

SUSY. Yes, he began studying when he left the Marines . . . was that where you . . . ?

MIKE. Yes, it was. (Realizing he is late on cue, Mike quickly takes out the small drugstore notebook [which Roat gave him last night] and turns the pages, searching.)

SUSY. You were in the . . . ? (As he can't find it Mike peers round at the photograph on the wall and half rises but it is just too far away—so he returns to his notebook and turns page.)

MIKE. The . . . seems so long ago I've almost forgotten . . . the . . . I got it! . . .

SUSY. No, don't tell me the—the third training battalion—Charlie Company!

MIKE. (Together, from notebook.) Charlie Company! That's it! (With a laugh.) Good old Charlie Company! (Surprised.) Did you know Sam in those days?

SUSY. Oh no—we first met about a year ago—just after my accident—and got married six months later. (Mike makes a note in notebook.)

MIKE. You lost your sight in an accident?

SUSY. (Quite cheerfully.) Yes—an automobile accident.

MIKE. Sam and I first met five feet under water—but I guess he's told you that one.

SUSY. No.

MIKE. I drove my Jeep into a canal. In fact—I guess he saved my life.

SUSY. Well that makes two of us!

MIKE. Oh? (Susy sits near Mike.)

SUSY. I was practicing how to cross at the lights and cars were piling up all round me by the time Sam yanked me out and he wasn't very polite about it, either!

MIKE. Oh Boy! You don't have to tell me!

SUSY. Were you scared of him?

MIKE. We all were—till we got to know him, of course. He was just a perfectionist I guess.

SUSY. And he still is! Of course he's the one who should be blind. He'd be terribly good at it. (Mike begins to laugh as if he cannot help it.)

MIKE. Blind Sam! . . . (Laughs.) I know I shouldn't laugh, Mrs. Hendrix, but—

SUSY. (Highly amused.) Oh that's all right! Now he would be the

world's champion blind man . . . (They both laugh together. As Susy is speaking the door opens quietly and Gloria looks in and watches them for a moment. Susy, calling:) Gloria? (To Mike.) Who is that?

MIKE. A little girl. (Mike rises, after glancing at Gloria he turns away so as not to be recognized.)

SUSY. (Louder.) Come in, Gloria!

MIKE. (After a pause.) She went out . . . does Sam . . . does Sam still get up to Canada now and then?

SUSY. Yes he was visiting his parents there last week . . . did you ever meet them? (Mike makes note: "visiting parents.")

MIKE. Er—no, I never did. Well I'm sure sorry to have missed him, Mrs. . . . (He goes upstairs.)

SUSY. Drop us a card next time you're around. (Susy rises and goes to below landing.)

MIKE. Thank you, Mrs. Hendrix.

SUSY. Susy.

MIKE. Susy. Well, I better go pick up my bags. Just say hello to Sam for me.

SUSY. (Trying to remember his name.) Uhhh?

MIKE. Mike Talman.

SUSY. Mike Talman.

MIKE. That's right. (Susy puts out her hand and they shake again over the railing.)

SUSY. Well goodbye . . . and thanks for putting out the . . . oh, my God! (Susy hurries to phone and grabs it off table. While she is talking on phone Mike opens door. Gloria is standing outside. He exits L. and Gloria enters quietly and stands at the top of the stairs watching Susy, who does not notice her. Gloria is nine years old and wears glasses. Susy, into phone:) Hello . . . oh—you're still there. I'm terribly sorry but the fire's out. As a matter of fact it wasn't in here at all. It was upstairs—just some soup that had burnt up on the stove but you could smell it for blocks! . . . Yes, you see there was a little girl up there and she was supposed to be watching it, but you know how they are sometimes—oh, no, she's fine and so it's all right now. Goodbye. (Hangs up.) Oh—how awful! Mike? . . . Mike?

GLORIA. What soup?

SUSY. Oh—hello, Gloria.

GLORIA. (Quietly, coming down stairs.) Who was that man who was in here?

SUSY. That was Mr. Talman . . . he's an old friend of Sam's.

