

# **THE ARTIST**

**Written by  
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# THE ARTIST

*Silent film, illustrated musically, with some title cards to indicate the dialogues, with actors whose lips move when they speak although we never hear their voices. The images are in black and white, in format 1.33.*

1      **TITLES**      1

The letters of the titles come up on a title card typical of the 1920s. Elegant motifs around the edge of the frame, and, in the background, there are geometrical shapes reminiscent of the light beams of a film première. Behind is a stylized town. The titles end in a fade to black. On black, the date appears on the screen: 1927

2      **INT. LABORATORY - DAY**      2

In a "futuristic" 1920s laboratory, a man in tail coat and bow tie is being tortured. Ultrasound is being piped into his ears. It's incredibly painful! He's screaming.

**Title card:**  
**I'm not telling! I won't talk!!!**

His torturers, cold men of science in white coats, gradually increase the volume. The pain seems unbearable, the volume reaches level 10 (maximum), the man passes out!

3      **INT. CELLS & CORRIDORS - DAY**      3

Guards wearing long leather overcoats throw the man into a cell!

As the man is lying there on the ground, a dog wiggles through the bars at the window. The dog, a Jack Russell, jumps on top of the man - visibly his master - and begins to lick his face. The man opens one eye! When he sees his dog, he can't help cracking a smile...

The man, now on his feet, looks in pain. Despite the pain, he motions to his dog who begins to bark in lively fashion.

Outside the cell, the guard looks curious about the noise. He goes to the door, opens the spy flap and finds himself face to face with the man, eye to eye just a couple of inches apart! The man moves his eyes in such a way that he hypnotizes the guard! Superimposed on the screen: a spinning black and white spiral, until the dazed guard take his keys, opens the door and releases the man and his dog.

The man (the hero, thus) imprisons the guard without harming him, then runs over to the guard's desk. His ears are still causing him pain, but he opens a drawer and takes out his belongings: a top hat which he snaps open, and a mask, which he puts over his head to conceal his eyes.

We catch up with the masked man walking down corridors. He suddenly stops, copied by his dog who follows him like his shadow. The man, on his guard, has spotted another guard where two corridors meet.

With a look, he orders his dog to move forwards into the guard's line of sight. The guard looks over at the animal. Using his fingers, the hero pretends to shoot his dog. The dog collapses, plays dead. The guard, increasingly curious, gets to his feet. He slowly approaches the motionless dog. When he comes close he is attacked from the side by the hero, who quickly puts him out of action with a mere punch!

The masked man then rushes to another cell, and releases a young female prisoner. She too is wearing evening dress. As she is thanking him he staggers and clutches his ears in pain. She's concerned.

**Title card:**  
Can I help you in some way?

He refuses.

**Title card:**  
No. I don't get helped. I give the help around here.

He composes himself. She casts him an admiring glance. Then, in view of the urgency of their situation, they escape at a run.

4      **EXT. HOUSE/LABORATORY - DAY**

4

They come out of a house that is lost in the hills, climb into a Bugatti sports car that the man starts by rubbing two wires together, and speed off.

5      **EXT. ROAD - DAY**

5

The car speeds along the road. Its occupants turn round to check they aren't being followed.

6      INT. HOUSE/LAB - DAY

6

The guard who got knocked out picks himself up, realizes what's happened and dashes over to his office. He grabs a radio emitter and begins sending a message.

7      EXT. AIR FIELD - DAY

7

The hero, the young woman and the dog come to a halt in the Bugatti on the air field, by a telegraph pole whose wires lead...to a watch tower.

In the watch tower, a radio receptor is vibrating. A soldier approaches, listens and suddenly understands! He grabs hold of his gun and goes out onto the air field, only to find the fugitives! He tries to shoot at them as he draws closer, but the hero manages to throw an airplane propeller at him, before climbing inside where the woman and dog are waiting for him.

The airplane begins to move.

The soldier shoots.

The airplane is positioning itself on the runway, while the soldier continues to fire!

The aircraft gains speed.

The soldier is still shooting, but too late, as the hero pulls back the joystick, and the airplane takes to the sky...

The soldier is furious, but the hero is all smiles as he looks back towards the ground and shouts something.

**Title card: Free Georgia forever!!!**

The airplane flies away into the evening sky.

8      EXT. AIRPLANE - NIGHT

8

A little later in the night, still at the controls, the man is fighting not to fall asleep. Behind him, the woman is sleeping, the dog is lying in her arms. Suddenly she is awoken by explosions happening close by! Pandemonium! The man doesn't understand it either, he tries to pick up altitude, but quickly notices that the explosions are in fact pretty and inoffensive. He consults a calendar dial on the control panel that shows it is July 14th, immediately understands, and bursts into laughter.

**Title card: We've arrived, welcome to France!!!**

As the music picks up the tune of The Marseillaise, the airplane flies away through the exploding fireworks...

The words "The End" appear on the screen.

9

INT. WINGS MOVIE THEATER LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

9

From the moment they parked the car onwards, we become absorbed by what's happening around the screening of end of this film.

Behind the screen, we've seen the actor who plays the hero - his name is George Valentin - closely studying the reactions of the audience. He was standing close to his dog, motioning to it not to make a noise. The dog's name is Jack.

In the same area, we've also seen the lead actress. Her name is Constance Gray. She too looks tense and is latched onto the arm of a pleasant-looking man who is chewing anxiously on a cigar. The man looks rich, but a little weak. He's surely the producer.

10

INT. MOVIE THEATER LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

10

In the house, much of the audience is open-mouthed, excited, immobile and often wide-eyed.

In the pit, a symphony orchestra plays to accompany the film.

(9) Now that the film is ending, and the last note is sounding, the cast anxiously awaits the audience's verdict, which, after two or three seconds of silence, bursts into thunderous applause, to the great joy of the actor and the people around him, especially the actress and the producer, who kiss each other on the lips.

Two theater hands bring down the curtain.

(10) The lights come on. George Valentin comes onto the stage and acknowledges the audience, they are cheering for him. He is so happy he dances a few tap steps to express his joy then he acknowledges the orchestra before finally motioning to someone in the wings to join him. Jack the dog trots over in response. The crowd laughs and cheers, George waves to the dog, Jack waves back then waves at the audience, the people are loving it!

In the wings, Constance is fuming with rage, but on stage, George is pretending with his fingers to pull at the dog, who fakes death. Thunderous applause again.

Behind the actress, the producer can't hold back a smile, and this enrages the actress still more.

Suddenly, George, hamming it up, remembers something he'd forgotten, and asks someone from the other side of the wings to join him. It's Constance. She comes over, smiling to the audience, and says something to George with a smile.

**Title card: I'll get you for that.**

She waves, but we can tell that her smile is set between her teeth. She isn't feeling comfortable. George motions firing a gun with his fingers, but she does not fall down, merely casts him a "very funny" glance. George looks at his fingers, not understanding why they don't work anymore then mimes throwing them away behind him, as though they've become useless. Constance stalks back off into the wings in annoyance, but the audience is ecstatic. Once in the wings, the actress sticks up her middle finger at George, and exaggeratedly mouths so he can read her lips: "Put this up your ass." George, grinning broadly, responds by clapping his hands in applause, then leaves the stage, executing a few more dance steps as he does so. The audience is delighted.

As he comes off stage, George gets soundly told off by Constance, but, still grinning, he motions towards the audience who are still asking for more. The producer, although delighted by the successful reception, makes a weak attempt to calm the actress down. As for George, he returns to the stage, the audience roars. He pretends to want to leave the stage, and mimes bumping into an invisible wall just as he's leaving the stage. George holds his nose, the audience goes wild, Constance gets even madder, and while George carries on clowning about, the producer too breaks into a beaming smile. He's probably realized that George has the audience on his side... Constance, furious, storms off. She is followed by the producer who is trying to placate her, although it looks like he's got his work cut out for him.

11

**EXT. MOVIE THEATER LOS ANGELES - NIGHT**

11

Outside, we are in front of a typically American movie theater decked out with all the accessories of a grand première. The entrance is lit up, there are crowds gathered on the sidewalk, cops are guarding the red carpet with a cordon of bodies, etc.

George comes out, causing the crowds, mainly young women, to press forwards - and the photographers' flashes to spark into life. The cops are struggling to maintain control of the situation as George poses for the photographers and waves at his many fans.

