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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Plaza Suite

A Comedy in Three Acts

by Neil Simon

SAMUEL FRENCH

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PLAZA SUITE, by Neil Simon, was first presented by Saint-Subber at the Plymouth Theater, New York City, on February 14, 1968 with the following cast:

VISITOR FROM MAMARONECK

Bellhop.....Bob Balaban
Karen Nash.....Maureen Stapleton
Sam Nash.....George C. Scott
Waiter.....Jose Ocasio
Jean McCormack.....Claudette Nevins

VISITOR FROM HOLLYWOOD

Waiter.....Jose Ocasio
Jesse Kiplinger.....George C. Scott
Muriel Tate.....Maureen Stapleton

VISITOR FROM FOREST HILLS

Norma Hubley.....Maureen Stapleton
Roy Hubley.....George C. Scott
Bordon Eisler.....Bob Balaban
Mimsey Hubley.....Claudette Nevins

Directed by Mike Nichols

These are three plays all taking place in the same suite at the Plaza hotel.

VISITOR FROM MAMARONECK

CAST

KAREN NASH

SAM NASH

BELLHOP

WAITER

JEAN MCCORMACK

ACT ONE

SCENE: *A suite at the Plaza Hotel. The seventh floor overlooking the park. The set is divided into two rooms. The room at Stage Right is the living room. It is a well-appointed room, tastefully furnished with an entrance door at extreme Right and windows that look out over the park. A door leads into the bedroom, which has a large double bed, etc., and a door that leads to the bathroom. The room also contains a large closet.*

TIME: *About four in the afternoon, mid-December.*

AT RISE: *The door of the suite opens and a* BELLHOP *enters and switches on the LIGHTS in the living room. He carries one small overnight bag.* KAREN NASH *enters behind him. She wears a six-year-old mink coat which could use a bit of restyling, and a pair of galoshes. Underneath she wears an expensive suit which unfortunately looked better on the model in Bendel's than it does on* KAREN. KAREN *is forty-eight years old, and she makes no bones about it. C'est la vie. She is a pleasant affable woman who has let weight and age take their natural course. A mink hat is plopped down on her head. She carries a box from Bendel's with her afternoon's purchases, and a small bouquet of flowers. The* BOY *closes a half-open window in the living room, and puts the bag on the luggage tray.* KAREN *looks around the living room, crosses to bedroom and puts her packages down on a chair. The* BOY *goes to bathroom and turns LIGHT on in there.* KAREN *follows the* BOY *to the bathroom. The* BOY *comes out of the bathroom, crosses living room, opens door to leave, and hesitates in the doorway.*

BELLHOP. Everything all right, m'am?

KAREN. Wait a minute, I want to make sure this is the right room. (*She crosses back into the living room.*) I know this is Suite 719, but was it always 719?

BELLHOP. Yes, m'am. 719.

KAREN. No, you don't understand. I know sometimes hotels change the numbers around and this could have been 723 or 715. And it's very important I get 719. (*She returns to bedroom for flowers.*)

BELLHOP. I'm here two years, it's always been 719.

KAREN. Because you know about 826 at the Savoy-Plaza?

BELLHOP. No, m'am.

KAREN. (*Unwrapping flowers at table behind the sofa in living room.*) Oh, well, they had a famous murder in 826. Then the next year there was a fire and the year after that a husband and a wife committed suicide. Then no one wanted 826. So they turned it into a linen closet. It's a fact, there is no more 826 at the Savoy-Plaza.

BELLHOP. There's no more Savoy-Plaza either. They tore it down two years ago.

KAREN. (*Looks at him incredulously, then goes to look out window.*) Oh, my God, look at that. There's no Savoy-Plaza . . . What's that monstrosity?

BELLHOP. It's the new General Motors building.

KAREN. (*Still looking out window.*) Shows you how often I get into the city. Well, listen, that's what they're doing today. If it's old and it's beautiful, it's not there in the morning . . .

BELLHOP. (*Indicating other windows.*) Well, you still have a nice view from here.

KAREN. (*Crosses to other windows and looks out.*) Mmm, for how long? I guarantee you Central Park comes down in five years.

BELLHOP. You think so?

KAREN. (*Starts to put flowers in vase on sofa table.*) I *know* so. Five years from now you'll look out this win-

dow and you'll see one little tree and the world's largest A & P.

BELLHOP. I don't think I'll be working here five years from now.

KAREN. You mean the rumor is true?

BELLHOP. What rumor?

KAREN. That the Plaza is coming down too!

BELLHOP. *This* Plaza?

KAREN. (*Puts vase on chest between the windows.*) I don't want to worry you or anything. It's just a rumor. No one knows for sure . . . But it's definitely coming down.

BELLHOP. I didn't hear that.

