

Frogs in the Living Room

Synopsis

Rich patroness Aline Barnsdall announces to her five year old daughter, Sugartop, that she's going to be the luckiest five-year-old girl in all California...because Mummy is going to build a house just for *her* on top Olive Hill, property she has just purchased in Hollywood. It will be wonderful, filled with dancers and actors and artists and painters and all of Mummy's friends to come and visit Mummy and watch Mummy act and dance, and if Mummy gets her way, which she almost always does, the architect of Sugartop's house will be none other than...*Frank Lloyd Wright!*

Aline conjures in her mind's eye the brilliant, caring, genius Frank Lloyd Wright. He waxes artistic about architecture, but it's Aline's muddled version, and has as much to do with her as it does with cantilevers.

The real-life Frank Lloyd Wright declines. He wants nothing to do with Aline, or California. That is, not until Aline offers oodles of money, no expense spared, no corners cut...and Wright is to have complete artistic license to build the house however he sees fit. (Though Aline confides to Sugartop that she actually has no intentions of sharing Frank Lloyd Wright; he'll be hers, hers, hers!)

Frank Lloyd Wright arrives on the grounds of Aline's property, snarly, scowling, insulting and dismissive, but his dour personality can't damper her enthusiasm for the artists' colony. She shows him where the artists' workshops are going to be, and the salons, and the open living room facing east, and oh, the theatre, the theatre! In her artistic ecstasy, she slips "unconsciously" into a performance of *Hiawatha*...

Frank Lloyd Wright has other ideas, already stimulated by the curves of the land and the views from the atop Olive Hill...perhaps a waterway from a reflecting pool running through and into the living room which will most decidedly face *west*....

Aline's social veneer is cracking. Is she not paying for everything, no expense spared, so she *will* get what she wants? Sensing he's losing the commission, Wright utterly crumbles, playing humble and acquiescent, and wheedles Aline into writing him an advance check in the amount of \$6,000.

But Wright heads to Japan to continue his work on the Imperial Hotel, in spite of Aline's increasingly emotional telegrams that she must have a model of the theatre or she will cancel her commission. Wright tells her that he's sent her a model, but that it was damaged in transit, and succeeds in wheedling another \$6,000 from her for a second model.

When he finally shows up again in California, he has no model, but only blueprints. They are (no surprise to us, but a shock to Aline) exactly as he had described them earlier, with water

running under the house, the living room facing west...and to Arlene's biggest shock of all, the theatre isn't a theatre -- it's an outdoor Greek amphitheatre.

Aline blows a gasket, and Frank Lloyd Wright blows one right back. Aline can't fathom the insult which she has just suffered. All the money, prestige, patronage...and the theatre doesn't even have a curtain?? Where's backstage? *Where's her dressing room?* Frank Lloyd Wright blasts that if she would leave him alone, he would design the most wonderful theatre in the world, but if she cannot leave him alone, he will have nothing more to do with her or Olive Hill.

Aline is miserable. She hates it. She hates the design, and she hates Frank Lloyd Wright. She'll give it away, she will, if he builds this monstrosity, this insult, she'll give it away to some halfway house, to a mental institution. Frank Lloyd Wright is happy to have her give it away. The drunks and the insane have more taste than Aline Barnsdall will ever have. Philistine! *You don't deserve a dressing room. And who names their child Sugartop!?* He storms out, and she is glad to see him go.

Aline is conflicted. Does she prove herself a woman of her word, and give away the house? Or does she live in...in...a *Frank Lloyd House home!* *Oh, what has she done?* If she just gives herself over to his architectural plans, she'll forever be linked to the world's greatest architectural genius. And then another thought hits her. If she can just lure him one more time to Olive Hill and get him to understand her vision, her *theatre*...yes, yes...once Frank Lloyd Wright will see that her vision must be, must be served...he will admire her, they will become friends at last, and she will have her glorious arts complex at last. Yes, she'll call him tomorrow!