In the crowd, a young woman right at the front is staring at him in rapture. She drops her bag and, as she bends to pick it up, a swell in the crowd pushes her underneath the arms of the policeman in front of her, out of the crowd and into George. She stares at him, more in love than ever, delighted to be there. The police wait for someone to give orders. George doesn't quite know what to do. Nobody moves. The young woman finally bursts out laughing, which, after a moment of shock, causes George to laugh too, thus placating the cops and tacitly signaling to the photographers that they can take pictures of the scene. The flashes seem to lend the woman self-confidence who, in a very carefree manner, begins to clown about in front of them. George is delighted at the sight, by the whole scene and, realizing this, the young woman steals a kiss. Flash. The image becomes static, then dissolves into the printed picture on the front page of "The Hollywood Reporter" newspaper, along with three other pictures of the scene and the headline **WHO'S THAT GIRL?**

12      **INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY**

12

The very same newspaper is being read by an elegant woman sitting at a sumptuous breakfast table. We are in the large dining room of an ultra-luxurious Hollywood villa. All around her are magnificent furniture, superb paintings and objets d'art, including a beautiful trio of monkeys, one hiding its eyes, one with hands clasped to its ears and the third obscuring its mouth. George comes into the room and kisses his wife. She responds with cold indifference. You could cut the atmosphere with a knife. The woman hands George the newspaper. He knows what's up but tries to laugh it off. She doesn't find it funny, is as cold as stone and barely looks at him. She is obviously extremely annoyed with him. George picks up his dog and puts it on the table. Jack drops his head to one side and his big eyes implore seem to implore her forgiveness. It's the exact expression of someone asking to be loved, but Doris is implacable. She gets up, walks away and does not turn back. Left on his own, George has a closed expression on his face. He seems unhappy to have hurt his wife's feelings. Then he realizes that Jack is on the table in a ridiculous pose, and signals to him to get down. The dog obeys. George looks at the paper, the cause of his problems.

13      **EXT. HOLLYWOOD STREET BUS - DAY**

13

Thirteen white letters placed on a hillside.

**HOLLYWOODLAND.**

Below, in town, a bus.

14 INT. BUS (DRIVING)/HOLLYWOOD - DAY

14

Inside the full bus is the young woman from the day before. Her name is Peppy Miller. She is proudly holding "The Hollywood Reporter" with her face on the front page, and is more or less discreetly making suggestive glances, hoping that someone recognizes her. But the people around her - from working and middle class backgrounds - are visibly on their way to work and remain impervious to her game.

She - carefully - puts the paper away in her bag, in which four or five copies of the newspaper are already carefully tucked away, then gets off the bus at the next stop.

15 EXT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DAY

15

She goes through the main gates of Kinograph Studios, and heads towards where they hire extras.

In a courtyard, fifty-odd people are waiting, some sitting on wooden crates, others standing. There are mums with kids, guys with animals, men dressed as cowboys, etc. Peppy is among them, sitting next to a man of about sixty who is dressed in a highly stylized fashion. His job is obviously that of a butler. Peppy proudly shows him the picture in the newspaper. The man leans to take a closer look, unfolds the newspaper, sees the headline, smiles and then folds it back up again and returns it to Peppy text-side-up, highlighting the headline: **Who's that girl ?**

Peppy is a bit annoyed to have been put in her place, but deep down she knows he's right. Nobody knows who she is. She puts the newspaper away.

A man who visibly works for the studio, some assistant or other, comes into the courtyard, climbs on a crate and makes an announcement.

**Title card: Contemporary film! Five girls who can dance!**

All the men who had pressed forwards turn on their heels, leaving the assistant surrounded only by women. The man says something to one girl, who begins to dance. He motions to her that it's ok and she heads off towards the wardrobe section. He does the same with a second girl and she gets hired too. Then it's Peppy's turn. She puts a lot of energy into a few top class tap steps, impressing the guy to such an extent that he smiles admiringly then signals that she's hired.

Full of self-assurance that her lucky day has come, Peppy heads off towards wardrobe too; swinging, her hips as she pauses in front of the butler.

**Title card: The name is Miller. Peppy Miller!**

She finishes with an exaggerated wink, before walking on, leaving behind the impassive butler.

16A      **INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY**      16A

In the lobby, George is preparing to leave the house. He waves at the huge, full-length portrait of himself waving and smiling whilst wearing a tuxedo. He looks great in the painting, and George is delighted to see and to wave to himself.

16      **EXT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DAY**      16

Later, George, in a luxurious car driven by his chauffeur, arrives at the Kinograph studios with his dog. The guard at the entrance smiles broadly at them and waves.

17      **INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DRESSING ROOM CORRIDORS - DAY**      17

As he walks towards his dressing room, everyone smiles at him. He's not always fooled by these signs of respect, and apes a few smiles himself.

18      **INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - GEORGE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY**      18

In his dressing room, wearing a tailcoat and top hat, George is finishing putting his make up on. He has a white face and dark lips and eyes. His chauffeur is signing autographs for him on full length photographs of himself (George) with his dog. George says to him:

**Title card: Go and buy a piece of jewelry for my wife. A nice piece, to make it up to her.**

The chauffeur nods. Having finished his mask up, George, picks up a photo, looks at it closely and then writes on it. As he leaves the dressing room, we see the photograph. He's written Woof Woof on it, and signed it with the paw print of a dog.

19      **INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - RESTAURANT DECOR SET - DAY**      19

We're on a film set, the crew is setting up a shot. The director is unhappy with a screen positioned behind a bay window and he sends it off.

**Title card: Remove that screen and bring me another one! On the double!**

Two hands pick up the screen and carry it away. George arrives on set, everyone smiles at him. He sits down on the chair which bears his name. The producer whom we saw the previous day at the première arrives. His name is Zimmer, and he's flanked by - and followed around at every moment by - two secretaries and two assistants. One of them hands him The Hollywood Reporter, and Zimmer, before he's even come to a halt, talks to George as he shows him the front page. He is visibly upset. George looks a lot more relaxed, he says hello and vaguely tries to reassure him. But Zimmer persists, still pointing at the newspaper.

**Title card: Because of this childish nonsense, there's nothing about the film before page 5!**

Behind George, the two set hands come back with a new screen of sky scenery, and wait, standing just next to George. As they are holding it, there is a three foot gap underneath. While the producer is talking to him, George's attention is drawn by a lovely pair of women's legs that have come to stand behind the screen, the top half of the body being hidden by it. George acknowledges the sight with a smile and is about to bring his attention back to the on-going discussion, when his attention is drawn away again by a noise, that of the tap steps the female legs are making, presumably as a warm up. George smiles in recognition and responds with a few tap steps of his own. The women's legs instantly stop, seem to think a moment and then answer back, but with a jump in the complexity of the steps. A tap dialogue ensues between the two pairs of legs, until the set hands - the path before them now cleared - pick up their screen of scenery and walk off with it. The screen moves away and as it disappears reveals that the upper body belongs to a young woman. She pulls a face meaning 'Here I am!!' And of course it's Peppy, except that she immediately realizes who she is dealing with - visibly she wasn't expecting this at all - and feels completely ridiculous and uncomfortable.

Her joyful expression gradually becomes one of abject apology, but George is roaring with laughter.

After a short pause, Zimmer makes the connection. He checks the front page of the paper, and recognizes her!

Then he begins shouting at her and all she can do is lower her head, unable to reply. He gestures that she's fired and for her to get out, and she starts to go, completely distraught. She's just made a couple of steps when George stops her and tells her to come back. Everyone is surprised, most of all him. Zimmer can't believe it, and so doesn't respond at first.

There's bad feeling between them, as though neither wanted this sudden conflict, but like it had always been there, tangible. Everyone on the set seems to be waiting for Zimmer to react, but to their surprise, after a long moment of hesitation, he walks away without saying a thing. Peppy looks at George gratefully, smiling, but seems a little preoccupied as though she might have made a mistake.

Everyone on set gets back to work.