KAREN. (*Crossing to bedroom, takes bag from luggage rack and puts it on dresser in front of bedroom window.*) Well, I'm sure they want to keep it quiet from the staff. The story is that they're going to tear down the Plaza and put up a fifty-two-story luxury hotel.

BELLHOP. Why? *This* is a luxury hotel.

KAREN. Yeah, but it's an *old* luxury hotel. Today it has to be new. Old is no good any more. (*Picks up phone on chest in living room.*) Well, all I really care about is tonight.

BELLHOP. Yes, m'am. Is there anything else?

KAREN. Oh, wait a minute. (*She puts down phone, runs to bedroom for her purse, and looks for change.*) Don't tell me I don't have any change.

BELLHOP. That's all right, m'am.

KAREN. (*Crossing back into living room.*) It's not all right. This is your living. (*Takes out a dollar bill.*) Here you are.

BELLHOP. (*Taking it.*) Thank you very much.

KAREN. I'll be very honest with you. I don't usually give dollar tips. But it's my anniversary. So I can be a sport.

BELLHOP. (*Hand on door. He'd really like to go.*) Oh, well, congratulations.

KAREN. Thank you, dear. Twenty-four years ago to-

night I spent my honeymoon in this room. This *is* 719, isn't it?

BELLHOP. Yes, m'am. 719.

KAREN. I bet you weren't even born twenty-four years ago, right?

BELLHOP. No, I was born . . .

KAREN. You know what I was? I was twenty-five. You know what that makes me today? . . . Some old lady.

BELLHOP. Well, you certainly don't look like an old lady. (*Smiles.*) Well . . . have a pleasant stay, m'am . . . and happy anniversary. (*He starts out door.*)

KAREN. Thank you, dear . . . and take my advice. Don't rush . . . but look around for another job. (*The* BOY *nods and exits.* KAREN *crosses to the bedroom, and looks at herself in the full length mirror on the closet door. Takes off hat and puts it on the dresser.*) You are definitely some old lady. (*She crosses to phone on night table next to bed, takes it and sits on bed, still wearing her mink coat.*) Room service, please. (*She groans as she bends over to take off galoshes.*) Ohhhhh . . . (*Into phone.*) No, operator. I was groaning to myself . . . (*Taking off her coat.*) Hello, room service? . . . Listen, room service, this is Mrs. Sam Nash in Suite 719 . . . I would like a nice, cold bottle of champagne . . . That sounds good, is it French? . . . Fine . . . with two glasses and a tray of assorted hors d'oeuvres . . . but listen, room service, I don't want any anchovies . . . They always give you anchovy patties with the hors d'oeuvres and my husband doesn't eat anchovies and I hate them so don't give me any anchovies . . . Instead of the anchovies, give me some extra smoked salmon or you can split them up . . . half smoked salmon and half caviars . . . That's right. Mrs. Nash. 719 . . . No anchovies . . . (*She hangs up.*) They'll give me anchovies. (*She puts phone back on night table.*) Look at that. No more Savoy-Plaza. (*Starts to take off galoshes again. The TELEPHONE rings. There is one in each room. She gets up and picks up the one next to bed.*) Hello . . . (*The PHONE in the living room*

rings again. Hastily she hangs up the bedroom phone and rushes to answer it.) Hello? . . . Oh, Sam. Where are you? . . . Good. Come up. I'm here . . . What room do you think? . . . 719 . . . Remember? 719? Suite 719? . . . That's right! (*She hangs up.*) He doesn't remember . . . (*She rushes to Bendel box and takes out a sheer negligee. She crosses to mirror on closet door, and looks at herself with negligee in front of her. She is not completely enchanted. The TELEPHONE rings. She puts down negligee and rushes to living room to answer it.*) Hello . . . (*The PHONE in the bedroom rings again. She hastily hangs up the living room phone and rushes to answer it.*) Hello? . . . Oh, hello, Miss McCormack. . . . No, he's not, dear. He's on his way up. Yes, I will . . . It's not important, is it? . . . Well, he seemed so tired lately, I was hoping he wouldn't have to think about work tonight. (*Glancing down at her feet.*) Oh, my God, I still have my galoshes on . . . All right, I'll tell him to call. Yes, when he comes in. Goodbye. (*She hangs up and quickly bends over in an effort to remove her galoshes. She is having difficulty. The DOORBELL rings.*) Oh, dammit. (*Calls out.*) Just a minute! (*The DOORBELL rings again. She is having much trouble with the right galosh.*) You had to wear galoshes today, right? (*She pulls her right galosh off but her shoe remains in it. The DOORBELL rings impatiently.*) Oh, for God's sakes . . . (*She tries to pull her shoe out of the galosh but it is imbedded in there.*) All right, all right, I'm coming. (*She throws down galosh with shoe still in it and "limps" across the room in one galosh and her stockinged foot. She crosses into living room.*) Look at this, my twenty-fourth anniversary. (*She "limps" to the door and opens it.* SAM NASH *stands there.* SAM *has just turned fifty but has made every effort to conceal it. He is trim, impeccably neat. His clothes are well-tailored, although a bit on the junior executive side. He carries an attaché case, a fine leather Gucci product. Everything about* SAM *is measured, efficient, economic. Smiles warmly.*) Hello, Sam.

