

VELASCO. (*At couch.*) Did you know my big toe is broken?

MOTHER. (*Smiles.*) Yes. . . . (*Catches herself.*) I mean no. . . . Isn't that terrible?

VELASCO. I'll have to wear a slipper for the next month. . . . Only I can't find my slippers. . . . (*Sees them on MOTHER's feet.*) Oh, there they are. . . .

MOTHER. (*Looks down at her feet, as if surprised.*) Oh, yes. . . . There's your slippers.

VELASCO. (*Sitting on sofa and putting foot up on coffee table.*) It took me forty minutes to walk up the stairs. . . . I'll have to hire someone to pull me up the ladder. (*To CORIE.*) Corie, could I please have about three hundred aspirins? (*CORIE crosses to stairs.*)

MOTHER. (*Appealing to CORIE.*) A broken toe. . . . Isn't that awful! (*CORIE ignores her and goes into bathroom.*)

VELASCO. That's not the worst of it. I just had a complete examination. Guess what else I have?

MOTHER. What?

VELASCO. An ulcer! From all the rich food. . . . I have to take little pink pills like you.

MOTHER. Oh, dear. . . .

VELASCO. You know something, Ethel. . . . I don't think I'm as young as I think I am.

MOTHER. Why do you say that?

VELASCO. Isn't it obvious? Last night I couldn't carry you up the stairs. I can't eat rich foods any more. . . . (*Very confidentially.*) and I dye my hair.

MOTHER. (*Moves to couch.*) Oh. . . . Well, it looks very nice.

VELASCO. Thank you. . . . So are you. . . .

MOTHER. (*Sitting next to VELASCO.*) Oh. . . . Thank you.

VELASCO. I mean it, Ethel. You're a very unusual woman.

MOTHER. Unusual. . . . ? In what way?

VELASCO. (*Reflectively.*) It's funny, but I can hardly feel my big toe at all now.

MOTHER. (*Insistent.*) Unusual in what way?

VELASCO. Well, I took a look at you last night. . . . I took a long, close look at you. . . . Do you know what you are, Ethel?

MOTHER. (*Ready for the compliment.*) What?

VELASCO. A good sport.

MOTHER. Oh. . . . A good sport.

VELASCO. To have gone through all you did last night. The trip to Staten Island, the strange food, the drinks, being carried up to my apartment like that. And you didn't say one word about it.

MOTHER. Well, I didn't have much chance to. . . . I did a lot of fainting.

VELASCO. Yes. . . . As a matter of fact, we both did. . . . If you remember. . . . (*Remembering, he begins to laugh.*)

MOTHER. Yes. . . . (*She joins in. It is a warm, hearty laugh shared by two friends. After the laugh gradually dies out, there is a moment of awkward silence and then with an attempt at renewed gaiety, MOTHER says:*) Mr. Velasco. . . . Where are my clothes?

VELASCO. Your clothes. . . . ? Oh, yes. . . . (*Takes piece of paper out of pocket.*) Here. (*Gives it to her.*)

MOTHER. I'm sure I wore more than that.

VELASCO. It's a cleaning ticket. They're sending them up at six o'clock.

MOTHER. (*Taking ticket.*) Oh, they're at the cleaners. . . . (*After a moment's hesitation.*) When did I take them off?

VELASCO. You didn't. . . . You were drenched and out cold. Gonzales took them off.

MOTHER. (*Shocked.*) Mr. Gonzales??

VELASCO. Not Mister! . . . Doctor Gonzales!

MOTHER. (*Relieved.*) Doctor. . . . Oh, Doctor Gonzales. . . . Well, I suppose that's all right. How convenient to have an M.D. in the building.

VELASCO. (*Laughing.*) He's not an M.D. He's a Doctor of Philosophy.

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MOTHER. I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me, dear. It is a little late.

CORIE. (*Moves towards MOTHER.*) Mother, you're not going home. It's the shank of the evening.

MOTHER. I know, but I've got a ten o'clock dentist appointment . . . at nine o'clock . . . and it's been a very long evening . . . What I mean is it's late, but I've had a wonderful time . . . I don't know what I'm saying.

CORIE. But, Mother—

MOTHER. Darling, I'll call you in the morning. Good night, Paul . . . Good night, Mr. Velasco . . .

VELASCO. (*Putting down brandy, crosses to CORIE.*) Good night, Paul . . . Good night, Corie . . .

CORIE. Mr. Velasco, you're not going too?

VELASCO. (*Taking beret and scarf from CORIE and putting them on.*) Of course. I'm driving Mrs. Banks home.

MOTHER. (*Moves away in shock.*) Oh, no! (*Recovers herself and turns back.*) I mean, oh, no, it's too late.

VELASCO. (*To MOTHER.*) Too late for what?

MOTHER. The buses. They stop running at two. How will you get home?

VELASCO. Why worry about it now? I'll meet that problem in New Jersey.

(VELASCO moves to the door and CORIE in great jubilation flings herself over the back of the couch.)

MOTHER. But it's such a long trip . . . (*Crosses to CORIE.*) Corie, isn't it a long trip?

CORIE. Not really. It's only about thirty minutes.

MOTHER. But it's such an inconvenience. Really, Mr. Velasco, it's very sweet of you but—

VELASCO. Victor!

MOTHER. What?

VELASCO. If we're going to spend the rest of the evening together, it must be Victor.

MOTHER. Oh!

VELASCO. And I insist the arrangement be reciprocal. What is it?

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MOTHER. What is what?

CORIE. Your name, Mother. (*To VELASCO.*) It's Ethel.

MOTHER. Oh, that's right. Ethel. My name is Ethel.

