

KISS ME KATE

The Story of the Play

It seems that everything is against the company rehearsing a musical version of Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*. To start with, June in Baltimore, U.S.A., is "too darned hot". The principal part of Katharine and Petruchio are played by a divorced couple, Fred Graham and Lilli Vanessi. Lilli is a sharp-tongued fiery woman and still jealous of Fred, as she makes clear when he shows interest in the pretty ex-Broadway dancer, Lois Lane. Lois is married to an inveterate gambler, Bill Calhoun, who is playing Lucentio. He has given an I.O.U. in the name of Fred Graham, and to add to their troubles, the Racketeer of the town has sent two of his henchmen to collect.

The situation between Fred and Lilli continues to deteriorate, and when the curtain goes up, their personal relations visibly affect their performances as Petruchio and Katharine (the Shrew) and threaten to break up the show. Lilli is forced by the gangsters to finish it at the points of their guns.

In spite of all this, *The Taming of the Shrew* is a hit, and Lilli decides that a tempestuous life with Fred is preferable to the **dull** security of marriage to a rich admirer.