(SAM *walks brusquely past her, surveying room.*)

SAM. An hour and fifteen minutes I was in the God-damned dentist's chair . . . (*He puts down attaché case on chair Downstage of door to bedroom, and takes off coat.*)

KAREN. (*Closes door, still warmly.*) How do you feel, Sam?

SAM. Between his lousy dirty jokes and WQXR-FM, I got some headache. (*He crosses to mirror over chest in living room and looks at his teeth.*) Did anyone call?

KAREN. Sam, do you remember this room? (*Moving to him.*)

SAM. (*Still examining teeth.*) Well, two more caps and I'm through. (*He turns, baring his teeth at her.*) What do you think?

KAREN. (*Puts her hands in front of her eyes to shield the glare.*) Ooh, dazzling!

SAM. You don't think they're too white, do you? (*Turns and looks in mirror again.*) Do they look too white to you?

KAREN. No, no. Perfect. Very nice with the blue shirt.

SAM. (*Still looking.*) These don't stain, you know. A hundred years from now when I'm dead and buried, they'll be the same color.

KAREN. Oh, good. You'll look wonderful. You don't remember this room, do you?

SAM. (*Looks at watch.*) Four-thirty already? The meeting must be over . . . Didn't anyone call? (*Takes coat and attaché case into bedroom, putting the coat on the chest and the case on the bed.*)

KAREN. Miss McCormack, from the office . . . She wants you to call back.

SAM. (*Looks at her annoyed.*) Why didn't you tell me?

KAREN. We were busy talking about your white teeth. Happy anniversary, Sam. (*Picks up vase and crosses to bedroom.*)

SAM. (*Not hearing her, into phone.*) Judson 6-5900

. . . What did you say? (*Sees her limp into bedroom.*) What's the matter with your leg?

KAREN. (*Limps into bathroom.*) One is shorter than the other. Didn't you ever notice that? I've had it for years.

SAM. (*Into phone.*) Lorainne? Mr. Nash. Let me have Miss McCormack, please. (SAM *looks at himself in closet mirror.*) Well, that kills my barber's appointment today. Oh, could I use five minutes under the sun lamp. (*Into phone.* KAREN *begins to sing in bathroom.*) Miss McCormack? . . . Did Henderson call? . . . Did he send the contracts? (*Places hand over ear to shut out singing.*) What about Nizer? . . . I see . . . (*He quickly takes a note pad from night table and places it on the attaché case on the bed in front of him. He can't find a pencil. He snaps fingers at* KAREN. *Still into phone.*) What does it look like? . . . Ah huh . . . ah huh . . . (*He snaps fingers at* KAREN *again.*) A pencil . . . pencil . . . (KAREN, *rushing in from bathroom, searches through the night tables on both sides of the bed and dresser.* SAM *still on phone.*) Very good. All right, give me the figures. (*He nods into phone.* KAREN *still can't find a pencil. She limps hurriedly over to her purse on the sofa table in the living room. Into phone.*) It sounds right but I've got to go over the estimates . . . Tomorrow morning? That doesn't give us much time . . . Wait a minute, give me those figures again . . . (*Hand over phone, he whispers angrily.*) Karen, for God's sakes, *a pencil!* (KAREN *is frantically looking through her purse. Into phone.*) One seventy-five escalating up to three and a quarter . . . (KAREN *takes a lipstick out of her purse and hobbles quickly to* SAM. *She hands it to him.*) Hold it. (*He writes on pad.*) One seventy-five up to three and a quarter . . . (*He stops writing and looks at* KAREN.) That's a lipstick.

KAREN. (*Taking empty Bendel box from chair.*) I don't have a pencil.

SAM. Then why do you give me a lipstick?

KAREN. Because I don't have a pencil. It's Shocking

Pink but it writes. (*Puts box into wastebasket next to dresser.*)

SAM. (*He glares at her. Into phone.*) All right, I'm going to go over my figures here. If Henderson calls or the contracts come in, bring them right over. What's that? (*He laughs.*) Yes! Well, it's like we were saying the other night, it's the old badger game. (*He laughs again.* KAREN *mocks his private joke with* MISS MCCORMACK *as she hobbles back into bedroom.*) All right, I'll speak to you later. And thank you, Miss McCormack. (*He hangs up.*) A hundred and seventy-five thousand dollar contract, you give me a lipstick. (*Puts lipstick down on table next to chair.*)

KAREN. (*Hobbles out of bathroom with vase.*) I'd have given you blood but it isn't blue.

