three Musketeers.’’

REDMOND: ``The Three Musketeers!’’ My big break! . . . Athos? . . . Porthos? . . . Aramis? . . . En garde, Charlie!

(Redmond, trying to cheer up Chaplin, strikes dueling pose, thrusts at Chaplin.)

CHAPLIN (*Not wanting to play the game, parries once then stops*): This isn't needed, Granville _ you're not going to be Athos, Porthos *or* Aramis.

REDMOND: Ah! . . . Small part, right? Pierre the Fishmonger? Andre the Hod Carrier?

CHAPLIN: Something like that. So don't let this attention go to your head. And quit getting your hopes up all the time. It tires me out.

(Redmond sighs, ``sheaths'' sword. They are both silent.)

CHAPLIN *(Pause, suddenly very animated)*: Granville, would you do me a painting?. . . I mean now _ a quick sketch. I just had an idea. This very second! Please, while I still have it in my head _ I've seen you do sketches like *that!*

(Snaps his fingers. Redmond replaces canvas on easel with another, looks at Chaplin, brush poised.)

CHAPLIN: Twilight . . .

(Lighting dims .)

(Redmond paints a red sky with quick, broad strokes; it appears on the screen. Looks at Chaplin.)

CHAPLIN: . . . the setting sun reflecting off the underside of heavy clouds . .

(Redmond paints, looks at Chaplin.)

A slough or pond . . . the water dark and still. . .

(Redmond paints, looks at Chaplin.)

Poplars along one bank . . . reflected in the water . . .

REDMOND *(Sticking brush behind his ear to free his hands to sign)*: Would eucalyptus do? I haven't seen a poplar since France.

CHAPLIN *(Nodding, clipped and quick)*: Fine _ eucalyptus, oak, elm, any kind of tree.

(Redmond paints, looks at Chaplin.)

Low, rolling hills in the distance . . .

(Paints, looks at Chaplin, puts brush behind ear, signs.)

REDMOND: What's the psychology?

CHAPLIN: A scenario . . . an idea for a film . . . Now . . .
(Pause.) The Little Fellow walks into the water, walks and walks until you don't see him anymore, only the hat . . .

REDMOND: Should we see the Little Fellow in the sketch?

CHAPLIN: Just the hat, floating, like a lily pad . . . Think . . . Monet.

(Redmond glares.)

Pardon me _ think Redmond.

REDMOND *(Arrested hand movement)*: The . . . end of . . . you?

CHAPLIN *(Shrugs)*: Not likely. *(Melancholy smile.)* I hope not. Maybe the end of the Little Fellow . . . perhaps he's outlived his usefulness . . . *(Pause.)* There are some that think so. Or maybe it's me they object to. I talk too much, I know, and the Little Fellow, who says nothing, suffers for it. Well, suffering is his specialty. Better him than me, I say. *(Smiles.)* Or maybe it's just the the end of silent films . . . Or my films. . . I haven't thought it out. I never do. I just invent gags and incidents and see what happens. But it's never failed me. One thing always seems to lead _ logically and absurdly _ to another.

(Redmond picks up brush, a stroke and the hat appears, floating. He studies it. Chaplin studies it, nods.)

CHAPLIN *(Wonderingly)*: It's as I imagined it _ as if you were in my head. We are one person, Granville!

(Chaplin approaches the image slowly. Redmond, uncomfortable, jumps up, intercepts him, signs excitedly.)

REDMOND: Charlie, tell me what you think! A letter from Piazzoni arrived this morning and reminded me of something!

CHAPLIN: Could you finish the painting first?

REDMOND: In a minute. I have the image. This is a bit you might be able to use someday.

CHAPLIN: Granville _ !

(But Chaplin becomes fascinated by Redmond's energy as he excitedly opens paints box, throws paint tubes and other supplies onto the floor wilynilly, puts aside several brushes and sponges. Sticks the hard end of a brush into a sponge, repeats the process. Holds one in each hand, brush hair ends up, faces Chaplin, makes them do a little dance, as if they were tiny figures kicking up their heels. He hums a tune; the dance is upbeat. Redmond sways slightly.)

(Chaplin smiles.)

(Redmond thrusts brushes at Chaplin. Chaplin makes them do a little dance, begins playing with the possibilities.)

CHAPLIN *(Articulating sharply so Redmond can read his lips)*:
The Rock-ettes?

REDMOND: No _ The Potatoes! The Baked Potatoes!

CHAPLIN: *Baked Potatoes?*

REDMOND: I call it ``The Dance of the Baked Potatoes.” Did this for Piazzoni’s children and now do it for my children _ at the dinner table. I used forks, of course, not paint brushes. Stuck them into potatoes, usually small potatoes. Sometimes beets. Sometimes biscuits or rolls.

CHAPLIN: Where did it come from?

REDMOND: My youth _ anything to get attention at the dinner table.

CHAPLIN *(Incredulous)*: Did _ do _ Piazzoni’s children laugh?

REDMOND: They demand encores! Even Piazzoni!

CHAPLIN: It's so absurd, but . . . *(Puzzles.)* No. "The Dance of the Baked Potatoes" doesn't sound right. It's too . . . heavy. You want something lighter, something ethereal . . . such as . . .

(Does a fluttering motion with the brushes and sponges, again articulating clearly so Redmond will understand him.)

. . . "The Dance of the . . . *(Going up on his toes, thinking, straining.)* . . . Such as . . . "The Dance of the . . . Dinner Rolls!"