VELASCO. That's better . . . Now . . . are we ready . . . Ethel?

MOTHER. Well . . . if you insist, Walter.

VELASCO. Victor! It's Victor.

MOTHER. Yes. Victor!

VELASCO. Good night, Paul . . . *Shama shama*, Corie.

CORIE. *Shama shama!*

VELASCO. (*Moves to door.*) If you don't hear from us in a week, we'll be at the Nacional Hotel in Mexico City . . . Room 703! . . . Let's go, Ethel! (*And he goes out the door. The MOTHER turns to CORIE and looks for help.*)

MOTHER. (*Frightened, grabs CORIE's arm.*) What does he mean by that?

CORIE. I don't know but I'm dying to find out. Will you call me in the morning?

MOTHER. Yes . . . about six o'clock! (*And in a panic, she exits.*)

CORIE. (*Takes a beat, closes the door, smiles and turns to PAUL.*) Well . . . how about *that*, Mr. "This is going to be a fiasco tonight"? . . . He's taking her all the way out to New Jersey . . . at two o'clock in the morning . . . That's what I call "The Complete Gentleman." (*PAUL looks at her with disdain, rises and staggers up the stairs into the bedroom.*) He hasn't even given a thought about how he's going to get home . . . Maybe he'll sleep over . . . Hey, Paul, do you think . . . ? No, not my mother . . . (*Jumps up onto couch.*) Then again anything can happen with the Sheik of Budapest . . . Boy, what a night . . . Hey! I got a plan. Let's take the bottle of scotch downstairs, ring all the bells and yell "Police" . . . Just to see who comes out of whose apartment . . . (*There is no answer from the bedroom.*) Paul? . . . What's the matter, darling . . . ? Don't you feel well?

PAUL. (*Comes out of the bedroom down the stairs, crossing to the closet. He is taking his coat off and is*

MOTHER. It couldn't have been all your fault.

CORIE. No . . . ? No? Because of me you're running around without your clothes and Paul is out there on the streets with a cold looking for a place to sleep. Whose fault is that?

MOTHER. Yours! . . . But do you want to know something that may shock you . . . ? I still love you.

CORIE. You do . . . ?

MOTHER. Yes, and Paul loves you too.

CORIE. And I love him. . . . Only I don't know what he wants. I don't know how to make him happy. . . . Oh, Mom, what am I going to do?

MOTHER. That's the first time you've asked my advice since you were ten. *(Gets up and moves to CORIE.)* It's very simple. You've just got to give up a little of you for him. Don't make everything a game. Just late at night in that little room upstairs. But take care of him. And make him feel important. And if you can do that, you'll have a happy and wonderful marriage. . . . Like two out of every ten couples. . . . But you'll be one of the two, baby. . . . *(Gently strokes CORIE'S hair.)* Now get your coat and go on out after him. . . . I've got a date. *(Crosses to coffee table and picks up handbag.)* Aunt Harriet isn't going to believe a word of this. . . . *(Flourishing her bathrobe, moves to the door and opens it.)* I wish I had my Polaroid camera. . . . *(Pauses and blows CORIE a kiss and exits.)*

(CORIE thinks a moment, wipes her eyes, and then rushes to the closet for her coat. Without stopping to put it on, she rushes to the door and opens it. As the door opens, PAUL is revealed at the doorway. He greets CORIE with a loud sneeze. His clothes are disheveled, his overcoat is gone, and he is obviously drunk, but he still is carrying his suitcase.)

CORIE. Paul . . . ! Paul, are you all right . . . ?

PAUL. *(Very carefully crossing to the coffee table.)* Fine. . . Fine, thank you. . . . *(He giggles.)*

CORIE. *(Moves to him.)* I was just going out to look for you.

PAUL. *(Puts suitcase on floor and starts to take out clothes.)* Oh . . . ? Where were you going to look . . . ?

CORIE. I don't know. I was just going to look.

PAUL. *(Confidentially.)* Oh! . . . Well, you'll never find me. *(Throws a handful of clothes into the closet. He is apparently amused by some secret joke.)*

CORIE. Paul, I've got so much to say to you, darling.

PAUL. *(Taking more clothes out of suitcase.)* So have I, Corie. . . . I got all the way downstairs and suddenly it hit me. I saw everything clearly for the first time. *(Moves U. L. to above couch.)* I said to myself this is crazy. . . . Crazy . . . ! It's all wrong for me to run like this. . . . *(Turns to CORIE.)* And there's only one right thing to do, Corie.

CORIE. *(Moving to him.)* Really, Paul . . . ? What . . . ?

PAUL. *(Jubilantly.)* You get out! *(Breaks into hysterical laughter.)*

CORIE. What . . . ?

PAUL. Why should I get out? I'm paying a hundred twenty-five a month . . . *(Looks about apartment.)* for this. . . . You get out. *(Stuffs clothes into dictionary.)*

CORIE. But I don't want to get out!

PAUL. *(Crossing back to suitcase and getting another handful of clothes.)* I'm afraid you'll have to. . . . The lease is in my name. . . . *(Moves to stairs.)* I'll give you ten minutes to pack your goulash.

CORIE. *(Moves to him.)* Paul, your coat! . . . Where is your coat?

PAUL. *(Draws himself up in indignation.)* Coat . . . ? I don't need a coat. . . . It's only two degrees. . . . *(Starts to go up stairs, slips and falls.)*

CORIE. *(Rushes to him.)* Paul, are you all right . . . ?

PAUL. *(Struggling up.)* You're dawdling, Corie. . . . I want you out of here in exactly ten minutes. . . .