SAM. All right, don't test me because I've got enough of a headache. (*He rubs eyes with thumb and index finger, opens case and takes out bottle of aspirin. She limps into living room and places vase on desk. He looks at her.*) And for God's sakes, Karen, stop hobbling around. I don't feel like listening to thump thump thump!

KAREN. (*She sighs.*) And happy anniversary to you.

SAM. What?

KAREN. Forget it. (*Sits at desk and takes off other galosh and shoe.*)

SAM. (*Moving to bathroom with aspirin.*) What are you talking about? . . . It's not our anniversary.

KAREN. Today is December 14th, isn't it?

SAM. Yes.

KAREN. So. We're married twenty-four years today.

SAM. (*Looks at her incredulously.*) Are you serious?

KAREN. We're not married twenty-four years today?

SAM. No. (*Comes out of bathroom with glass of water and takes aspirin.*)

KAREN. We're not married twenty-four years?

SAM. No.

KAREN. We're not married?

SAM. Tomorrow is our anniversary and we're married

twenty-three years. (*Puts glass down on dresser and moves into the living room.*)

KAREN. (*Looks at him.*) Are you sure?

SAM. What do you mean, am I sure? I know when our anniversary is. December 15th, we're married twenty-three years. How can you make a mistake like that?

KAREN. All right, don't get so excited and it's not such a big mistake because I didn't get you a present . . . You're sure it's not the 14th?

SAM. I go through this with you every year. When it comes to money or dates or ages, you are absolutely unbelievable. (*Turns, exasperated, and goes to bedroom.*) We were married December 15th, 1945—

KAREN. Then I'm right. Twenty-*four* years.

SAM. 45 from 68 is *23!*

KAREN. Then I'm wrong. (*Shrugs.*) Math isn't one of my best subjects.

SAM. (*Hanging jacket over dresser chair.*) This isn't math, this is people's *lives!* (*Moves back to* KAREN.) How old are you?

KAREN. What?

SAM. It's a simple question. How old are you?

KAREN. (*She's reluctant to answer, moves to window.*) I don't want to play.

SAM. I can't believe it. You really don't know how old you are.

KAREN. I know how old I am. But you get me nervous. Promise you won't leave me if I'm wrong . . . I'll be 49 in April. (SAM *stares at her in disbelief, crosses back into bedroom and wearily leans against closet door.* KAREN *follows him.*) Isn't that right?

SAM. No, but you're close.

KAREN. I'm not going to be 49?

SAM. Not *this* April. *This* April you're going to be 48. How the hell can you make a mistake like that? Can't you add? (*Taking several contracts out of attaché case.*)

KAREN. All right, don't talk to me like I'm a child. I'm a 48-year-old woman.

SAM. But the thing that infuriates me is that you make the mistake the wrong way. Why don't you make yourself younger instead of older, the way other women do?

KAREN. Okay, I'm 47. (*Throws herself on bed and poses sexily.*) So how do I look to you now?

SAM. I've got work to do. I've got a very important meeting at eight o'clock in the morning. (*Crosses to desk and sits.*)

KAREN. (*Sitting up in bed.*) Oh, come on, Sam, where's your sense of humor? I think it's cute as hell that I don't know how old I am.

SAM. (*Starts to look over papers.*) I can't even think straight. I've had five meetings this morning, four teeth capped and I haven't even had my metracal. (*He crosses to phone in living room.*) I'd better eat something. (*Picks up phone.*)

KAREN. I just ordered hors d'oeuvres.

SAM. Not for me. You know I'm on nine hundred calories a day. (*Into phone.*) Room service, please. (*He turns and looks in mirror.*) My God, who the hell is that? Will you look at my eyes? I have no pupils left. (*He turns to* KAREN.) Come here. Look at this. Do you see any pupils?

KAREN. (*Crosses and looks into mirror.*) Yes, Sam. I see two gorgeous pupils . . .

SAM. (*Still in mirror.*) Where? Where? I don't have a pupil in my head. Would you get my eye drops out of the case?

KAREN. (*Crossing to case on bed.*) I think you've been overworking, Sam. I haven't seen you two nights this month.

SAM. (*Stretches arms.*) I really could use some sun. And about a month of sleep.

KAREN. (*Searching through case.*) Hey, why don't we go down to Jamaica for a couple weeks? Just the two of us. We haven't done that in years.

SAM. (*Into phone, pacing.*) Oh, hello, room service, where were you? . . . Listen, I'd like a plate of cold

roast beef, medium rare, very lean. You know what very lean is? . . . No, it doesn't mean no fat . . . It means *absolutely* no fat . . . and I want a salad, *no dressing,* a half grapefruit and a pot of black coffee . . . And I'd appreciate it as soon as possible . . . Wait a second. (*To* KAREN, *who has entered living room with eye drops.*) Where are we again?

KAREN. 719, Plaza Hotel, New York 23, New York.

SAM. (*Into phone.*) 719 . . . As soon as you can. (*He hangs up, moves down to* KAREN *at couch.*) What's wrong with you today?