(Redmond "flutters," has trouble going up on his toes as lightly as Chaplin. Considers questioning Chaplin's idea, but instead smiles, shrugs and lands heavily on his feet with a thud.)

REDMOND: So be it. The Master says "The Dance of the Dinner Rolls."

(Music _ light, ethereal.)

(Redmond puts together another "set of dancers.")

(They face each other. They have become childlike, showing off to each other.)

(Chaplin creates a dance with the pieces, stops, invites Redmond to take the stage.)

(Redmond creates a dance with the pieces, stops, invites Chaplin to try.)

(Chaplin tickles his chin with the brush end of the brushes. Laughs.)

(Redmond does likewise. Laughs.)

(They stand shoulder to shoulder, work on and finally choreograph their dances in unison.)

(Exchange a look, and decide to dance themselves while performing. They have trouble coordinating their feet and the pieces. They stumble. They laugh. Then they get it. They sweep across the stage, one way and then the other.)

(They laugh.)

(They sweep off the stage once more.)

(The sound of a crash and then laughter.)

(Redmond painting image fades and the music gives way to the whirring sound of film running through a projector, then music as the lights dim.)

Act Two

Note: The Floating Hat can be played without intermission by immediately following the whirring sound of the projector with footage from ``The Gold Rush.''

Chaplin's ``The Gold Rush'' playing on the screen. The scene: ``The Dance of the Oceania Rolls.'' With three young women looking on in a cabin in Alaska, Chaplin's Tramp creates a little dance with dinner rolls on the ends of forks, basically a reprise of Redmond's dance with the brushes and sponges. The women laugh and applaud.)

Image fades out to reveal Chaplin's silhouette against the screen. He comes forward in hat, twirling cane, jaunty. He's aged a bit; his eyes darker, gray streaks in his hair.

CHAPLIN: Dear Gottardo, Granville's become impossible. Maybe it's advancing age, but he seems to have gotten it into his head that he's a star. And speaking of his head, he recently had his hair styled. His head looks like a pillow . . . By the way, look for him in yet another new talking movie. His third. Suddenly he can't get enough of them. Imagine if he could talk. It's called . . . well, I forget what it's called.

(Spot on Redmond entering, wearing a top coat; he keeps his right arm under his coat. He moves slowly. He wears an ascot and sunglasses. His hair is now totally gray, and he has gained weight.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, I've done a new film. People talk in it. Well, everyone except me. But at a distance I appear to be yelling. And I carry a sign that says: "Cold Beer, Ten Cents." You can't miss me.

CHAPLIN: Dear Gottardo, please ignore my last letter. I was being petty. Granville deserves every success. . . But I meant what I said about his hair.

(He turns. They see each other. Chaplin starts, pulls off his mustache, sticks it in his pocket.)

(Silence.)

CHAPLIN *(Finally, indicates signing; stiffly)*: Well, who's this _
Barrymore?. . . Tyrone Power?. . . *Mae West?* . . .

(Redmond forces a smile, poses to fit the latter.)

CHAPLIN *(Not biting)*: Dark glasses? Granville, isn't it enough
you can't hear? Now people will think you're blind, too.
All you need is a white cane.

REDMOND *(Signing with his free, left arm)*: Well, I certainly
wouldn't want to embarrass you, Charlie.

(Removes sunglasses, drops them into pocket.)

CHAPLIN *(Pause _ trying again, clearing his throat, pleasantly)*:
How did the shooting go? . . .

REDMOND *(Also; making a gesture first with his left hand
that might be construed as synonymous with clearing his
throat)*: Fine. Everyone says hello.

CHAPLIN *(Unable to help himself)*: My, my _ everyone says
hello! . . . I hope, Granville, you're not neglecting your
real gift, which is painting, to hobnob with these film
types. None of us is given limitless time, you know.

REDMOND: Meaning?

CHAPLIN: Everyone dies.

REDMOND: What you really meant, Charlie.

CHAPLIN: OK, since you ask. Maybe you've noticed . . .
there's a strange phenomena going around this town
_ great novelists strain to become mediocre
screenwriters, talented actors sing badly and . . . a
noted artist would rather be an actor. . .

REDMOND. What's that? Your signing's gotten sloppy, Charlie.

CHAPLIN (*Signing emphatically, with some anger*): Oh, this
is very low of you, Granville. Quite beneath you. Did
you pick it up from the talking-film people?

REDMOND: The talking-film people, as you call them, say if
you weren't so stubborn you'd make talking films. They
call you ``The man who would not talk.''

CHAPLIN: Well, my friends who have experienced your
obstinacy call you ``The man who would not
hear!''

REDMOND: I think, Charlie, you've lived too long
in this silent make-believe world of yours.

CHAPLIN: Oh? And what about you?

REDMOND: Mine's not make-believe. Besides, I don't think you should want me to shrink from the rest of the world. I never did before. Anyway, how can you, Charlie Chaplin _ actor, director, writer, composer _ condemn others for widening their horizons?

CHAPLIN: It's hardly my fault I'm good at those things, is it? Well? (*Irritated, bordering on angry.*) But, since you say my signing has become sloppy _ tell me, what does this mean? (*Does the Nazi salute, violently shooting his right arm out.*) Heil!

REDMOND (*Involuntarily stepping back in horror, signing nervously*): That's not a sign _ *that's an assault!*

CHAPLIN: It's the salute Germans use to honor a politician named Adolph! It's called . . . it's spelled like this _

(Chaplin sign spells.)