GLORIA. Oh, I see. Is the grocery list ready?

SUSY. Yes. It's by the phone. And five dollars . . . can you see it?

GLORIA. (Picking them up.) Yes, I have it. What else?

SUSY. Nothing else . . . (Cheerfully.) my job for today is to defrost the icebox . . . if you'd like to help me. (Wasting no time, Gloria goes straight to the refrigerator, switches it to defrost and, leaving refrigerator door open, starts towards stairs.) What did you do then?

GLORIA. Switched it to defrost, of course.

SUSY. No—that's not how we do it.

GLORIA. It is too. I've done it for Mother—hundreds of times.

SUSY. Not with this one. If you switch this one to defrost the milk freezes solid and all the jars crack open. We have to do it Sam's way. We just pull out the cord at the back and take everything out and put two pans of boiling water into the freezer.

GLORIA. (Overlapping.) Okay, do it Sam's way then. I'll go to the A & P . . . (As Gloria reaches stairs.)

SUSY. Did you close the door . . . of the icebox? (Gloria glances from the open refrigerator to Susy and back.)

GLORIA. Yes.

SUSY. I didn't hear it shut.

GLORIA. Okay, then, it's open.

SUSY. (Calmly.) Then will you shut it, please.

GLORIA. Can't you shut it yourself? It's right by you. (Susy pretends to be busy at sink—burns to herself.)

SUSY. That's the girl . . . thanks.

GLORIA. For what?

SUSY. (Surprised.) Oh! I thought you closed it!

GLORIA. Well I didn't.

SUSY. (Letting go.) Now look here, Four-Eyes! I thought I'd made this clear. When I open the icebox I close it and when you open . . . (At the name "Four-Eyes," Gloria goes into a controlled rage. She knocks an ashtray off side table and then stands facing Susy, waiting for a fight. Susy, quietly.) Did you drop that by mistake?

GLORIA. No.

SUSY. Then pick it up . . . now! (Gloria goes to table, picks up jar, but seeing it is breakable puts it back and throws knives and spoons, etc. onto floor instead.)

GLORIA. (Through her teeth.) Don't you ever call me that again. (Loudly.) AND I DO NOT STEAL?

SUSY. Steal? Who said anything about stealing?

GLORIA. (Loudly.) You did! I know Sam wouldn't say a thing like that. You told Mother I'd stolen a doll of yours. What would I want with a silly doll?

SUSY. I never said anything of the kind. And whatever you threw down then—pick it up! (Shouting.) At once! (Gloria now goes right round the sink and closets, systematically dropping everything she can see [which will not break or damage] onto the floor. As she does this, she shouts angrily.)

GLORIA. And don't you shout at me! . . . I—don't—like—being—shouted—at! Understand? (Susy puts her hands to her ears and spouts.)

SUSY. You stop that—whatever you're doing—stop it! You little . . . sawed-off shuttlecock! (Gloria stops dropping things and stares at Susy, a coffee pot still in her hands.)

GLORIA. (Quietly.) What did you say?

SUSY. (Quietly, ashamed of herself.) I'm sorry, Gloria, I—I shouldn't have said that. (Gloria lays down coffee pot.)

GLORIA. What does it mean?

SUSY. Nothing. It just popped out—see what happens when you push someone too far? . . . (Gloria moves towards Susy.)

GLORIA. I know some dirty words too, you know . . .

SUSY. . . . And I wouldn't have called you Four-Eyes either if . . .

GLORIA. So why did you?

SUSY. Doesn't Sam call you that?

GLORIA. Sam likes me. He can call me what he likes.

SUSY. Oh, I see, thanks. I'll tell him.

GLORIA. What will you tell him? (No reply, then slowly.) If you tell Sam anything about this—I'll tell him!

SUSY. What?

GLORIA. (Slowly.) About that man—who was here just now—I—heard!

SUSY. What do you mean—I heard? (Gloria notices Mike's package on the safe. She picks it up and reads.)

GLORIA. From M. Talman . . . Arizona! . . . Well!