KAREN. You wouldn't believe it, but fifteen minutes ago I was the happiest woman on earth . . . Sit down, I'll put your pupils back in.

SAM. (*Hand extended.*) I can do it myself.

KAREN. I know you can, Sam, but I *like* to put your eye drops in. (*He lies down on sofa with head on arm and she moves to look down at him from side of sofa.*) It's the only time lately you look at me. (*She poises eye dropper.*)

SAM. (*Looks up at her.*) I'm sorry.

KAREN. You are?

SAM. I haven't been nice to *anyone* the past couple of weeks.

KAREN. You sounded swell to Miss McCormack.

SAM. Put the eye drops in.

KAREN. (*Bending down over arm of sofa.*) First give an old lady a kiss.

(*He gives her a soft, gentle kiss.*)

SAM. I give you my permission to hate me.

KAREN. (*Straightens up.*) I'll save it for later. Open your gorgeous pupils. (KAREN *fills dropper with fluid.*)

SAM. Eight months I've been working on this deal and suddenly today my two top men in the office come down with the flu and I've got to do everything myself. (*She puts drops in eye. He jumps up.*) AAGHH! (*He grabs eye in pain.*)

KAREN. What's the matter?

SAM. (*Sitting up.*) You *drop* them in, you don't *push* them in.

KAREN. I'm sorry, you moved your head.

SAM. I moved my head because you were stabbing my eyeball. (*Gets up and peers in mirror over fireplace.*) Oh, dammit!

KAREN. All right, don't panic, Sam, I'm sorry.

SAM. Why do you think they call it a dropper? If they wanted you to stab people they would call it a stabber. (*Grabs it from her.*) Give it to me, I'll do it myself. (*Lies back down on sofa and begins to put drops in both eyes.*)

KAREN. You mean that's the end of being nice to each other?

SAM. I don't know what we're doing in a hotel anyway.

KAREN. What's the Plaza got to do with my stabbing your eyeball?

SAM. Because it's insane being here, that's why. I've got work to do tonight, I don't know how I'm going to concentrate.

KAREN. You've got to sleep *some* place tonight. The painter says it's going to take two days for the house to dry.

SAM. Yes, but why *now?* Do it in the spring. This is my busy time of the year. (SAM *puts eye drops on the coffee table and crosses to bedroom.*)

KAREN. I know, but it's not the painter's busy time of the year. In the spring he doesn't want to know you.

SAM. Why didn't you ask me first?

KAREN. (*She follows him into bedroom.*) I never see you . . . I saw the painter.

SAM. You could have checked with my secretary. (*He goes into bathroom.*)

KAREN. I did. She said go ahead and paint the house. (*She takes coat from bed and hangs it in closet.*)

SAM'S VOICE. Of all times of the year. Did you bring my things? Toothbrush? Pajamas?

KAREN. I brought your toothbrush.

SAM'S VOICE. You forgot my pajamas?

KAREN. (*Plops down on bed.*) I didn't forget them, I just didn't bring them.

SAM. (*He comes out of bathroom wiping eyes on towel.*) Why not?

KAREN. Because this is Suite 719 at the Plaza and I just didn't think you'd want your pajamas tonight.

SAM. You know I can't sleep without pajamas (*He returns to bathroom.*)

KAREN. (*Yelling after him.*) I took that into consideration . . .

SAM'S VOICE. What?

KAREN. Never mind. They've got shops in the lobby. (*Gets up and picks up phone next to bed.*) Should I send for their catalogue or will you take pot luck?

SAM'S VOICE. Heh. You know what a pair of pajamas would cost at the Plaza? Forty, fifty dollars.

KAREN. You want me to send a bellhop to Bloomingdale's? (*Hangs up phone.*)

SAM. (*Comes out of bathroom.*) I don't understand you. One lousy little bag is all you had to pack.

KAREN. Forgive me. It's my busy time of the year.

SAM. Karen, do me a favor. Don't get brittle. (SAM *crosses to desk in living room.*) I'm very shaky right now and one good crack and I go right to the dry cleaners . . . Boy, could I use a nice, big, cold double martini. (*He sits and begins to examine contracts.*)

KAREN. (*Follows him into living room and leans on the chest of drawers.*) Don't get angry but can I make a suggestion? Why don't you have a nice, big, cold double martini?

SAM. Are you serious? You know how many calories are in a double martini?

KAREN. (*Shrugs.*) Four or five million?

SAM. You know my metabolism. One double martini and right in front of your eyes I get flabby.

KAREN. You used to get sexy. (*She takes a sheet from pile of stationery in the chest.*)

SAM. (*Gets up with papers to sit in more comfort on sofa.*) Well, now I get flabby. Unless I watch myself like a hawk . . . (*As he passes fireplace mirror, he pauses, admiring waistline.*) which I think I manage to do. (*Sits on sofa.*)

KAREN. (*She starts to fold the piece of stationery.*) I like you flabby.