20      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - RESTAURANT DECOR SET - DAY      20

They're about to start shooting. The director is showing George what he has to do. The scene is happening in a cabaret restaurant. George has to cross a dance floor, but each time he is stopped by a guy ringing a bell to signal it is time to change dancing partner. George finds himself dancing with Peppy one moment, and in the arms of a very fat man the next, the director finds the gag hysterical. The scene is shot several times from three different angles. Each time, George dances with Peppy, and, each time, the nature of their rapport changes. To begin with, they are happy and laughing, but then, with time, less so. Then they become embarrassed, and then things get worse. We start the sequence again and again, to the sound of the clapperboard counting the number of takes, but the eroticism between them is the only thing that stands out from the scene, every thing else goes unnoticed. Ultimately, no flirting or suggestiveness has gone on, just the very obvious beginning of feelings between them that they find disturbing. It's probably love.

21      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DRESSING ROOM CORRIDORS - DAY      21

Later on, in the dressing room corridor, Peppy, holding an envelope, goes up to George's door. She knocks, waits for a reply, then enters. There's nobody there. She hesitates, not sure whether to leave or stay...

22      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - GEORGE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY      22

Finally, she goes into the room and places the envelope addressed to George Valentin on the dresser. Then she attentively looks around the dressing room. She looks at the objects and photos and notices, hanging from a coat stand, George's jacket on a hanger, and his hat which sits on a hook above it. The way the clothes are disposed looks like George's silhouette, except that the clothes are empty. She goes over, strokes the jacket and little by little brings George to life through his clothes.

She puts her right hand into the sleeve and touches her own waist. As it's George's sleeve, she makes it look like his arm has come to life, as though George has come to life. Even more so since her left hand is stroking the jacket as though George were inside. She takes pleasure from the embrace and, when George comes into the room, she slowly removes her hand without any rush. George sees her, they look at each other. He closes the door but doesn't go over to her, instead going over to the mirror. He looks at her, she at him.. He motions to her to approach. She does. He stares at her face for a while before he speaks.

**Title card: If you want to be an actress, you need to have something no one else has.**

He takes a make-up pencil and draws a beauty spot above her upper lip. She looks at herself in the mirror and smiles. She likes it. She turns towards him and, quite naturally, folds into his arms. The dog watches them curiously with its head leaning to one side. They are probably about to kiss when George's chauffeur comes into the room and catches them. George swiftly moves aside and there is a moment of discomfort. The chauffeur unwraps a parcel and takes out a large and beautiful pearl necklace. George is intrigued by the necklace, and turns away from Peppy. She understands that George has his own life, that their embrace was just a stolen moment and slowly leaves, looking back at George as she does so. He does not look at her. She leaves the room. Once he has studied and necklace and is satisfied, George turns back towards Peppy but she is no longer there. The chauffeur exits the room.

When he is alone, George looks at himself in the mirror. His expression shows that he thinks he is the stupidest man in the world. He mimes shooting himself in the temple with his fingers, but it's the dog which collapses into its play-dead pose.

23

**INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY**

23

The next morning, he's having breakfast with his wife. The atmosphere is still dreadful but this time he's not making any effort either. He disdainfully watches Doris eat. She is cutting up strawberries using a knife and fork. George watches her, smiles and continues to watch. Except it's not Doris he's watching. Instead it's Peppy who's tucking into her food and talking and laughing vivaciously. George is with her with an expression of love on his face. He's laughing with her when, suddenly, reality bites. He's still sitting opposite Doris, and she's staring at him because she doesn't understand why he is laughing. She visibly finds him ridiculous. He stops laughing and breakfast carries on as normal.

- 24      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY      24
- We see several quick sequences which indicate time passing:
- Breakfasts with George and Doris where the atmosphere is increasingly dreadful. Doris scribbles on photos of George in the press, draws on moustaches, large spectacles, etc.
- 25      INT. STUDIO/STAGES - PIRATE/COWBOY/ETC. - DAY      25
- Short extracts of George in various films, in which he portrays a pirate, then a cowboy, then William Tell, etc. We also see him in "Someday in July" in the sequence he shot with Peppy and the fat male dancer.
- 26      INT. MOVIE THEATER AUDIENCE, ETC. - DAY      26
- Movie-goers reacting to the films, but the way the images are edited - cut with breakfast images - could mean they are reacting to them too.
- Among the audience is Peppy Miller. She's trying to concentrate fully on the film and is pushing away the handsome young man she's with, who is trying to kiss her. We see her later, at the movies again, but this time alone.
- 27      INT. STUDIO/STAGES - PEPPY AS A SERVANT/DANCER/ETC. - DAY      27
- We see her playing some bit parts, maid, dancer, etc. Her roles seem to get a little bigger. We notice that she now wears the beauty spot that she'll keep forever.
- Her name climbs up the ranks in the title sequences of films, until it appears on its own.
- 28      INT. OFFICE - PEPPY/CONTRACT/1927 - DAY      28
- We see her signing a contract in a small office, she seems happy.
- 29      INT. OFFICE - GEORGE/ZIMMER/CONTRACT - DAY      29
- George signs a big contract with Zimmer as photographers take pictures. He smiles broadly, whereas Zimmer looks like his smile is a little forced.
- The date appears on the screen: 1929

30

INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - TAVERN DECOR - DAY

30

George, dressed as a musketeer, is sword-fighting with three middle-ages thugs in a tavern. He kills two of them, but unfortunately loses his epee when fighting the third. But when the third man attacks, George merely dodges with a sleight of body and puts his attacker out of action with a right hook! Calm restored, he smiles and waves in brotherly fashion to a mysterious man who is trying to hide underneath his long cape. The man stands up, throws aside his cape and reveals himself to be... Napoleon! He puts his bicorne hat back on and warmly thanks an astonished George. Napoleon says something to him and George respectfully bows, walks away from him still bowing then turns and runs. Once out of the decor, he bumps right into a worried-looking Zimmer who is followed by his loyal assistants. George is in a playful mood. Zimmer tells him:

**Title Card: I want to show you something. Right now.**

George seems astonished that Zimmer is leaving the set and not filming, but agrees. Napoleon walks past them very imperially and gestures royally to a technician to bring him a chair. The technician doesn't miss the chance to remind the man that he is only an extra, and not Napoleon.

31

INT. SCREENING ROOM - STUDIO - DAY

31

Zimmer, his guards, and George - still dressed as a musketeer - come into a screening room in which a dozen or so very serious-looking people are waiting. They sit down and Zimmer, very proudly and self-confidently, gestures to an assistant who passes on the message to the projectionist. The room goes dark. The screening begins.

32

INT. VOICE TEST STUDIO - DAY

32

On screen we see a card that indicates it's a sound shooting test for a talking scene. Then Constance appears, the actress from the spy film. She's standing in front of a mic and she tests it, delighted to be there. Cut. We see her again, the microphone has disappeared and she acts out a scene. It's a monologue. Her acting is terrible, very theatrical, but the audience can hear her. It is however, awful.

(31) In the screening room, the audience seems stunned by what they see/hear. They are fascinated. They then begin to congratulate each other and slap Zimmer on the back. Zimmer's pride seems to grow by the second.

George, who at first seemed very surprised, slowly begins a snigger which gradually has become a belly laugh when the actress earnestly ends her monologue.

When the lights come up, George is laughing uncontrollably way beyond the bounds of mere mockery as his sincerity is obvious. The people present are embarrassed, and Zimmer is deeply put out. George, still laughing, leaves the room, waving an apology with his hands as he goes, but also pointing to the screen to explain why he's laughing. Zimmer feels even more humiliated. Fade to black on his face.

33      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - GEORGE'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY      33

We're back with George in his dressing room. He's removing his make up. He moves some ordinary object and the object, as he moves it, makes a noise. We hear the noise it makes. Really hear it. It's the first time we've heard a sound that comes from within the film itself. One second later, George realizes that the object made a noise. He moves it again, the object makes a noise again. George is worried. He tries another object and obtains noise again. His dog barks and we hear it! He gets up (chair makes a noise) and says something to his dog, but no sound comes out of his mouth when he speaks. He realizes this... Panic sets in, he turns to the mirror and tries talking again, but still no sound comes out. Not understanding what's happening, the feeling of panic fully blossoms and he flees his dressing room!

34      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DRESSING ROOM CORRIDORS - DAY      34

Noisy, laughing dancers pass in the corridor, others are talking or shouting and even if we can't make out what they are saying, they are all making sound. George tries to talk to them but his voice remains silent. One dancer, seeing his fright, bursts into throaty laughter. George rushes through the milling crowd the sound of which is becoming increasingly loud...