REDMOND: H - E - . . . They yell "Hell"?

CHAPLIN: Now who's being sloppy? Pay attention! (*Suddenly realizing he sounds like a school teacher.*) And sit up straight! (*Sign spelling slower, more emphatically.*) H - e - i _ eye_ as in _ (*Points to his eye.*) _ l. Heil!

REDMOND (*Irritated by his manner*): So? What does it mean?
And I've never heard of _ well, this person you just said.

CHAPLIN (*Subconsciously makes frustrated sign*): Granville,
get your head out of the sand! *Adolph Hitler!*

REDMOND: Oh _ *him*.

CHAPLIN: *Him!* Herr Hitler! Herr *Artiste!* He's a fan! *Of* the
Little Fellow!

REDMOND: You think everyone's a fan of the Little Fellow.

CHAPLIN: You can laugh if you want, but he's grown a
mustache _ (*Slaps his mustache on.*) _ *like mine!*
(*Looks front, shoulders thrown back; signing furiously.*)
It can't be coincidence! (*Turns on his heel, strides
back and forth, building up physical energy.*) But don't
think I'm flattered, Granville. Oh no _ this man is evil!
He's a menace to the world, the Jews, and he has his
eyes on *your* France!

REDMOND: What does he want with *my* France?

CHAPLIN: To destroy its people and its art. He thinks them _
and it _ decadent! (*Fire in his eyes.*) But first, having
already `stolen' my mustache, he'll steal _ ? (*Coaxing.*)
He'll steal? . . .

(Walking back and forth in front of Redmond.)

Granville, what will he steal?

REDMOND: I have no idea.

CHAPLIN: Artists!

REDMOND: `Artists`?

CHAPLIN: You *_ they! _* can be so *(Does the frustrated sign emphatically.) _* ! So unaware! `The Walk`! That's what he'd steal! . . . *Our `Walk`.*

REDMOND *(Incredulous)*: What would he do with `The Walk`?

CHAPLIN *(Wildly)*: What?! What would he do with it?! . . . Must I draw *you*, Granville Redmond, *an artist*, a picture? . . . `The Walk` is riveting! This is what he would do with it!

(Turns his hat sideways on his head, does The Walk,` giving the salute with one hand, indicates signing with the other _ a kind of mad inspiration has come over him.)

. . . And plagiarists they are, they'll all be doing `The Walk`!

*(He does a sideways goose step takeoff of
`The Walk,' glancing over at Redmond as if he
should join him)*

. . . And thieves and thugs they are, they'll claim it for
themselves, call it something else! . . . Perhaps. . .
`The German Hoedown'! . . .

*(To Western music he dances this _ thumbs
in belt, facing out as he crosses the stage twice,
again looking over at Redmond.)*

. . . Or `The Gestapo Stomp' ! . . .

REDMOND: Ges - ta - po? *(Furious, in desperation:)* Another
new word! Please, Charlie, stop! . . .What is ges -ta - po?

CHAPLIN *(Hitting the brakes, impatiently):* I don't know!
What does it matter? It's only a word! These things
just come to me! I think them and they happen. It's
that curse called inspiration.

*(To Wagner he dances the ``Gestapo Stomp''
_ classical and military, crossing the stage,
his steps heavy and rhythmic _ gesturing for
Redmond to join him.)*

. . . Or `The' _ Granville, join me, please! _ Or `The . . .

Duck Walk' !. . .

(To ``cartoon'' music he dances this, a squatting kind of march, saluting with one hand, holding his "aching" back with the other, and _ with dismay, his eyes wide _ dangerously looking back at Redmond as he goes off.)

(A crash.)

(Music stops.)

(Silence.)

REDMOND *(After a considered pause)*: Dear Gottardo, good news! Charlie had an accident, which usually means an inspiration. He once fell off a pier getting the idea for a new moving picture. Walked right off the end of it and just missed a fishing trawler. It's because he puts himself so fully into everything he does.

(Chaplin re-enters, hobbling on his cane, fondling his nose.)

CHAPLIN *(Irritable)*: Twisted my ankle and fractured my nose! . . . That bastard Hitler _ *I told you he was dangerous!* I'll get even . . . No, it's *your* fault, Granville! . . . You did this to me. Why didn't you join in?

(Insecure, anxious.) You liked the idea, didn't you? It works, doesn't it?

REDMOND: The idea's fine.

CHAPLIN *(Injured)*: Fine?

REDMOND: Brilliant. *(Extra, sincere emphasis in his signing)*
I mean _ brilliant!

CHAPLIN: Well, then?

REDMOND: *This*, then.

(Redmond slowly removes topcoat to reveal his right arm in a sling.)

CHAPLIN: How?

REDMOND: Walking.

CHAPLIN: Doing 'The Walk'?

REDMOND: No _ simply walking. One foot in front of the other. Like this.

(Redmond walks.)

CHAPLIN: Oh, well, that was your mistake. Just look at you! Simply walking is dangerous. It lacks character. Most walking accidents happen when people are walking normally. It's hard to find a rhythm. *(Removes mustache, puts it in his pocket. Primly:)* You'll seldom see me doing it.

REDMOND *(Smiles)*: There were . . . circumstances . . . At least it wasn't my painting arm. At least I can still work. *(Pause.)* Walking the beaches I saw something recently . . . This woman . . .