SAM. What does that mean?

KAREN. (*Still folding paper.*) It means I like you flabby. I admit you look like one of the Pepsi generation but it seems a little unnatural to me. A man of your age ought to have a couple of pounds of skin hanging over his belt.

SAM. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you.

KAREN. I'm not disappointed, I'm uncomfortable. I watch you when you get undressed at night. Nothing moves. You're vacuum packed. When you open your belt I expect it to go like a can of coffee— Pzzzzzz! (*She continues folding.*)

SAM. Do you think it's easy with my metabolism to keep my weight down? Do you know what it's like to have a business luncheon at the Villa Capri and watch someone slop down a bowl of spaghetti and I'm munching on a hearts of lettuce salad?

KAREN. My compliments to your restraint.

SAM. I go through torture to maintain my weight.

KAREN. I have nothing but admiration for your waistline. (*She is through folding.*)

SAM. But you like me flabby.

KAREN. We all have our little perversions.

SAM. Can we drop the subject?

KAREN. Like a baked potato.

SAM. Thank you.

KAREN. You're welcome. (*She aims her finished paper airplane across the room and lets it fly.*)

SAM. (*Gets up and paces angrily.*) Why do you like me flabby?

KAREN. Is the floor open again?

SAM. No. Forget it.

KAREN. It's forgotten.

SAM. What was I just doing?

KAREN. Watching yourself like a hawk. (*She crosses to bedroom and begins to fold negligee at dresser.*)

SAM. (*He returns to the sofa. There is a silence. Finally.*) Look, I just want to say one more thing and then the discussion is closed. (KAREN *puts down negligee and crosses back to sofa in living room.*) I'm at the athletic club three, four times a week watching men at least ten years younger than me huffing and puffing trying to sweat off a couple of ounces that goes right back on after the cocktail hour. Now maybe you don't consider it a monumental achievement, but my weight hasn't changed in six years. I'm still one seventy-seven on the scale.

KAREN. So am I. (*Crosses to bedroom, and puts negligee away in chest.*) Now you know why I like you flabby . . . The subject is closed. (*She crosses to chair and sits.*)

SAM. (*Upset, he remains in living room. They contemplate the floor a few seconds.*) Hey, Karen.

KAREN. Yah, Sam . . .

SAM. Let's not fight.

KAREN. It's all right with me, Sam.

SAM. Let's be nice to each other.

KAREN. Okay . . . Who goes first?

SAM. (*He gets up and starts for bedroom. He stops at the door, trying to find words.*) Karen . . .

KAREN. (*Looks up.*) Yes, Sam?

SAM. (*This doesn't seem to be the time to bring up whatever is on his mind.*) Nothing . . . I'm going to do a little work, okay? (*He goes back into living room and sits on sofa.*)

KAREN. (*Still sitting. Without malice.*) You don't even remember this room, you louse.

SAM. What's that?

KAREN. (*Gets up and crosses into living room.*) I may not know how old I am but I sure as hell remember we spent our honeymoon night in Suite 719 at the Plaza Hotel

and this is definitely 719 because I just tipped the bellhop an entire dollar.

SAM. (*Looks at room for the first time.*) Was this the room?

KAREN. Oh, Christ. (*She sits on the arm of the sofa.*)

SAM. (*Gets up and looks about.*) Wait a minute, I think you're right. (*He looks into bedroom.*) Sure, this looks like the suite. Only it was decorated differently. This room was blue.

KAREN. (*Going into bedroom.*) That was you. You were in the Navy. The bedroom was green.

SAM. I think you're mistaken. The bedroom was blue.

KAREN. You're probably confusing it with some other honeymoon . . . (*Sitting on bed.*) Hey, Sam, remember we had dinner here in the bedroom?

SAM. No.

KAREN. Yes. We had dinner here in the bedroom. Do you remember what we had?

SAM. For dinner? Twenty-three years ago?

KAREN *I* remember. You remember too. Take a guess.

SAM. Karen, I don't remember.

KAREN. Yes, you do. Think about it a second.

SAM. I thought about it. I don't remember.

KAREN. We had a bottle of champagne and a tray full of hors d'oeuvres. And we left all the anchovies in the drawer. (*Indicates night table.*)

SAM. Oh. (*Crosses and looks out living room window.*)

KAREN. See. It's coming back to you. (*Notices him looking out window.*) If you're looking for the Savoy-Plaza, it's not there. (*She goes to bedroom window and follows his gaze.*)

SAM. (*Looking out window.*) I'm looking at the Pierre.

KAREN. There it is.

SAM. . . . Karen.

KAREN. What?

SAM. (*Still looking out window.*) It was 819. (KAREN *steps back from window and looks at* SAM. SAM *turns and looks at her.*) We were in 819, not 719.

