

LIBBY. Because it's important that I do this on my own. I really appreciate your letting me stay here. If I ever thought you owed me anything, you more than paid me back. But I had a long talk with Grandma over the weekend and we decided if I'm going to make it in this business I have to do it on my own.

HERA. Grandma's still here? I thought she left. You told me she missed New York.

LIBBY. She does. But she went out to this Hillside Cemetery the other day near the airport and she met some women she used to know from Prospect Park. They moved out here when their children did and then they died. So Grandma brings them up on the news in the old neighborhood. I've got to go. If you get stuck, maybe Grandma'll help you with the dinner. (Libby leaves through the front door.)

HERA. (Looks up to "Grandma".) I'll cook. You clean up.

Blackout

SCENE 2

*It is about midnight. There is the sound of a car passing the house. HERB comes out, wearing his robe and slippers. He seems distressed. He goes to the door and looks out.*

STEFFY is wearing a short Japanese robe that she probably leaves there for such occasions. She stands in the doorway near the garden looking at HERA, sensing his distress.

STEFFY. It's okay. I know how you feel.

HERA. You do?

STEFFY. It was a lousy day for me too. The big star came an hour and a half late and we all had to work overtime. I'm sorry if I spoiled the dinner.

HERA. You didn't spoil anything.

STEFFY. I did. I came late, the chicken was a little dry. I'm sorry.

HERA. It was timed for eight o'clock. I mean, the kid makes a chicken, baked potatoes, sour cream, chives, two vegetables and a chocolate mousse, the least you could have done was call.

STEFFY. There were twenty grips trying to get at the phone. I thought I'd make better time on the freeway.

HERA. (Picks up a handmade card.) She even made this beautiful little menu—"Potatoes Germaine, Peas à la Libby. . . ." All the artwork she did herself. She drew the chef's hat. She watercolored the little bunnies around the edges—

STEFFY. It's gorgeous. I don't know what else to say.

HERA. Would you leave her a note? Would you tell her the dinner was fantastic?

STEFFY. I'll tell her tonight. When is she coming home? (She sits.)

HERA. I don't know. She's been out there three, four nights this week and I don't know where she is or what she's doing. What is it now, twelve-thirty? Don't you think that's kind of late?

STEFFY. (Smiles.) No. I think it's kind of wonderful. Welcome to the World of Worried Parents. How does it feel, Herb?

HERA. I don't like it.

STEFFY. Being a parent or being worried?

HERA. Do I get a choice?

STEFFY. Nope. It's a package deal. To love someone is to be scared every minute of your life.

HERA. In two years with you, that was the first time

I've been preoccupied in bed. It's very hard to keep stimulated while you're listening for a car to drive up.

STEFFY. For your information, it was one of the nicest times we've had together.

HERB. Well, you're weird. I like my sex without any distractions . . . I would call someplace, but I don't know where to call.

STEFFY. Interesting how worked up you're getting over a perfect stranger.

HERB. What do you mean stranger? She's my daughter, isn't she?

STEFFY. She's been your daughter for sixteen years but you'd need a telescope to notice it.

HERB. I didn't know what she was like. She wasn't real to me. I thought she hated me. Never thought she'd want to see me. I've lived all these years and I don't know a goddamned thing about life.

STEFFY. How come you only have two trees?

HERB. What?

STEFFY. You've got a lemon tree and an orange tree. You've got room for a few more. You got one that's dying that you don't pay any attention to. . . I was wondering why you just have two trees?

HERB. I don't know what the hell you're—Oh Jesus! Don't give me that. I give up my two kids so I grow two trees. So if I left sixteen kids I'd have Yosemite National Park back there, right? I don't think we should see each other anymore, Steffy. I'm not sure it's healthy to be having sex with your analyst.

STEFFY. Don't look at me. I just raised the questions, not the trees.

HERB. So what's your point? Libby is my Orange and Carl is my Lemon? And their mother is the dried up one with the pits, is that it?

STEFFY. I didn't mean it to be literal. I don't even know why I thought of it. I just thought of it.

HERB. And who are you? I don't see *you* growing around here.

STEFFY. (*With some resignation.*) Yeah. I don't see me growing around here either.

HERB. (*Amazed.*) Who do you want to be? A rose? A tulip? A rhododendron? I'll get a pot and plant you tomorrow.

STEFFY. I want to be Steffy. And I want to be somebody who sees you more than whenever it just suits your fancy. I want to move on with our relationship, Herb.

HERB. (*Looks out the window.*) If she was lost, she would call me, wouldn't she?

STEFFY. What is it you're more worried about? Libby or answering my question?

HERB. What's wrong with our relationship? We've had a two-year run so far. To me, that's a big hit.

STEFFY. I lied to you a few weeks ago. I told you I don't see other men. I did. I had dinner twice with Monte Walsh—he's the cameraman on the picture. It was dinner, nothing else, but I found, much to my surprise, I enjoyed being with him. I enjoyed talking to him. I enjoyed enjoying myself.

HERB. I'm glad. What did you have for dinner?

STEFFY. Communication.

HERB. Oh, then you must have gone to Angelo's. They make it great.

STEFFY. There's your typewriter. There's the paper. All you've got to do is get those snappy answers down on the page and maybe someday *you'll* be able to afford to take *me* to Angelo's. I'm getting dressed. (*She goes into the bedroom.*)

HERB. Jesus Christ! Two weeks ago it was peaceful around here. Now suddenly they're moving in, moving out. I'm running the goddamn Beverly Hilton.

STEFFY. (*Comes out, putting on her blouse.*) One daughter and one girlfriend is hardly a convention. I was hoping you could handle it.