35      EXT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - COURTYARD - DAY      35

...and bursts out into the courtyard of the studio that is now suddenly deserted and silent. In front of him a feather eddies slowly to the ground, carried by the breeze. It finally lands, making a completely abnormal and disproportionate noise like that of a building crashing to the ground in slow motion. George screams, but again his cry is silent.

36      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT      36

George awakes with a start! He's in bed and is having trouble shaking off his nightmare.

The film continues as normal: in other words, silent.

His wife is sleeping by his side. He gets up, taking care not to make a sound.

37      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT      37

George calms down as he sits in the living room, alone in the darkness. Jack, still sleepy, has just curled into a ball next to him to fall back to sleep. George smiles and gives him a pat.

38      INT. GEORGE'S CAR (DRIVING) - LOS ANGELES STREETS - DAY      38

Driven by his chauffeur, George crosses town heading for the studios.

39      EXT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DAY      39

The car goes through the studio gates. There's nobody there. George gets out. He goes into the courtyard. There's nobody there either.

40      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - TAVERN DECOR SET - DAY      40

He goes into the studio and heads for the set. There is still no one about. He doesn't understand and goes back outside.

41      EXT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - DAY      41

Outside in the deserted courtyard, a feather eddies towards the ground, carried by the breeze. George is watching it drift to the ground when suddenly a gust of wind sends it soaring back into the sky. George follows it with his eyes and notices a man crossing between two sets. He looks like some kind of set hand or assistant; a working man in any case. George calls to him. The two men draw close and George asks him what's happening. The man takes the day's newspaper out of his pocket and hands it to George before walking off. George reads:  
**Kinograph Studios stop all silent productions to work exclusively on talkies.**

42      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - SECRETARY'S OFFICE - DAY      42

Despite the secretary's attempts to stop him, a furious George storms into Zimmer's office.

Zimmer is in a meeting with some men. They are probably engineers in view of the attention being given to the plans lying on the desk. Everyone is surprised by George's rude entry. The engineers seem embarrassed, but Zimmer smiles and politely asks them to leave, as though asking for their understanding. As they head for the door, some of them drop their heads so as not to meet George's eyes, whereas others look him right between the eyes but without any love lost. This exchange causes a strange, unpleasant feeling within him. He seems embarrassed. It's perhaps due to the rudeness of his eruption into the office, but it's more likely due to the looks he's been given. For the first time for ages, he has not been looked at how a star is normally looked at - with respect, desire and admiration - but like any ordinary man is looked at or, worse still, how a superfluous man is looked at.

As George realizes that his status has just changed, Zimmer invites him to sit down. Then speaks to him, in a friendly manner.

**Title card: We belong to another age, you and I, George. Nowadays, the world talks.**

He talks to him, looks a little embarrassed, while George takes it on the chin, not knowing how to respond.

**Title card: People want to see new faces. Talking faces.**

George reaches deep down into himself and makes an effort to bring up a smile.

**Title card: Paramount will be delighted. They still want me.**

Zimmer responds with a pursing of the lips that is more damning than any counter argument could be. As though he's telling George he can always give it a go... George understands what's happening. Zimmer is sorry.

**Title card: I'm sorry. The public wants fresh blood. And the public is never wrong.**

George gets to his feet.

**Title card: It's me the people want and it's my films they want to see. And I'm going to give them to them.**

Zimmer nods with another pursing of the lips, as though he can't wait to see that. George seems very sure of himself.

**Title card: I don't need you. Go make your talking movies. I'm going to make them a beautiful film!**

As George leaves in disgust, his eyes are drawn to an advertising feature representing the "new faces of Kinograph Studios". Among the medallion framed young portraits, George recognizes that of Peppy Miller. He glances up at Zimmer.

**Title card: Fresh blood...**

The two men exchange a last glance, then George exits.

44      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS, SECRETARY'S OFFICE - DAY      44

Outside he feels a few seconds of discouragement but, as he meets the gaze of the engineers waiting in the secretary's antechamber, he puffs up his chest and walks tall out of the office.

45      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - STAIRS - DAY      45

Going down the stairs from the offices, he passes a laughing Peppy who is accompanied by two young and charming men, perfect specimens of America's golden youth. She is coming up, he is going down. When she notices him, she stops, already one step above of him. She has a beaming smile and is truly delighted to see him. He is delighted too, although his mood is very different.

**Title card (him): How are you?**

**Title card (her): Fantastic! I've been given a lead role! Isn't it wonderful?!**

He nods, we see in his eyes that he's terribly happy for her. They look at each other, she laughs.

Then she fumbles in her bag for something with which to note down her telephone number on a piece of paper. It takes a while and is a little chaotic, she apologizes, but he visibly takes a lot of pleasure out of watching her. She finally gets the number down and hands it to him, telling him to call her - to really call her. In response he casts a glance over to the young men waiting for her higher up the stairs, and she bursts out laughing. She leans towards him to say something.

**Title card: Gadgets!**

She looks at him flirtatiously. Then she gestures again for him to call her, and he nods, even though we think that he probably will not do so. She leaves and he watches her go before beginning his decent once more. Once at the top, she turns back to call out to George, he too has turned to look. She smiles at him, breaks into a few tap steps for old time's sake, then blows him a kiss.

He catches the kiss with a smile, pretends to make it disappear in his other hand like a magician, then shows her the inside breast pocket of his jacket as proof that he's keeping it safe and warm. She laughs loudly and goes on her way. He watches her walk away with admiration in his eyes. She vanishes and George's smile takes on a note of melancholy, and then he leaves too.

46      OMITTED      46

47      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY      47

George comes home. Doris is there scribbling on a magazine but he takes no notice of her. When the dog jumps into his arms however, he greets it affectionately. Doris is vexed.

48      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY      48

A while later he's running Jack through his tricks when Doris arrives.

**Title card: We have to talk, George.**

George smiles.

**Title card: Or not.**

She insists but he doesn't listen. He's with his dog. She gets annoyed, he doesn't answer, she ends up throwing Jack. George cannot forgive her for doing so, he looks at her in disgust. She starts to cry.

**Title card: I'm unhappy, George.**

He answers without looking at her.

**Title card: So are millions of other people, me for instance.**

49      INT. GEORGE'S STUDIO SET - JUNGLE DECOR - DAY      49

Thanks to a montage of shot frames, photos and press cuttings, we see George begin making his film, the first clap of the board that shows he's both the film's producer and director. The film is called Tears of love, and it tells the tale of an English adventurer - played by himself - accompanied by a young woman, an old man who looks like a professor and who is probably the father of the young woman and, lastly, an African tribe represented as savages and whose humanity remains to be proven.

We see George in the various stages of preparation: writing, re-writing, directing, acting, signing a lot of checks, but also leaving very early in the morning to set up shots with his collaborators, etc. He looks fulfilled, like he truly believes in what he's doing, despite the tiredness he's feeling. His dog has a role in the film too, doing tricks. George looks very happy, very committed. He takes a supple branch, feeds it through the sleeves of a woman's blouse and, by holding the two ends of the branch out in front of him, dances with the imaginary woman. Everyone around him is happy and laughing. He's not shooting a comedy, however, it's obviously a drama of some sort from what we see of the set and the way the actors play their role.

Then appear on screen the mock ups of posters, they are shown on the set to George.

He chooses the one in which he is most prominent, it's a poster depicting a cutesy melodrama and bears the release date October 25th.

50 **OMITTED**

50

51 **EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET (POSTERS) - DAY**

51

In the street, at the entrance to a movie theater, George sees a large "Beauty Spot" film poster. The poster shows Peppy close up, wearing a magnificent and jauntily positioned chapka over one eye. She is incredibly stylish but in no way vampish, more the image of a young comedy debut... George looks at her, Peppy seems to be smiling at him. He smiles back. Then his smile becomes strained. He's noticed something. The two theater employees are sticking a banner over the poster that reveals the release date of Beauty Spot - it's also October 25th.

52 **INT. ANIMATION STAND - DAY**

52

Then we see advertising inserts and full page press articles appearing one after the other, creating a montage of images with a very 1920's feel. "Get some Peps with Peppy!" and a close up on her smiling, mischievous face. "The girl next door", "The girl you'll love to love" "Young and pretty", etc. with a photo of Peppy each time, posters of the film and then, everywhere, the face that it's a talking movie! Talking, talking, talking!

As for George, his image is a lot more austere, the photographs show him as very serious. And the captions are like: "I'm not a puppet anymore, I'm an artist!"