KAREN. (*She glares at him and grits her teeth with hostility.*) You're wrong!

SAM. I'm not wrong, I'm right. We were in 819. I'm right.

KAREN. (*Angry.*) Don't keep saying you're right like you're right. You're wrong. We were in 719.

SAM. I'll prove it to you. Come here. (KAREN *joins him at living room window.*) Remember, I had my binoculars, we were watching that couple getting undressed in the Pierre? They were on the eighth floor. I remember because we were looking for them the next night. We called them "The Couple on the Eighth Floor."

KAREN. I don't know what you called them, I called them "The Couple on the Seventh Floor." (*She walks away angrily into bedroom.*)

SAM. Look, it's pointless to argue about it. It's not important.

KAREN. (*From bedroom.*) If it's pointless then why are you pointing it out?

SAM. Because you made an issue of it.

KAREN. (*Crossing to bedroom door.*) Maybe I made an issue of saying we were in 719 but *you* made an issue of proving to me we *weren't* in 719.

SAM. All right, Karen. (*He walks away to fireplace.*)

KAREN. Don't tell me, "All right, Karen." If I thought it was 719, why didn't you have the decency to let me just go on in my ignorance and think it was 719?

SAM. Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. It was 719.

KAREN. Aw, forget it. It was 819. (*Moves back into bedroom.*)

SAM. (*Rushing into bedroom.*) No, no. As a matter of fact, you're right. I just remembered. It really was 719.

KAREN. I don't want it 719. I want it 819 . . . Look, why don't you go inside and lose some weight? (*That was a nasty remark.* SAM *glares at* KAREN, *then goes into living room, reassures himself with a glance at his waistline in the fireplace mirror, picks up work papers and sits.* KAREN *realizes what she's done. She crosses to living room*

and embraces him.) I'm sorry, Sam. (SAM *nods his head, looks at his papers.* KAREN *moves around the sofa.*) We're some lousy couple, aren't we? . . . Aren't we?

SAM. (*Doesn't look up.*) Mmm.

KAREN. Mmm what? (*Sitting on the arm of the sofa.*)

SAM. (*Looks up.*) Mmm, yes, we're some lousy couple.

KAREN. (*Without malice.*) That's what I said. First thing we agreed on today.

SAM. Look, Karen, I really don't mean to be rude but I *must* work on these estimates tonight. You understand.

KAREN. Sure, I understand.

SAM. I explained to you that Sid and Walter suddenly came down with the flu—

KAREN. It's all right, Sam. You're excused . . . (*She wanders aimlessly about the room. Catching sight of herself in the mirror over the chest, she examines her figure and then decides to do some exercises, which she quickly gives up. She sits on the arm of the sofa next to* SAM.) Do you have any good estimates for me to read?

SAM. Isn't there anything to read in the bedroom?

KAREN. (*Shrugs.*) "Check-out time is three o'clock." That's all I could find . . . Don't worry about me. I'll find something to do.

(SAM *goes back to his papers.* KAREN *puts her arms around his shoulders and rocks him playfully from side to side, much to* SAM'S *displeasure. Suddenly she releases him, goes to the front door, opens it and goes out into the hall.*)

SAM. What are you doing?

KAREN. (*Coming back into room.*) Looking for the waiter.

SAM. Call him up.

KAREN. I thought I'd look in the hall first. Gives me something to do. (*She goes back out into the hall.*) Nope, don't see him. (*Comes back in and closes door.*) In five minutes I'll call. See? I'll alternate them.

SAM. Karen, please.

KAREN. (*Crosses to him and takes his arm.*) Oh, come on. Forget your crummy old papers and take me to a dirty movie. (*Tries to pull him out of sofa.*) Come on, Sam. Let's go.

SAM. Stop it, Karen.

KAREN. You know what's playing on Sixth Avenue? "Cat House Confidential" and "Ursula the Slut." I passed it in the cab, I swear on my mother's life.

SAM. Don't be ridiculous.

KAREN. (*Kneeling by sofa.*) Are you afraid we'll be recognized? We'll buy beards in the Five and Ten.

SAM. If you want to go, go yourself. (*Trying to concentrate on papers.*)

KAREN. What happens if I get picked up?

SAM. Call me and I won't wait up for you.

KAREN. (*Hugging him.*) Oh, good, you've got your sense of humor back. All right, just take a walk with me. A ten-minute walk and I'll leave you alone.

SAM. Maybe later. We'll see.

KAREN. (*Getting up and pacing.*) No movies . . . no walk. (*She sits on top of the chest of drawers and picks up "What to Do in New York" magazine and skims through it. There is a silence. Finally:*) Feel like going back to the house and watching the paint dry? (SAM, *at the end of his patience, gets up with papers and moves into the bedroom.*) I'm just trying to think of something we can do together.

(*The DOORBELL rings.*)

SAM. (*Pacing in bedroom.*) Shall I get it or is that something you'd like for us to do together?