HERB. Why now? Why now after two years do you come in here and throw pressure in my face? I thought you were happy. I thought we had the perfect arrangement. I thought you *liked* being the liberated woman.

STEFFY. I'm going to be forty years old in June. As a choice, liberation is terrific. As a future prospect it's a little frightening.

HERB. I won't get married again.

STEFFY. I don't need you to *save* me. I need you to *want* me.

HERB. I'll give up seeing other women. For good. I only did it once in a while anyway. Is that what you want?

STEFFY. I didn't ask you to turn this into Lent! I just want something more permanent, Herb. Not marriage, just a commitment. I've got a house twice as big as this, I've got a room for you to work in. Move in with me. No financial obligations—I make more than you do anyway. I just miss you in the mornings. I get angry because I see a perfectly good talent gathering dust on your typewriter because you're the kind of man who needs a gentle, prodding push from behind. I care and I worry about you. I don't have to be your wife, but I think I'd make a terrific pusher.

HERB. Why don't you like it the way it is anymore?

STEFFY. Nothing stays the way it is. It all changes. It moves on and there's not a damn thing you or I can do about it.

HERB. (*He's quiet. Looks away.*) I miss 1948. I played stickball on the streets from seven in the morning till six at night. A summer lasted forever. And the pennant was going to fly over Yankee Stadium for the next two hundred years.

STEFFY. I miss 1956. I wore a size-seven dress and never needed make-up. That's still not going to stop Monte Walsh from calling me tomorrow night. What do I do, Herb?

HERB. Change your number.

STEFFY. Sorry. You can't have it all your way. Not forever. When you're eighty-three and I'm seventy-seven, neither one of us is going to look forward to my coming over every Tuesday night. I put my kids on the school bus in the morning and they come home in the afternoon grown up. Don't ask me to settle for whatever it is *you're* willing to settle for. I want more for myself. I want it for *both* of us. But I'm just not going to wait around for *you* to make the decision for what *I* get.

HERB. Jesus, if it's anything I hate, it's someone who asks me to be fair. Maybe there's another way. Maybe there's some other arrangement we could make.

STEFFY. You know what I'm going to get you for Christmas, Herb? An "Exit" sign. I never saw a man who looked so hard for ways out. (*She goes into the bedroom and returns with her skirt and shoes.*)

HERB. I got a kid missing on the streets. Can we talk about this tomorrow?

STEFFY. She's not missing. She's just *out*. . . All right, we'll talk about it tomorrow. (*She puts her skirt on.*)

HERB. I know this place is a dump. I know I should get out of here. But it's just not that easy. I feel "comfortable" here.

STEFFY. Your lucky house?

HERB. Maybe it's what I think I deserve—"The House That Guilt Built."

STEFFY. Listen, we could take the trees with us. I know a guy who does great transplants. I have apples and pears. With your oranges and lemons, we'd make great fruit salad.

(HERB looks at her warmly.)

HERB. Monte Walsh, heh?

STEFFY. Sorry. . . How does it make you feel?

HERB. Angry. Competitive. Scared. I've seen him around. Wears a cowboy hat, always looks like he's in Marlboro Country. What kind of cologne does he wear? Sagebrush?

STEFFY. He makes me smile but he's never made me laugh.

HERB. Yeah? Well, the bastard's making me nervous.

STEFFY. I know the feeling. That's what Libby's doing to me.

HERB. Libby?

STEFFY. (*Gets her skirt and shoes and starts putting them on.*) It's tough for a woman you've known for two years to compete with a daughter you haven't seen in sixteen.

HERB. Are you crazy? What's Libby got to do with you and me?

STEFFY. Don't ask me. I didn't make up nature.

HERB. I don't understand you. I don't understand women. To tell you the truth, I don't trust *anyone* who can't go to deep center field and catch a fly ball.

STEFFY. You know me. I say what's on my mind. She's got something I wish I had.

HERB. What?

STEFFY. You worrying about where I am at twelve-thirty.

HERB. I *know* where you are. You're in the living room putting your clothes on instead of in the bedroom taking them off. Don't give me deadlines, Steffy. Don't tell me I have to make a decision this week. You want to have dinner with Monte Walsh, have dinner with him. You want to hunt buffalo with him, have a good time.

See him as much as you want. I've got a script I not only have to finish, I have to *start*. I've got a daughter who wants to be a movie star by Sunday morning and I've got a dead grandmother in Brooklyn watching every move I make—that's all I can handle right now. You want a happy ending, you'll have to come up with it yourself.

STEFFY. I'm not dumb enough to look for happy endings. I'd gladly settle for a promising middle.

HERB. I'm sorry, Stef. I used up all my promises for this week.

STEFFY. (*Nods, knowing there's no use pushing.*) Sure. Forget it. I just thought I'd mention it in passing. (*She goes into the bedroom and gets her purse.*)

HERB. (*He looks out the window.*) It looks cold out. I wonder if she's dressed warmly enough.

STEFFY. She walked over the Rocky Mountains in shorts, she'll get through Wishaire Boulevard in a Mustang.

HERB. How much do I owe her?

STEFFY. For what?

HERB. For waiting sixteen years before I started worrying if she's dressed warmly enough?

STEFFY. I don't know. The minute you think you owe somebody something, you start paying them back for the wrong reasons. Forget the sixteen years, you can't make them up. In a way you're lucky. If you never left, she'd be nineteen years old anyway and still resent you for being a parent. I don't miss a breakfast with my kids and I'm going to end up in the same place you are.

HERB. You know what? You're one of the smartest ladies I know.

STEFFY. Then how come I'm going home alone at twelve-thirty at night?

HERB. You're just dumb when it comes to picking men.