**Title card: It would seem that we're ruined.**

The chauffeur takes it on the chin with as much reserve as he can muster, but George continues.

**Title card: That's the best case scenario...**

He almost laughs - not so the chauffeur.

56      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY

56

Now wearing a suit, George is sitting at his desk. Lying in front of him are the front pages of newspapers reporting the Crash. He looks for something on the inside pages of one paper and reads. Next to a large picture of Peppy there's a review of his own film, beginning "Tears of Love, Old and Boring". He shuts the paper and searches for something in the drawer of his desk. He takes out a piece of paper. It's the telephone number that Peppy had scribbled down for him. He looks at it, moves closer to the telephone, hesitates, looks at the paper again, then puts the scrap of paper back in the drawer without making the call.

57      INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

57

Peppy awakes in bed with a start. She doesn't know what has woken her up. She looks around, looks at the phone, seems perplexed. Then a man's arm invites her to lie back down; she does.

(56) Still at his desk, George gets up and goes to the window. He seems lost in thought.

58      INT. GEORGE'S STUDIO SET - JUNGLE DECOR - DAY

58

An extract from "Tears of Love" in which we see George, holding the young woman in his arms, take part in a cliché-d African dance with shields, spears and all the African accoutrements attributed by Westerners at the time. George and the woman are complacently watching the dance, when George says to the young woman.

**Title card: Let's go back, Norma. They've never seen a white woman before and I don't want to take any risks.**

59      INT. MOVIE THEATER - "TEARS OF LOVE" SCREENING - DAY

59

There's hardly anyone in the theater. The people that are there look bored more than anything. At the back smoking a cigarette, George takes the failure on the chin.

One couple gets to their feet and leaves the theater. As the man reaches George, he recognizes him and casts him a glance that seems to say "goodness old chap this one's not up to much..." George doesn't know what to say in reply.

60      EXT. MOVIE THEATERS - LOS ANGELES - DAY      60

Outside, George comes out still smoking his cigarette. On the sidewalk, people are cheerfully waiting in line. George walks up the line and comes to a movie house that's playing the "Beauty Spot" talking movie. A huge poster depicts Peppy and the people in the line seem excited and delighted to be going to see the film. It's visibly a success. George takes it on the chin.

61      INT. GEORGE'S CAR (DRIVING) - LOS ANGELES STREETS - DAY      61

Inside the car, behind the implacable chauffeur, George is talking to himself, as though he's re-running the story in his head and searching for what he might have done better, or differently.

62      INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - DAY      62

Once home, he finds a photo of himself on the floor. It has been defaced with a scribbled moustache, spectacles and a big nose. There's a note to him scribbled on the back. We read it at the same time as him.

*It's over, George. You've got a fortnight to collect your souvenirs together and get out of the house.*

*Doris*

*P.S.: You should go see Beauty Spot, it's incredible.*

George takes it on the chin and leaves, revealing behind him the portrait of himself wearing a tuxedo, smiling and waving.

63      INT. MOVIE THEATER - "TEARS OF LOVE" SCREENING - DAY      63

As for Peppy, she's in the theater, watching Tears of love. She's with a handsome young man who seems bored.

64      EXT. JUNGLE - DAY      64

George is wearing shorts and an explorer's hat. He is sinking in sinking sand. The young woman is screaming and the dog barking.

The Africans are panicking but there's nothing anyone can do. George stops struggling, and looks deep into the eyes of the young woman. He says gently:

**Title card: Farewell, Norma. I never loved you...**

It's obvious he's only saying that so that she can forget him and move on with her life, but it doesn't wash and the young woman weeps all the more, terribly moved by this last sacrifice on his part.

(63) In the balcony, Peppy is speechless and her face impassive.

(64) On screen, George and the young woman exchange a last glance as George's face gradually sinks into the sand.

(63) Next to Peppy, the young man sits watching her. She sees sad.

(64) On screen, George has disappeared into the mire. Only one hand stays in the air for several seconds more in a tortured pose, that of a dying man trying to hold on to the wind.

(63) Peppy's companion seems to find the film far too long and doesn't understand why they haven't already left.

(64) The hand has disappeared. The young woman is in a state of shock, rigid with a look of horror on her face. She is no doubt about to be put to certain death. The dog turns round and walks off with head and tail lowered...

The End appears on the screen.

(63) Peppy seems moved. She is shaking her head from side to side.

65

**EXT. LOS ANGELES STREET - PICTURE OF GEORGE - EVENING**

65

Evening has fallen on the town. It's raining. On the ground lies an old page from a newspaper that bears a picture of George. A man's feet trample the picture.

66

**INT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - NIGHT**

66

George is at home. Two bottles are apparent and, obviously drunk, he is staring out the window. The projection of raindrops sliding down the window look like tears running down his face. And Jack's face too. George is pulled out of his stupor as he hears something.

**EXT. GEORGE & DORIS' HOUSE - TOP STEP - NIGHT**

He opens the door. It's Peppy. She immediately notices that George is drunk. Her smile tenses a little.

**Title card: I wanted to talk, I...**

George looks at her. She continues.

**Title card: I saw Tears of Love.**

George nods, and answers.

**Title card: And so you've come to get your money back?**

She smiles stiffly, not knowing how to react. He continues.

**Title card: Too much face-pulling?**

She stops smiling because it's not funny at all. It's bitter, even. There's an embarrassed silence. Softly, she tries to explain.

**Title card: About last night...**

She stops because George is not looking at her anymore. He's watching the arrival of the young, smiling, handsome and wholesome man who is with Peppy. George bears a melancholy smile.

**Title card: You're right. Make way for youth...**

The young man shakes George's hand. He's obviously a nice lad, and very polite.

**Title card: I'm so happy to meet you. My Dad just loves you.**

He says it very nicely, with no ulterior motive, but George is cut to the quick. The comment wounds him and Peppy notices. She cuts short the meeting by smiling and upping the cheerfulness stakes, as though to kid George she hasn't noticed any embarrassment or perceived anything that might have shocked or hurt him during their encounter.

**Title card: OK! Well, we'll be off now. I'll call you soon. Bye!**

George smiles politely. She leaves, taking the handsome jock with her. George watches them leave. As does his dog, who sits with his head and ears hanging low as though very disappointed. George watches Peppy walking away, then steps forwards and sits down on the steps leading up to the house.

As she gets into the car, Peppy seems surly, unhappy even, for the first time. She turns her back on her companion.

**Title card: Take me home. I'd like to be alone.**

George watches the car leave, then goes and sits on a bench next to the front door. But the bench breaks and George finds himself on the ground next to the dog. George remarks evenly to Jack:

**Title card: See, could be it just wasn't my day...**

FADE TO BLACK.

68      **EXT. MOVIE THEATER - "TEARS OF LOVE" - DAY**      68

In the rain, a worker is taking down letters from the facade of a theater. Of Tears of Love, only the word Tears remains.

69      **INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - PEPPY'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY**      69

Peppy is facing her mirror and putting her make up on. She takes a break, looking a little sad. Someone (some kind of assistant) opens the door to her dressing room and says something like you need to hurry up. She nods and gets back to work.

70      **EXT. MOVIE POSTERS - LOS ANGELES - DAY**      70

Alternate shots of three or four film posters and frames from them which illustrate Peppy's rising fame. Her name moves higher up the posters and into bigger letters. The films are called "The Rookie", "The Brunette ", "The Girl Next Door" and, finally, "On the Roof ".

71      **OMITTED**      71

72      **INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - PEPPY'S DRESSING ROOM - DAY**      72

We catch up with her in a close up, applying her make up. The camera pulls back and we see that not only is she not putting the make up on herself - a make up artist is doing that - but there are in fact four pairs of hands getting busy around her; two make up girls, a hairdresser and a wardrobe assistant. Peppy, fortunately, has stayed completely natural and doesn't seem to take any of it seriously. As the last touch is put in place, Peppy gets to her feet and turns round.

At her feet lie a dozen pairs of shoes, each pair as magnificent as the next, and all in their swanky boxes. Peppy tries on a pair. Close up of her feet.

73

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE (1931) - DAY

73

Crossfade to a man's pair of shoes with used heels and uppers. George's dog comes to sit at his feet. The date is superimposed on the screen: 1931.