(Redmond sets palette out, takes brush in his left hand, sits at easel, begins to paint. The image slowly begins to take shape on the screen. It begins with a beach, a beach tent, nondescript but arresting figures.)

CHAPLIN': Dear Gottardo, Granville took a fall on wet pavement and broke his arm _ his right, non-painting arm . . . We're not used to rain here, as you people are in San Francisco. So we're very clumsy in it _ people falling down, automobiles crashing, gutters overflowing. Put a fish on land, we're like that in water _ painful to watch . . . Still, taking a fall is humiliating for a man who has such pride in his physical grace . . . *(Pauses, smiles sheepishly.)* . . . such as Granville . . .

(On screen, beach scene begins to appear; Chaplin stares at it.)

But still, he works . . .

(Redmond paints a woman with a parasol walking toward the viewer, wearing a sleeveless blouse, a nearly transparent skirt, people under beach umbrellas, etc. Chaplin takes a few steps toward the image. Redmond suddenly stops painting.)

. . . or did. Recently he's been experiencing numbness in his left hand, a circulation problem . . . his painting hand . . .

(Redmond tries to move his hand.)

. . . For the first time, he can't paint . . . The doctors don't know how to treat it . . . And for the first time the famous Granville Redmond joyfulness . . . which, as we both know, was exaggerated anyway, because the man really can be morose and surly . . . if not downright suicidal . . .

(He pauses as he watches Redmond furiously hurl brush.)

. . . has disappeared altogether . . . There's not a trace of it . . .

(Redmond gets up, picks up his coat,

leaves.)

Chaplin (*Pause*): . . . or, for that matter, of Granville. I haven't seen him for weeks . . . I come into his studio every day, when I can get a moment away from filming _ but no Granville . . . It's lonely and boring . . . (*Pause.*) I have no one to sign to! (*Paces, moving his fingers to suit the following.*) It is nothing to *talk* to yourself, Piazzoni, but to *sign* to yourself! . . . People stare at you! (*Forces himself to stop moving his fingers.*) *It's . . . disturbing!*

(Approaches image of Redmond painting _ he stares, taken by it.)

And something else. He left a painting, incomplete, of a woman on a beach. Odd of him to do people, as you know. He painted her so quickly, yet she walks _ I'm a prisoner of walks, of course _ with such confidence and elegance, but alone in a world of her own. She's quite lovely.

(Sits, puts elbows on knees, chin on hands, stares at image, sighs.)

I wonder if Granville will ever finish the picture. . . I don't know if I want him to . . . I've fallen in love with her the way she is . . . Gottardo, I'm the only man I know who can fall in love with a *painting* of a woman!. . . Was she someone he knew and loved?. . . Can you tell me anything? . . .

REDMOND'S VOICE: Dear Charlie . . .

(Chaplin sits straight, alert.)

I should be leaving the hospital in a few days. The doctors told me you visited again, but I was sleeping. Thank you for your concern and friendship.

(A silence.)

I don't know when I'll be able to return to the studio. My broken arm is slowly getting better, but my painting arm is poorly . . . I feel like the Venus De Milo . . . I can't manipulate a fork, much less a brush . . . I'm down to a mere two-hundred pounds, a shadow of my former self. The worst is, I can't perform ``The Dance of the Oceana Rolls' ' for the children . . . Well, they're almost young adults now, but they still request my routines.

(A silence.)

And _ excuse the pun _ but speaking of roles _ not *speaking roles*, mind you, since you don't _ or won't _ do talking films _

(Chaplin frowns.)

_ do you have one for me? . . . I'm running low on money. I could play an onlooker. . . Someone in a crowd scene _ how about that? . . . Listen to me! . . . How my

career's plummeted _ from deaf valet to onlooker, just like *that!* I didn't know when I had it good, did I?

(A silence.)

One thing more, if you would . . . I left an unfinished painting in the studio, a woman walking on a beach, and it's been so long maybe the janitor threw it out _ I wouldn't blame him if he did. Or you, if you had gotten sick of it . . . But if it's still on the premises . . . well, I don't like incomplete work being around. If I die, someone could sign my name and pass it off as a completed work . . . I would hate that . . . Even worse, they could sign *someone else's name* _ I'd hate that even more! Would you please get rid of it for me?

(Chaplin sits bolt upright.)

Burn it or something.

CHAPLIN *(Jumps to his feet): Burn it?!*

REDMOND'S VOICE: Granville.

CHAPLIN: The hell you say, *Granville!*

(Stares at painting, paces, stops, pantomimes writing, scribbling madly.)

CHAPLIN (*Urgent*): Dear Gottardo, Granville wants to _

PIAZZONI'S VOICE (*Quick response*): Charlie, it's his painting.

CHAPLIN: But _

PIAZZONI'S VOICE: Whatever he wants to do with it _

CHAPLIN: You don't understand _

(Piazzoni , humming his little tune, appears in his own light; his hair and mustache grayed; he moves a little slower, but stands very straight.)

PIAZZONI: Charlie, he created it.

CHAPLIN: That doesn't give him the right to destroy it.

PIAZZONI: Of course it does. God does it all the time. You must respect the artist's wishes in a matter like this. I'm sure you'd want yours respected. (*Pause.*) *Well?* You tell me. Or would you like those film clips you thought you'd thrown in the scrap pile resurrected after you die?

(Piazzoni goes off.)