SUSY. What have you got there?
 GLORIA. He left a package on the safe. By mistake I'm sure.
 SUSY. You better leave it there.
 GLORIA. Of course . . . he'll be back.
 SUSY. I don't like you today—I think you better go.
 GLORIA. Okay. I'll go then. (She crosses to refrigerator and slams door hard.) I've closed the icebox.
 SUSY. And leave the grocery list—and the money. I'll do it myself. (Gloria plonks list and money on settee table and goes upstairs. Susy suddenly remembers the things on the floor.) Oh . . . but before you go, pick those things up . . . all of them . . . go on . . . put each one back where it came from. If you can't remember where—give it to me.
 GLORIA. (Hesitates.) Will you tell Sam?
 SUSY. I tell Sam everything.
 GLORIA. (Quietly.) Then pick them up yourself. (Once again Susy is about to explode, but instead she becomes very controlled.)
 SUSY. (Very quietly.) O.K. . . . I will. (Susy gets down slowly on her knees and feels around, gathering all she can find into one pile on the floor. Gloria stands at top of stairs and watches.) Now beat it! Go on—get out of here . . . and don't ever come down here again. (Susy goes on collecting on the floor and Gloria watches. She notices how Susy keeps missing things by inches. Gloria begins to wish all this had never happened. Maybe she'll lose Sam as well. Then she comes down the stairs.)
 GLORIA. (Quietly.) Please don't tell Sam. (Pause.) Susy . . . ? (No reply.) I wanted to help you today. (No reply. Susy goes on trying to pick up. Gloria picks up something that Susy has missed twice and puts it into Susy's hand.)
 SUSY. (Quietly.) Thanks. I'll put that away. (As they continue to pick up and put away.)
 GLORIA. You won't tell Sam, will you?
 SUSY. Just tell me what's broken. Go on—don't be afraid.
 GLORIA. Oh, nothing's broken. I only threw unbreakables.
 SUSY. Well! That was crazy of you. Who taught you that?
 GLORIA. Daddy.
 SUSY. Oh! Does he throw things sometimes?
 GLORIA. (Cheerfully.) Boy he sure did the night he left. He went around the whole apartment throwing all the unbreakables on the floor. But Mother finally got wise to this and said "Well—just look

at you! You can't even break anything!" And when we woke up the next morning he'd gone . . . (Susy is about to pick up a small sharp knife from the table.) Look out! . . . Oh—I'm sorry, Susy.
 SUSY. That's okay—what is it?
 GLORIA. It's just a small kitchen knife—looks sharp. (Susy feels around carefully and picks it up.)
 SUSY. It is! Thanks . . . (Front doorbell rings.) Who is it? (Doorbell rings again.) Come in! The door's open.
 GLORIA. I'll go to the A & P.
 SUSY. Thanks, honey. No rush. (Gloria picks up list and money and runs up stairs. Doorbell rings again.) Come in!
 GLORIA. I'll get it. (About to open door.) You can call me Four-Eyes one day if you like . . . but not just yet, if you don't mind. (Gloria opens door, revealing a man of about seventy standing outside. He may not immediately recognize him as "Roat," who is now disguised as "Harry Roat, Sr." He is eccentric in appearance and manner, even a little crazy. He wears a hat over white, tousled hair. His voice is old and husky.)
 ROAT. I would like to speak to Mr. Sam Hunt.
 SUSY. I beg your pardon . . . ? Who are you, please . . . ?
 ROAT. Where is she? . . . Where is Mrs. Roat? (Roat comes inside the door and Gloria stands outside watching him.)
 SUSY. I think you must have the wrong house . . . I'm Mrs. Hendrix . . . who are you please? . . . You see I'm . . .
 ROAT. May I have a glass of water? I—I'm not feeling too well.
 SUSY. (Hesitates.) Okay. Just a minute. (Susy goes to the sink to find a glass while Roat closes the door. He then starts down the stairs.) If you'll just wait there, I'll bring it. (Roat runs into the bedroom and we hear him open several drawers in the dresser.) What—what are you doing in there? (After a few moments Roat bursts out of the bedroom. He is brandishing what looks like a thin leather volume [i.e., closed leather framed wedding photograph]. He crosses to Susy like a maniac and as though he does not realize she is blind.)
 ROAT. And you can tell Sam Hunt—if he doesn't leave her alone—I'll kill him! (He starts crossing to door, Mike enters without knocking, and comes down the stairs.)
 MIKE. (Cheerfully.) Hello . . . It's Mike Talman again. Sorry—but I think I must have left a package . . . oh yes, there it is—