The camera climbs up his legs to reveal George lying fully dressed in his bed, obviously at home in view of his attitude. He's changed. And even if his suit is still pretty smart, he's become more "common", less unattainable. He seems to have lost whatever it was that made him so superb. Primarily he's a bit drunk, somewhat hesitant. George gets up and closes his Murphy bed, the kind of bed that slots up into the wall to look like a closet. Then he walks across the living area. His home has changed too, it's fallen in class and is a lot more modest than the one we were used to seeing him in. We do however recognize some of the objects, furniture and paintings from his old house, notably the huge portrait of him smiling. He goes into the kitchen which is open onto the rest of the apartment. There's nothing in the refrigerator. He looks for something to drink but there's only one bottle left in the rack. He lifts it up. It's empty.

He opens a closet. Inside, a tuxedo hangs among a number of bare hangers.

74

INT. PAWNSHOP - DAY

74

In a pawnshop, George, still a little drunk, is selling his tuxedo. The pawnbroker and he are visibly disagreeing on the price, but of course it's George who folds first and hands over the tuxedo. The pawnbroker counts out the bills and hands them to George who, in a fit of pride, leaves a tip as he leaves - his dignity intact even in the face of adversity.

75

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY

75

At home, George is drinking and watching his chauffeur fix some food. He seems preoccupied.

**Title card: How long's it been since I paid you last, Clifton?**

The chauffeur answers as he carries on doing what he's doing.

**Title card: Been one year now, Sir.**

George gets up, visibly thinking that he shouldn't have done that, that it's wrong. He goes to get the keys and a jacket, comes back and gives them to the chauffeur.

**Title card: You're fired. Keep the car. Get yourself a job someplace else.**

The chauffeur refuses, George insists. They don't agree but George ends up throwing him out, even though we've understood that he's doing it for Clifton's benefit and not through any unkindness.

76      **EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY**      76

Once outside, the chauffeur doesn't move. He stays next to the car. George watches him through the window. The chauffeur still doesn't budge. George pulls the curtains.

77      **EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - EVENING**      77

In the evening, George looks out between the curtains, the chauffeur is still there. George turns on his heels and gets into his Murphy bed.

78      **INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT**      78

Night time. George is in bed with his eyes open.

79      **EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT**      79

Outside, the chauffeur is still in the same position.

80      **INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY**      80

The next morning, George gets up and goes to look from the window. The chauffeur has gone. George is a little sad, but that's just the way it is... He looks around at his home.

A little later, George looks at himself in a mirror. We pass from him to his reflection, which he hides by placing his drink against the mirror.

81      **INT. AUCTION ROOMS - DAY**      81

A sign says that the effects of George Valentin are to be auctioned. Furniture, costumes, objets d'art and paintings on September 14th. There aren't many people in the room, just five or six. George is standing at the back, smoking a cigarette.

His position and demeanor are exactly like when he was watching the screening of Tears of Love, from the back of the room with the verdict of failure in the air...

He's looking a little unsteady on his feet, probably due to the hip flask he's necking that seems to contain liquor. The objects go under the hammer one by one. We see the three monkeys go by, notably, hear no evil, speak no evil, see no evil. Two buyers especially are raising the prices by bidding against each other, a distinguished and reserved-looking man, and a lady of a certain age who looks a bit severe, to the point of bigotry. They don't seem perfectly comfortable, but they are the only two buying.

A few crossfades (the display table emptying, faces, hands being raised, hammer falling, "sold" labels) show us the lots disappearing - every single item is sold.

82      INT. AUCTION ROOMS - CORRIDOR - DAY

82

George is now with the auctioneer, he's studying the list of items as auction assistants busy themselves around him, carrying and packing the sold lots. The auctioneer, who is putting on his coat, congratulates George.

**Title card: Well done! It all sold, there's nothing left!**

George nods but his smile seems a little ironic. He leaves the room.

On the stairway, as he's leaving, he is joined by the distinguished-looking man who puts on his coat and leaves.

83      EXT. AUCTION ROOM'S STREET - DAY

83

They leave at the same time. The man crosses the street, we follow him.

He gets into a car. Peppy is sitting in the back. She's alone and watching George walk off with his unsteady gait. She's sad. The man casts a glance to ask her what he should do next. Peppy, with a forced smile, motions that they can leave. As the man starts up the motorcar, George is walking away. The car sets off and overtakes him. Peppy does not turn round. She's crying.

84      INT. CLANDESTINE BAR - NIGHT

84

George, dressed differently, is drinking in a clandestine bar that has made the effort of putting up a few Christmas decorations. George is visibly smashed.

85

INT. STUDIO JUNGLE ENCRUSTED LITTLE GEORGE - NIGHT

85

A small version of him appears superimposed on the bar, dressed as an explorer and discovering the life-size version of himself. The big version watches the little version load his rifle. Then the little version shoots at the big version, but the big version just smiles.

Little version runs off shot to get help, and he comes back with a tribe of African warriors, all bearing spears. They attack.

Big version tries to defend himself, staggers as he gets to his feet, tries to gesture to the barman, but he is so drunk that he falls straight backwards without making the slightest attempt to stop his fall. The Africans leap about with joy.

FADE TO BLACK.

(84) George's chauffeur comes into the bar. He motions to the barman who jerks his head in one direction. The chauffeur follows the indication and finds George lying on the floor, totally smashed. He slaps him gently around the face a few times in a vain attempt to wake him, then lifts him over his shoulder, pays the check and leaves.

86

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

86

At George's house, his chauffeur puts him to bed and hangs his suit carefully before leaving the room. He sees the dog, goes over to it and strokes it. They look at each other. We can tell that the chauffeur is worried about George.

87

EXT. "GUARDIAN ANGEL" THEATER - DAY

87

Peppy Miller is "The Guardian Angel". It's a huge poster on the facade of a movie theater. George goes inside. With Jack.

88

INT. "GUARDIAN ANGEL" THEATER - DAY

88

The auditorium is full. George sits down in the first row. To watch the film he has to look upwards, and sees a huge and magnificent Peppy rising above him. She's playing a scene with a young actor we recognize, it's Humphrey Bogart. He's become a spectator: he laughs, is absorbed and cries along with the others.

89

INT. "GUARDIAN ANGEL" THEATER - CORRIDOR & LOBBY - DAY

89

Coming out of the theater several young people bump into him. They don't recognize him. There's a lot of people milling about, so he picks Jack up. A woman exclaims an Oh! of admiration as though she's recognized George. He smiles modestly but soon realizes that it's just because she thinks Jack is cute and has come over to stroke him like she would any other dog. She is totally under Jack's charm, and says to George.

**Title card: If only he could talk!**

George still has the smile on his lips, but it has become one of resignation.

He looks away as the woman strokes the dog.

90

EXT. MEXICAN VILLAGE - DAY

90

George is playing Zorro. He performs stunt after stunt and the close ups show his devastating smile to its best advantage. *In fact, it's an extract from The Mark of Zorro with Douglas Fairbanks, into which we'll insert close ups of Jean we've shot ourselves.*

91

INT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY

91

The Zorro sequence is being screened on a wall in George's apartment. George is watching himself, slumped in an easy chair. His sluggish attitude and listless air are in sharp contrast with the image of himself projected by the film.

Then the image jumps and goes white. George gets up, still half-smashed. His shadow is clearly delineated on the white screen. He sees it, looks it up and down and then starts to look at it sideways.

**Title card: Look what you've become...**

He carries on shouting at it, obviously very annoyed with it.

**Title card: You were very nasty! And stupid! And arrogant!**

He doesn't even want to look at it anymore. He looks disgusted. Suddenly his shadow separates itself from him and moves independently from him. As he shouts at it, it lowers its head and doesn't reply.

**Title card: You acted very badly! You were thoughtless!**

He carries on as though it's normal until his shadow walks off with its head bowed. He watches it go, trying to understand what's happening, but it's gone and he's still there. He begins to holler.

**Title card: COME BACK! COME BACK HERE RIGHT NOW!!!**

Totally smashed he starts to violently throw film reels against the wall as he hollers. The cans split open and the film bursts out all over. George is becoming more and more frenzied. The floor is now covered in cans and film. He stops, dripping with sweat. Worriedly, he looks around for a moment. Then he strikes a match, takes a second to consider what he's about to do and throws the match into the middle of the reels.