CHAPLIN (*Considers, then pantomimes hurling away*

a pen): Dear Gottardo, yes yes! Of course, whatever you say! (*Pantomimes tearing up a letter.*) You're not, Dear Pen Pal, as much fun as you used to be.

(Chaplin picks painting off easel, stares at it, impetuously kisses it passionately, pauses, checks his lips for paint, finds none, goes off with canvas. A crashing sound. Silence. Then he returns limping. He sits, dabs at his eyes with a handkerchief.)

PIAZZONI'S VOICE: Dear Charlie, I haven't heard from Granville in weeks. It's your fault I'm worrying about him now. If I don't hear something soon, I may have to come down there. . . and then you'll have to put up with me as a house guest.

(Lighting change.)

CHAPLIN (*Still dabbing at his eyes*): Dear Gottardo, did I forget to notify you? Granville's returned. He's fine but reclusive. Believe it or not, he did some work for me the other day, a new movie called ``City Lights.'' He plays a sculptor who does a bit of posing _ a natural for such a poseur as Granville, requiring no acting talent whatsoever . . . I will admit, though, he ranted beautifully, when that was what I wanted . . . Probably because he needed the work so badly. (*Blows his nose in handkerchief.*) I'm sorry if I sound nasty, but when I asked Granville if he would return to his painting, he said nothing. He pretended he didn't `hear' me. And this after I'd just given him work. He

won't come back to his painting studio _ he says he
`hasn't the desire." He's doing this to hurt me. He has
a hard side _ Granville does. He can be cruel, especially
to those who look after him.

(Piazzoni enters in his own light.)

PIAZZONI: La-fi de-la/
Foo-ya yu-sca/
De-le-diga di-goon . . .

Look after him? Charlie, he's not a child.

CHAPLIN: Can you deny I've been good to him?

PIAZZONI: Why would you be otherwise? He's your friend.

CHAPLIN *(As he looks around)*: This studio I gave him _
we could have used it for a warehouse, scenery
workshop, dressing rooms, whatever. But no, I
gave it to Granville years ago.

PIAZZONI: And that was generous of you. But don't forget,
it was always a dream of Granville's to have his own
studio.

CHAPLIN: Yes, yes, I know _ *(Mockingly.)* _ at `the base
of rolling hills." But I'll tell you, Piazzoni, Granville
couldn't have wanted it all that much, or he'd have it by
now. *(Growing irritation.)* You speak as if I've mistreated

him. I've found him collectors _ Mary Pickford and Doug Fairbanks among them, for God's sake _ I've bought his paintings, I've put him in my moving pictures and the moving pictures of others. . . Please do forgive me if I haven't put him in a talkie. I don't do talkies.

REDMOND'S VOICE: Dear Charlie _

(Redmond appears in his own light. He looks older, tired, but his ``voice'' remains vigorous. Piazzoni goes off.)

_ I'm such a fool. I hope you didn't listen to me and destroy that painting. The title just came to me. And once the title comes to me, I know the painting has a reason for being and must be finished. And that I must paint again, when I am able.

(Chaplin hurries off; he returns with the painting _ the stretcher bars are broken, a small rip or two in the canvas. He frantically puts it on easel, its damaged imageshowing on screen, and tries to smooth it out.)

CHAPLIN: Dear Gottardo, thank you ever so much. Granville's decided he wants the painting of the lady on the beach after all.

(It falls off the easel, he puts it back on, holds it there as if it were a living thing.)

Can you direct me to a good conservator? I didn't destroy the painting but I tripped and fell on it. If Granville sees it this way . . . (*Thinks about it, then rubs his nose.*) . . . he'll laugh at me.

REDMOND: Dear Charlie, I am going to call it ``Talk on the Beach.'' What do you think?

CHAPLIN (*Pause*): Dear Granville, what do I think? I think you of course mean ``*Walk* on the Beach.''

REDMOND: Dear Charlie, will we never understand each other? I said and I meant ``*Talk*.'' Of course, I understand you are obsessed with walks. (*Pause.*) Now please excuse me, I am told I must rest. I will continue this letter shortly. If you have destroyed ``Talk on the Beach,`` I will understand.

(*He goes off.*)

CHAPLIN (*Trying to smooth canvas*): Dear Piazzoni, help.

PIAZZONI'S VOICE: Dear Charlie, I didn't think you would intentionally destroy it. But I had forgotten about your occasional accidents. Don't worry, most paintings can be fixed. Granville could probably do it himself.

CHAPLIN (*Hesitant*): There's something else. . . Granville calls the painting ``Talk on the Beach.'' Well, no one's talking that I can see, but the woman *is walking* . . . Why

is he so maddeningly contrary? I don't call the Little Fellow the *Big* Fellow, do I?. . . I feel another argument around the corner.

(Piazzoni appears in his own light, he holds a hat in one hand.)

PIAZZONI: Which, of course, you'll both enjoy immensely.

(Redmond enters. Darkness around his eyes; he has lost weight. Redmond and Chaplin look at each other and then spontaneously embrace. This is not their usual behavior, and the embrace is very brief. Redmond breaks off first. He's in some physical pain but tries to hide it. Both are somewhat embarrassed. Chaplin clears his throat.)

CHAPLIN *(After a beat, signing)*: Well, you're as strong as ever. I'm sorry about _ *(Makes himself say it:)* _ "Talk on the Beach." Do you think it can be fixed?