SUSY. Mike—stop him . . . I don't know who he is . . . (Roat starts up stairs.)

MIKE. You just hold it! Who are you? (Mike pretends to be pushed over so that he falls down the stairs.)

ROAT. Don't touch me! Don't you dare touch me! I've found it! I've found it in the House of Sin! (Roat exits, running. Mike gets up from floor.)

MIKE. Now wait a minute! Come back here! (Offstage we hear Roat shouting, L.)

ROAT. Taxi! . . . Taxi!

SUSY. Mike?

MIKE. What happened?

SUSY. (Scared to death.) I don't know . . . he just barged in and went into the bedroom. I heard a lot of noise and then . . .

MIKE. And then he emptied your dresser all over the floor . . . I'll call the police.

SUSY. (Thinking hard.) The number is . . . 440-1234. . . . Mike, what will I do if he comes back? (He crosses to the phone, takes out his little notebook and is referring to the telephone number of the phone booth outside.)

MIKE. 440-1234. (As he dials the number from his notebook.) Don't worry, Susy. I'll take a later flight to Phoenix. I'll stay here 'til Sam gets back. Okay?

SUSY. (With great relief as she sinks onto settee.) Oh, yes! Thank you.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT I—SCENE 2

ACT I

SCENE 3

TIME: Twenty minutes later.

ALTERATIONS TO SET: Hall door is closed. Venetian blinds are nearly closed downward slant.

ON RISE: Carlino enters from bedroom, notebook in hand. He is now dressed as a city police detective and wears

raincoat (his hat is on the safe). He is followed by Susy and Mike. Mike is acting as though he is already irritated by Carlino and there is friction between them throughout this scene.

(Author's Note: During this scene Mike and Carlino occasionally throw each other a glance, but they do not need to overdo this. They have played this con-game together many times with women who are not blind and they tend to behave as though Susy can see. The only exception to this is that Carlino does wipe off a few fingerprints from last night and, being clumsy by nature, he makes more noise than is necessary and Susy notices this once or twice and looks a little puzzled. Carlino has a leather glove on his left hand [which he wears during rest of play] and a handkerchief in his right hand.)

MIKE. (Annoyed, entering from bedroom.) But I've got to fly to Phoenix tonight.

CARLINO. Well, maybe that little girl will be able to identify him. Just write your address down here, will you? (Mike takes Carlino's notebook and writes.) How many apartments are there in this house—Mrs. Hendrix?

SUSY. Only two, this one and the one upstairs.

CARLINO. (To Mike, as he wipes off some fingerprints.) You say he was waving something in his hand, Mr. Talman?

MIKE. (Still writing in notebook.) Yes, it looked like a thin leather book . . . here's my address. (Mike gives notebook back to Carlino. In doing this he points to both sides of the page and Carlino nods. Carlino goes to window and signals with the Venetian blinds, saying to Susy:)

CARLINO. Excuse me, Mrs. Hendrix, it's a little dark in here . . . this your permanent address, Mr. Talman?

MIKE. Yes it is. (Susy goes to light switch by bedroom and feels the top switch, finding it is in the "on" position she looks puzzled.)

CARLINO. (Picks up hat and goes upstairs.) Well I won't bother you any more . . . and don't worry, Mrs. Hendrix—if your husband does find anything missing he'll let me know, I'm sure.

SUSY. Yes, he will. And thank you for coming so quickly.

CARLINO. You're entirely welcome. (The phone rings. Mike