There's madness in his eyes as he watches the fire take hold. We can see his pleasure at seeing the flames spread. But he's very quickly overrun. The reels burst into flames in an instant and give off lots of smoke. Jack is panicking and barks incessantly. Suddenly, George seems to lose it. He doesn't know what to do anymore and, although the fire is spreading quite spectacularly around him, he runs to where the reels and films that he has not opened are, and begins throwing them frantically over his shoulder as though he's looking for one in particular. The ever-increasing denseness of the smoke, however, is making the task almost impossible. On the floor, below the smoke, Jack flees the room and runs off while George suffocates but continues to struggle with the cans of reels.

92

**EXT. GEORGE'S HOUSE - DAY**

92

The dog comes out of the house and makes a dash for the sidewalk as fast as he can.

(91) In the room, among the flames and the smoke, George - now breathless - picks one of the reels and tries to turn round. He collapses, still holding on to the can.

93

**EXT. POLICEMAN JUNCTION - DAY**

93

Jack spots a cop at a junction. He takes hold of the cop's trouser leg with his teeth and tries to pull him towards George's house. The policeman doesn't understand, however, and pushes it away with his foot. The dog persists and barks but the cop just wants to be left in peace.

(91) George is suffocating on the floor. The level of smoke is getting ever lower and is slowly covering his face.



- 99      **EXT. HOSPITAL COURTYARD - DAY**      99
- The car pulls into the hospital courtyard.
- 100      **INT. HOSPITAL - LOBBY AND STAIRS - DAY**      100
- Peppy bursts into the lobby, talks to a woman at the desk who directs her with a raised hand that Peppy immediately follows.
- She bounds up the stairs four at a time and comes into a corridor,
- 101      **INT. HOSPITAL - CORRIDOR AND GEORGE'S ROOM - DAY**      101
- and then to a door through the window of which she sees George lying down. His dog is at the foot of the bed, asleep. George is on a drip, unconscious and covered in bandages. A doctor is in the room with a nurse.
- Peppy enters. She's anxious but the doctor seems reassuring.
- Title card: He's not in any danger now. He just needs to rest.**
- Peppy goes up to George. She notices that his burnt hands seem to still be clutching something. She's intrigued. In response, the doctor shows her the reel of film that sits in a corner of the room.
- Title card: He was holding that. It was real hard to pry it away from him.**
- Peppy picks up the can. The label is too damaged to be able to read the title of the film. She opens it and unrolls some of the film in front of the window. We see random photographs run by. It's the only sequence they ever shot together, years before. Peppy is moved. Without turning round, she asks the doctor:
- Title card: Do you think he could come rest up at my place?**
- The doctor nods with a kindly glint in his eye.
- Title card: It's probably the very best he could have hoped for.**
- 102      **EXT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - DAY**      102
- An ambulance takes George, still unconscious, to Peppy's house. Jack is with him.

It's a large, beautiful house, very expensive and very Hollywood. But it's also very inviting.

103 INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - GEORGE'S BEDROOM & CORRIDOR - NIGHT 103

It's night time. George is in bed. He opens one eye. Then he wakes up and looks around, not understanding where he is.

Jack wakes up and barks, wags his tail. A nurse who had been dozing in an armchair facing the bed awakes with a start, then goes over to George. She reassures him, motions to him not to get upset, then slowly leaves the room before running off down the corridor. She knocks at a door then goes back to George's room. Peppy is close on her heels. She comes into the room in her nightgown. When he sees her, George smiles and she rushes over to the bed and puts her arms tight around him. She is terribly moved but, when she releases him from her arms to talk to him, she realizes that he has lost consciousness again and so was not sharing the same special moment as she. She pulls a face, afraid she might have done something wrong, glances over at the nurse, then lays George's head back on his pillow.

104 INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - GEORGE'S BEDROOM - DAY 104

The next morning, Peppy brings breakfast into George's room and they eat it together. She laughs, talks, eats, drinks and is as vivacious as he had dreamed she would be all those years before. He looks at her with a smile on his face. Then she looks at her watch and realizes she needs to hurry.

**Title card: I've got to go. I have to be on set for nine o'clock.**

George smiles kindly at her. She returns the smile but we can tell that maybe reality has just reminded them that she is working, and he is not. They exchange a last glance before she leaves the room.

George, now alone, gets up with some difficulty. He picks up a pile of folded clothes from an armchair. It's his jacket and pants, both half burned. On the floor, his shoes are in exactly the same state of disrepair.

105 INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - DAY 105

A little later, and alone, he's exploring the house. It's richly and tastefully decorated, highly personal. He goes along a corridor and down a wide stairway. Jack begins sniffing outside of one door, as though he wants to go inside.

106

INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - STOREROOM - DAY

106

George opens the door and goes into the room, it's a kind of storeroom in which everything is covered up with sheets. He closes the door behind him. The room has a ghostly quality to it. Jack sniffs about everywhere. George too seems troubled by the strange pervading atmosphere. His curiosity is spurred by a convoluted object that is covered in a thin cloth. A ray of light surges into the room. The door has opened and, standing against the daylight, is a maid.

**Title card: You should go back to your room, Sir.**

George nods with a smile. The maid leaves pretty swiftly, we haven't seen her face, the whole moment seems rather strange. George is intrigued but leaves the room. He has to call Jack to him. Jack is reluctant to go but finally obeys his master.

107

INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS - PEPPY SET - 1931 - DAY

107

A screenplay lies on a table. Peppy and Zimmer are seated either side of the table and are talking animatedly. We're on the set we saw the previous day, and Peppy seems to be trying to convince Zimmer of something. She seems to be describing a film poster or the façade of a movie theater she'd love to see. He doesn't seem too enthusiastic from the looks of the negative shakes of his head and his apologetic air as he listens to Peppy. She finally stops talking and gives him a determined look. Zimmer, uncomfortable and sorry, calmly replies.

**Title card: George is a silent movie actor. He belongs to the past. Today he's a nobody.**

As Zimmer's speaking, she removes her accessories and hat. Zimmer is so intrigued he stops talking.

**Title card: What are you doing?**

She looks him straight in the eyes, and answers:

**Title card: I'm stopping work. It's him or me.**

She looks determined. He's looking unsure of himself. He visibly isn't sure he's understood properly. She drives her point home.

**Title card: What I mean is it's either him AND me! Or neither of us!**

Zimmer still isn't sure he's understood. He just looks at her.

**Title card: I'm blackmailing you, get it?!**

Even when she's blackmailing, she's still pretty, and Zimmer looks at her totally at a loss but at the same time it's obvious that he's going to back down. The people around them are listening in on their conversation and seem to be waiting for his decision. There's an element of déjà-vu to the situation, and Zimmer, who already backed down a few years before, gives in.

**Title card: And why not...**

She smiles at him, picks up the screenplay with delight, and leaves. As he moves away she whistles at him. He turns round and she vigorously blows him a kiss.

108      **INT. PEPPY'S CAR (DRIVING) - DAY**      108

The screenplay lies on the front seat of a car. The camera pulls back, it's Clifton who is in the driving seat.

109      **INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - GEORGE'S BEDROOM - DAY**      109

George is lying in bed when his former chauffeur comes in. At first, he's delighted to see him, but this turns into astonishment and he seems to ask the man a question. The chauffeur answers:

**Title card: I work for Miss Miller now.**

George visibly doesn't know what to think and, although he remains pleasant, becomes somewhat reserved. It's as though something has come between them. The chauffeur places the screenplay on the bedside table. George seems to greet it with mistrust, certainly not with enthusiasm.

The chauffeur also has a box of cakes with him that he puts on a plate for George. George doesn't want any, it's all too much...

Before he leaves, the chauffeur overcomes his habitual reserve for the first time and says to George:

**Title card: She's been good to you. She's always looked out for you.**

The chauffeur leaves without trying to convince George further, as the other looks on full of pride and doubt.

110      EXT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - DAY      110

From the window, we see the chauffeur get into the car and drive off. We recognize the car as being the one that belonged to George.

(109) At the window, George watches him leave. Then he seems to have an idea or, more exactly, an intuition.

111      INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - STOREROOM - DAY      111

George goes into the room that's full of sheets. He goes straight over to the object with the bizarre shape and lifts up the sheet. Underneath he finds his former objet d'art, the three monkeys "hear no evil", "speak no evil" and "see no evil". He thinks for a moment, then pulls off another sheet to reveal a piece of furniture. Once again it's a piece that used to belong to him and we recognize it from having seen it at the auction room.