REDMOND *(Picking up brushes, studies painting)*: Not only fixed, Charlie _ *finished!*

(He straightens canvas, then sits at his easel and begins painting. Chaplin sits behind Redmond and watches, both hands resting on the handle of his cane. He is quiet and content. His eyes shift from Redmond's back to the screen.)

(There is a silence of several moments, except for the heightened, rhythmic sound of brush on canvas.)

CHAPLIN: Dear Piazzoni, I think the most restful moments in my life have come watching Granville paint, right here in this room . . .

(He becomes silent, watches and listens, light changes to shadow on him, narrowed, but soft, on Redmond.)

His quiet intensity. I watch him paint as, in my childhood, I watched my mother apply make up for the variety stage. *(Pause.)* The sound of the brush on the canvas . . . *(Pause.)* The smell of the oil paints . . . *(Pause.)* The anticipation of what will appear next in the picture. . . All of the tension goes out of me. I feel hypnotized . . . Is this a good thing or a bad thing? *(Pause.)* I don't know.

(Redmond shifts, as if he ``heard ``something, but his concentration is fully on the painting, and although he can be seen to be in discomfort, he works swiftly and surely. He develops the figures of three adolescent girls in bathing suits standing in a group, looking at the walking woman. They appear to be in conversation.)

REDMOND *(After a while, turns to Chaplin, signs with his free hand enthusiastically):* ``Talk'' refers to _

CHAPLIN (*Trying to please and remain in his trance, quickly cutting him off*): Oh, I understand.

REDMOND: No, you see _

CHAPLIN (*Quickly again*): It's symbolism, isn't it?

PIAZZONI (*A slight mocking emphasis*): Symbolism.

CHAPLIN (*Waving Redmond off so he will continue painting*): I use it myself on occasion.

(Redmond thinks about replying, decides against it, smiles ruefully, turns back and continues painting.)

(Lighting softens on Chaplin and Redmond.)

PIAZZONI: In his final years Granville had worried his art wasn't important enough, as if painting from the soul wasn't satisfactory. . . It needed to ``mean'' something. You had to be able to put words to it and it didn't hurt to be part of a movement. (*Putting mock emphasis on some of the words.*) ``The Ash Can School''. . . ``The Group of Seven'' ``Kandinsky and *The Blue Four*'' . . . These were the people and groups the critics were writing about. Granville was especially self-conscious of his paintings of fields of wildflowers. These were his ``pot boilers,'' they were what sold. . . The more people praised their beauty, the more ashamed of them

he became. . . His mood pieces, which he most loved doing, were practically ignored by the public. . . Jean, his eldest son and a realist _ when it came to life and money _ encouraged his father to paint more and more fields of wildflowers, especially the golden California poppies _ these paintings paid the bills . . . When Granville rebelled, Charlie mocked him.

(Strong lighting change. Image on screen changes to a Redmond landscape of a field of wildflowers. Bright blues, golds and greens. Redmond remains at easel, but his painting rhythm changes. Chaplin stands, puts on hat and tips it forward, takes on a new character, saunters over to Redmond, whistling, points cane at painting.)

CHAPLIN (*Loud*): I say, Mr. Granville Redmond, how much for the pretty picture?

(Redmond, reading his lips, looks away and discreetly rolls his eyes.)

I say _

REDMOND (*Terse signing*): Not now, Charlie!

CHAPLIN: Play the game, Granville!

REDMOND: I'm working! No!

CHAPLIN: Play it! . . . *(In character.)* I'm told you're a great artist, even though you can't hear or speak. Amazing. That true? . . . I say, that true? Speak up _ I can't hear you . . . So, Mr. Redmond, how much for the pretty picture?

(Redmond sighs _ playing the game, he wearily pantomimes writing, showing writing to Chaplin's character, who reads loudly from the "paper" they hand back and forth, then responds:)

CHAPLIN: "What pretty picture is that, sir?" . . . Well, I don't see any other than this one right here, Mr. Redmond.

(Redmond "writes," Chaplin reads, etc.)

"I have others. Some that are . . . more meaningful." . . . Thank you, but I don't need to see others. I certainly don't need "more meaningful." No, I know what appeals to me and this picture appeals to me. I will pay cash for it _ *(Winks.)* _ so you won't have to report it to the . . . well, I'm sure you get my meaning . . . Incidentally, since you've got your brush in hand, could you put more flowers in the picture?

(Redmond glares, writes forcefully, pushes paper at him; Chaplin reads:)

"I say, it has quite enough *flowers!* In fact, *sir*, this painting's not for sale. And that way, *sir*, is the door
—

(Redmond waves goodbye.)

CHAPLIN (Moving off): Well, I say! Touchy, aren't we? Well, well.

(Lighting change.)

CHAPLIN: How odd you are, Granville! What's wrong with paintings that make people feel good? Don't you know joy _ your joy in the world around you _ is what you and your art are about? Do you think I resent it if people laugh _ or more to the point, cry _ at my comedy? Do you think I am ashamed of making money?

REDMOND: There's a difference, Charlie. People take your comedy seriously. My serious paintings_ which I feel are *spiritually joyful*, by the way _ aren't taken, well, anything _ they simply don't sell.

CHAPLIN: People will come around to it. Give them time.

REDMOND: Time? Charlie, I'm nearly sixty-four. I don't have time.

CHAPLIN: You don't know that. You *do know* you need money.