After taking off several other sheets, George realizes that she bought everything he had put up for sale: furniture, paintings, objets d'art, souvenirs, etc. He rips off sheets one after the other and the objects appear, even down to his suits and tuxedos. He continues and discovers the painting depicting him in a tux, waving and smiling. George looks stunned at the sight of himself looking so full of life. He's interrupted by the same ray of light which surges into the room once more. This time, at the door, are the butler and the maid.

George walks towards them when he sees them. The closer he gets to them, however, the more his expression tightens. We realize that the butler is none other than the distinguished-looking man who purchased everything at the auction, and that the maid is the woman who was bidding against him to raise the sale prices. George is looking at them as he leaves the room. He has recognized them, but doesn't say anything to them. He walks off, still shocked by what he's just realized.

112      INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - GEORGE'S BEDROOM - DAY      112

He finishes putting on his burnt suit in his room, and leaves.

113      INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - DAY      113

He goes down the stairs and flees the house.

114

**EXT. BEGGAR STREET - DAY**

114

George is in the street wearing his burnt suit and damaged shoes. He is shirtless. With Jack by his side, he walks along the sidewalk. There are a few other people walking along. About twenty yards ahead of him a man is begging. He holds out his hand to passers-by. George approaches and, when there are no other passers-by between him and George, the beggar glances at him and lowers his hand. He doesn't raise it as George approaches. George stops in front of him and looks at him, but the beggar motions to him to scam. George continues on his way. For that moment at least, he has become one of them.

He buttons up the collar of his suit in an attempt to hide the fact that he doesn't have a shirt then, heads off and loses himself in the crowd. Some distance later, he stops to check his reflection in a shop window. The image he sees is that of a bum. It's even more striking because in the window there is a young male mannequin wearing a tux, top hat and white scarf. The image of the mannequin and that of George are superimposed.

A cop comes up to George and begins talking to him in a friendly manner. He speaks but we don't know what about. There is not Title card. George visibly has no idea what the cop is talking about. The cop seems to be talking about nothing important, just chatting... He talks and talks... George doesn't understand what he's saying, and doesn't understand why he's talking to him. He's lost.

**Title card: What did you say?**

The cop smiles, carries on talking, then stops. He thinks he's talking to a madman. He doesn't persist, merely sizes George up and, once he's decided that he's harmless, the cop walks off. George, totally bewildered by the incident, seems to lose his grip on himself a little more.

115

**INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - DAY**

115

Peppy gets home in the evening, arms laden with flowers. She's happy.

She quickly goes up the stairs and into George's bedroom. He's not there. She looks for him but can't find him. The maid says that he has left. She drops the flowers.

116

**INT. GEORGE'S BURNT HOUSE - DAY**

116

George goes into his house that has been disfigured by the fire. The flames have changed everything and the atmosphere, here again, seems ghostly and sad.

George sits down in an armchair in the darkness. Jack sits down facing him. He wags his tail and it thumps on the ground.

117 **INT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - STOREROOM - DAY** 117

In the room with all the sheets, Peppy is with the maid. The maid seems to be telling her what happened with George, how he removed all the sheets, etc. Peppy listens with an inscrutable expression on her face. Then, suddenly overcome by a terrible thought, she rushes outside.

118 **EXT. PEPPY'S HOUSE - DAY** 118

She runs out of the house and over to the car, but the chauffeur isn't there. She honks the horn to call him but there's no response. She honks the horn again, then, not wanting to wait any longer, and seeing the keys on the dashboard, she gets behind the wheel, starts the engine and pulls off in a series of kangaroo hops. It's obvious that she doesn't know how to drive all that well, but still goes at full speed - more or less successfully. Just as she passes through the gate, the chauffeur turns up. Too late. He sees her drive away.

119 **EXT. PEPPY'S CAR (DRIVING) - DAY** 119

Peppy is driving as fast as she can through town, but she's pretty reckless and almost causes an accident.

120 **INT. GEORGE'S BURNT HOUSE - DAY** 120

Outside George's house, the wind is slamming one of the shutters with the regularity of a metronome. George takes a gulp of liquor, then puts down the glass, opens a cardboard box and takes out a pistol that he places on the table in front of him. He picks up the glass for another gulp. Jack doesn't like what he sees. He barks.

(119) As for Peppy, she's speeding along, totally ignoring even the most basic of road safety requirements.

(120) George puts down his glass and picks up the pistol. Jack isn't happy at all. He barks and bites George's trouser leg, pulling on it.

(119) Peppy speeding along.

(120) George puts the pistol into his mouth. Jack is barking like mad. George, still in the same position, closes his eyes.

**Title card: "BANG!"**

George is in the same position. He still has the pistol in his mouth. Visibly, he's heard a BANG from outside, because he takes the pistol out of his mouth and looks out the window.

121      **EXT. GEORGE'S BURNT HOUSE - DAY**      121

Outside, we see Peppy's car has rammed into the gate and is still shuddering. Peppy didn't brake in time, but she doesn't care. She jumps out the car and runs into the house.

122      **INT. GEORGE'S BURNT HOUSE - DAY**      122

She rushes into the living room and stops for a moment to look at George. George awkwardly tries to hide the pistol behind him. She bursts into tears.

**Title card: I feel so awful. I only wanted to help you. To take care of you...**

He seems to reply that no, it's not her fault, she's got nothing to feel bad about. He opens his arms towards her, still holding the pistol and the gun fires itself. Fortunately no one is hurt, but the incident makes Peppy laugh and, between sobs and gasps of laughter she throws herself into George's arms. They hug for a long time. Peppy says into his ear,

**Title card: You've got so much that no one else has...**

And into her ear, George replies:

**Title card: No, I'm nothing but a shadow. No good for anything but silence.**

Peppy doesn't reply. She just holds him tighter still and closes her eyes. Jack is sitting close by, watching them and wagging his tail.

Outside, the shutter is still slamming and the car is still shuddering. Peppy opens her eyes. Visibly, she's had an idea.

Jack wags his tail and thumps it on the ground. The shutter slams. The car shudders. Peppy smiles at George.

**Title card: I know what you have that no one else does.**

Peppy moves away from George and motions to him to listen. The shutter slams. Jack's tail thumps. The car shudders... Peppy does a few tap steps. George doesn't understand.

Peppy starts again, with a beaming smile, waiting for his response. George does a few tap steps himself, basic ones, without any great enthusiasm. She smiles at him and does a few more complex steps that are a lot livelier. He smiles back finally understanding the golden gift that he has in his feet. He looks at Peppy lovingly with a beaming smile on his face.

123      INT. KINOGRAPH STUDIOS (1931) - ZIMMER'S OFFICE - DAY      123

Music suddenly begins to play and we see feet dancing in another decor. Except that from now on we actually hear the sound of the tap steps. We pull back to find Peppy and George in Zimmer's office. They're dancing for him. Little by little, Zimmer is convinced by them, and, when they finish their demonstration, he has a broad smile on his face.

124      INT. STUDIO - PEPPY & GEORGE - DAY      124

We find Peppy and George on a film set, still dancing. The piece of jazz they are dancing to has gone so crazy that now everyone wants to get up and dance! They are dancing a tap number facing the camera, in a décor representing a stylized New York. The choreography is incredible, in the grand style of the old Hollywood musicals and they finish with a knee slide that brings them right up to us with big smiles on their faces. The music stops on a powerful blast from the brass instruments that leaves everyone bursting with energy. In the ensuing silence, Peppy and George stay exactly where they were, facing the camera, with the smile stuck on their faces. It goes on for a little too long, they are out of breath.

Then they look at someone off-shot. They are facing a film crew (from their era of course). The director smiles. Zimmer, sitting next to him, seems ecstatic. The director speaks and we hear what he says.

DIRECTOR  
Cut! Excellent!

Zimmer has both his thumbs up. The director says to Peppy and George.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
Once more? Please?

George laughs and replies, and we hear him too.

GEORGE  
With pleasure!

## The End

The credits run while Peppy and George go back to their positions. The camera (ours) pulls back and into frame come all the technicians who are setting up the shot, the hair, make-up and costume people for continuity, the camera coming into position, the director coming over to say a few words to the star couple, in short: the shot being prepared for another take. And, when everyone is in position, the director speaks into his megaphone and we hear "OK, Camera! Sound! Rolling... and... Action!"

Fade to black and the music picks up again for the end of the credit sequence.