(Redmond nods slowly, then goes back to

his painting, which again becomes the woman on the beach. Chaplin settles in to watch, sighing contentedly. Lighting softens on both of them)

PIAZZONI: Many years after Granville's death, and after Charlie's . . . and mine, too, come to think of it _ *(Smiles.)*_ well, that's a jolt _ a dictator was deposed in Southeastern Asia. He was the sort of man Chaplin despised and would have satirized. . . This dictator had a home in Beverly Hills, making it easy to stash money in U.S. banks. On the dictator's overthrow, his Beverly Hills house was cordoned off . . . there were thought to be important papers within, and perhaps there were. But they found something far more valuable. Hanging on the walls, in nearly every room, were paintings by one Granville Seymour Redmond, artist extraordinaire. . . They were everywhere . . . It was Charlie's old house, before he left the country _ he was driven out, really _ for Switzerland. *(Pause.)* We had talked about Switzerland once, Charlie and I, when I happened to show up in Los Angeles looking spiffy in . . .

(Puts on hat he is holding. Striking a solemn pose, nose up, thumbs in his lapels: (Note: they remain in separate light and do not face each other when speaking))

CHAPLIN *(Small pause, grinning)*: It's called *what?*

PIAZZONI *(Proudly, turning in a circle to show off the hat)*: A Sicilian country hat! They're quite popular, you know.

CHAPLIN: Are they? Funny hat. Makes you look short.

PIAZZONI: I am short.

CHAPLIN (*Stands straight; they are the same size*): No, I wouldn't say so . . . *Sicilian? Piazzoni?*. . . All this time I thought you were Italian!

PIAZZONI: Neither. I was born in Switzerland. A village called Intragna. But my parents were descendants of Italian immigrants.

CHAPLIN: Then you're really Italian.

PIAZZONI: No. My parents called Switzerland their home. I would dishonor them to ignore that. I grew up Swiss, or Italian-Swiss, if you like.

CHAPLIN: And what are you now _ *Italian-Swiss-American?*

PIAZZONI: Yes. But truer in spirit, and for the sake of brevity and simplicity, I would call myself Californian. A man's roots grow deepest in the land he adopts . . . Besides, California is better for such as us, Charlie. And Granville, too. It's where we create best.

(Redmond jumps up, elated, gestures to painting, signs excitedly:)

REDMOND: There, Charlie! _ ``Talk on the Beach'' is repaired
_ *and finished!* . . . Well, the stretcher bars need regluing,
and there's a small tear, and an odd indentation in the
center of the canvas _

(Chaplin frowns, fondling his nose in memory.)

_ which can be fixed, but that's all . . . The main
thing is, I think the painting works now.

*(Does a little dance step, but stops, short of
breath. He picks up brush, signs the painting
with a dramatic flourish.)*

CHAPLIN *(Gesturing dramatically, announcing):* ``Granville _
S. _ Redmond!"

*(Redmond nods in appreciation, smiles,
backs up to look at painting at a distance.)*

REDMOND *(Some anxiety):* Well? What do you think, Charlie?
. . . Do you still like it?

CHAPLIN *(Signing and saying emphatically):* Very much,
Granville! Very much indeed! *(Sighs.)* She's so lovely.
Such elegance. I'm quite taken by her. I'm glad you didn't
. . . add anything.

REDMOND *(Almost childishly excited):* It's important to know

when to stop! I felt the story was told. Do you see now where the title comes from?

(Chaplin hesitates.)

Don't try so hard, Charlie! . . . It's not symbolism _ it's life! That's all, just life! A picture of life! . . . The three girls! They are *talking* about the woman. She is beautiful and mysterious and they wonder about her and want to be like her. You can see it! It's very simple! . . . It's just a moment in time, but in the lives of children, a telling one . . . *(Small pause.)* It was the way you spoke of the woman that gave me the idea for the girls and the title. *(Bows, gestures to painting.)* So, with the greatest pleasure, I present to you, Charlie Chaplin, the world's greatest comedian, ``Talk on the Beach.''

CHAPLIN *(Pleased)*: Oh, well . . . Yes . . . Thank you, Granville. . . What a surprise! This is a wonderful picture. I'll treasure it always. *(Looks at painting a moment, then thoughtfully:)* Of course, since she is the one being talked about _ the center of attention, as your composition makes abundantly clear _ you could have called it ``Talk *of* the Beach.''

(His voice trailing off.) Certainly, if I was making a film of it . . .

(Redmond, while smiling, turns away and makes frustrated sign almost gently, resignedly. He sighs.)

REDMOND: Dear Gottardo, Charlie is being contrary again. It's just as well. Soon I will tell him I am

leaving . . . I must if I am to find myself _ and,
and frankly, it will be easier if we are arguing.
(*Smiles.*) Besides, our arguments are my fondest
memories . . .

CHAPLIN (*Sounding distant, stepping back*): . . . But of course
I know how stubborn you can be, once you get an idea
into your head . . .

REDMOND (*Continuing letter, cocking his head, as if he could
hear Chaplin*): ... And I think his, too.

PIAZZONI: I don't know what happened between Charlie and
Granville, but something did . . . Because, though they
spent sixteen years in the closest proximity . . . though
Granville appeared in a dozen Chaplin films . . . though
Chaplin collected dozens of Granville's paintings . . .
though Chaplin was inspired in no small part by
Redmond . . . Though all these things, Charlie did not
mention Granville in his autobiography. (*Pause.*) Not
one word. (*Pause.*) Nothing.

(*A silence.*)

Unfortunately, Granville's somewhat sudden death
precluded any comment from him. There were clues,
but that's all they were.

(*Lighting change.*)

REDMOND: You see the problem, don't you, Gottardo?
I've always wanted to be part of the speaking world,
Charlie of the silent. It wears at us.

CHAPLIN: I know I sound like a rebuffed lover, Gottardo, but I
don't think he appreciates all I've done for him. I think he
takes me . . . (*Pantomimes playing violin, sniffing.*) . . . for
granted.

PIAZZONI: But these were eternal squabbles between them.
There were moments I witnessed that gave me more
concern. Seeming pin pricks that might become gaping
wounds. Charlie's paternal attitude, despite being much
the younger of the two. Granville ungraciously taking
credit for some of the bits Charlie borrowed.

CHAPLIN (*To Redmond*): Just because *you* did it,
Granville, doesn't mean I hadn't thought of it. Or wouldn't
have! I'm Charlie Chaplin, or have you forgotten?

PIAZZONI: They became critical and defensive with each other.
Then there was the day early in 1935, several months
before his death, when Granville, remembering his Paris
humiliations at the hands of priests and monks, began
harping on Catholics again, and Charlie rounded on him
and yelled, not even bothering to sign _

CHAPLIN: And what, tell me, do you think of the Jews?

PIAZZONI: Well, he told Charlie, confused and startled, he
hadn't thought of them at all. Should he have? And if so,

what? *(Pause.)* Charlie said nothing. *(Pause.)* There was such a silence _ between ``the man who would not speak'' and ``the man who would not hear'' _ that I cut my trip short and returned to San Francisco. I later regretted that. *(Pause.)* Granville's final letter made me smile.

REDMOND: Gottardo! *(Thinks of something, grins, does an involuntary, joyful little dance step.)* Gottardo, don't laugh! _ well, you're bound to _ but I have my eyes on a little studio, with wonderful light, at the foot of the San Gabriels . . . Jean has spoken to the landlord and we are ready to sign a lease. It's just a matter of days now . . . *(Pause.)* Gottardo, I really mean it this time. I hope Charlie understands . . .

PIAZZONI: But then, for several months, silence from them both. My letters went unanswered.

(Redmond starts to leave, hesitates to look back at Chaplin _ standing in fading light and staring at the painting _ then, clearly conflicted, Redmond goes.)

(Lighting change.)

PIAZZONI: Until, weeks after the fact; until, indeed, weeks after Granville's family had given me the news _

(Chaplin walks front, carrying cane.)

CHAPLIN: Dear Gottardo, I'm sure you know by now
Granville is dead. I knew the family contacted you. It was
sudden but somehow not unexpected. I would have
written sooner but I've been busy . . .

PIAZZONI: The recurring circulation problem had been the
cause of death. . . The letter seemed distant and
detached, until, near the end, almost grudgingly _

CHAPLIN: He had many friends here _ everyone seemed to
love him _ so, for them, I have kept the studio vacant in
his memory, with a painting on the easel _ one he did
many years ago for me, of a slough or pond . . .

*(The painting from earlier of a slough and trees
appears on the screen.)*

. . . with poplars _ *(Double-take and intentional comic ac-
cent on ``no, make that eucalyptus'' to cover a slight
self-embarrassment.)* _ no, make that *eucalyptus!* . . .
(Evenly now.) . . . on one shore, reflected in the water,
and in the distance, far distance, hills . . . and floating on
the water, a hat.

(Brief Silence; he twirls cane.)

As for ``Talk on the Beach," it is going home with me.
Granville gave it to me. I don't have a receipt or
anything _

(He sets cane aside, takes ``Talk on the Beach''

off the easel, starts to walk toward the screen image, up the ramp, in a normal walk, then thinks better of it, stops, descends, puffs up his hair a la Redmond, then does an imitation of Redmond's dance step up the ramp.)

_ but it's mine.

(Chaplin is now at the top of the ramp. He is silhouetted against the painting of a pond in a landscape.)

PIAZZONI: La-fi de-la/
Foo-ya yu-sca/
De-le-diga di-goon/
Doo-ya de-la-mash/
Don-gui-na don-yu-sca . . .

(Hums the tune for a few moments.)

CHAPLIN: Dear Gottardo, if you're ever this way, and need a place to work, you know you are always welcome. Who knows? We might put you in a moving picture.

PIAZZONI: I told him I was too short to be in moving pictures. He said _

CHAPLAIN: You're just the right height. In fact, if you can dance we might make a duo.

PIAZZONI (Pause): What do you mean?

CHAPLIN: This studio space . . .

PIAZZONI: Granville's space?

CHAPLIN: . . . shame to see it go back to dusty props and costumes when it could have paintings again. Besides, you always said you wanted to paint the Southern California landscape.

(Silence. Chaplin waits.)

CHAPLIN: Well, what do you think?

(Piazzoni moves off a bit.)

PIAZZONI: I said it didn't bear thinking about. *(Short pause.)*
Not for long, anyway.

(Piazzoni, somewhat sadly, hums his tune.)

CHAPLIN: Very welll.

Chaplin lowers his head, turns and looks into the landscape, which darkens to twilight, the focus narrowing to the hat, floating. A brief silence, then darkness on Chaplin.

Piazzoni makes a deft, unintelligible signing motion, then darkness descends over him and what can still be seen of the hat in the landscape.

End.