KAREN. Listen, I'll even take nastiness. It's not much but it's a start.

(KAREN *crosses to door and opens it. It's the* WAITER *with the food on a roller table. He is a middle-aged Puerto Rican.*)

WAITER. Good evening.

KAREN. (*Smiles.*) Hello.

WAITER. (*He rolls the table in.*) Would you like the table near the window?

KAREN. (*Moves towards bedroom.*) Sam, would you like the table near the window?

SAM. (*Disinterested.*) It doesn't make any difference.

KAREN. (*Sweetly, to* WAITER.) It doesn't make any difference.

WAITER. (*Leaving the table up near the windows.*) Shall I leave it here?

KAREN. Sam, should he leave it there?

SAM. (*Throwing contract on bed and moving to doorway.*) Here, there, anywhere, it doesn't make any difference.

KAREN. (*Shrugs, smiles at* WAITER.) Here, there, anywhere. It doesn't make any difference.

WAITER. (*Takes chair from desk and puts it to the right of the table.*) Yes, m'am. (*He gets armchair from right of sofa and brings it to the table.*)

SAM. (*To* WAITER.) You don't have to set up the chairs.

KAREN. (*To* WAITER.) You don't have to set up the chairs.

WAITER. Yes, m'am. (*He starts to put armchair back.*)

SAM. All right, leave them, you've done it already.

KAREN. Yes, why don't you just leave the chairs? They're all set up.

(WAITER *puts the chair back at table.*)

SAM. Can I have the bill, please?

WAITER. Yes, sir. (*Takes bill and pencil to* SAM.)

KAREN. (*She looks at tray of hors d'oeuvres on table. Sweetly.*) Oh, look at all the anchovies.

SAM. (*Signing bill.*) Didn't you tell them you didn't want anchovies?

WAITER. (*To* KAREN.) You didn't want anchovies?

KAREN. (*Doesn't want more trouble.*) No, no. I asked for anchovies. I'm a very big fan of anchovies.

SAM. (*Hands bill to* WAITER.) That'll be all, thank you.

KAREN. Yes, that'll be all, thank you.

WAITER. And thank you. (*Crosses to door.*)

KAREN. (*Looks at table.*) Wait a minute. The champagne. Where's the champagne?

WAITER. No champagne? (*Looks at check.*) You're right. They forgot the champagne.

KAREN. But the anchovies they remembered.

SAM. (*Returning to bedroom.*) I can't drink anything now, I've got work to do. What do you need a whole bottle of champagne for?

KAREN. It's our anniversary. (*To* WAITER.) It's our anniversary.

WAITER. Oh, congratulations.

KAREN. (*Sitting on arm of chair at table.*) Thank you. We're married twenty-three or twenty-four years today or tomorrow.

WAITER. Then you want the champagne?

KAREN. With two grown children in college.

WAITER. Oh? That's wonderful.

KAREN. (*Shrugs.*) You think so? He's flunking out and she's majoring in dirty clothes.

SAM. (*Greatly irritated, moves back to living room.*) He's not flunking out. Why do you say he's flunking out? (*Controls himself. To* WAITER.) That'll be all, thank you.

WAITER. If you don't want the champagne, I'll cross it off the bill.

SAM. She doesn't want the champagne. Cross it off the bill. (*Crosses back to bedroom.*)

KAREN. (*To* WAITER.) I *want* the champagne. Don't cross it off the bill. (*For* SAM's *benefit.*) Bring me a bottle and *one* glass.

WAITER. Yes, m'am.

SAM. (*From bedroom.*) That'll be all, thank you.

KAREN. Yes, that'll be all, thank you.

WAITER. (*Opening door.*) When you want me to take the table, just ring.

KAREN. (*Moving to* WAITER.) Yes, I'll ring when I want you to take the table.

WAITER. Thank you . . . And again, congratulations. (*He exits.*)

(SAM *crosses to table, takes cover off a dish.*)

KAREN. (*At mantel.*) Did you hear that, Sam? We're being congratulated on being married to each other.

SAM. (*Disgusted, slams cover back on dish.*) I asked for lean roast beef. That is not lean roast beef. (*Moves to sofa and sits, taking contract from coffee table.*)

KAREN. (*Contemplatively.*) You know how many people we know who are still married as long as us? One other couple. The Shelly's . . . The most boring people I ever met.

SAM. (*Cannot contain himself any more.*) Why do you talk to the waiter like that?

KAREN. Like what? (*Sits at table and begins to serve herself.*)

SAM. Like you've known him for twenty years. You just met him. He walked in here two minutes ago with fatty roast beef. It's none of his business how our son is doing in school.

KAREN. I was just having a conversation. I get lonely, I like to talk to people.

SAM. He's a waiter. Talk to him about food.

KAREN. I did something wrong again. I'm sorry, Sam. When he brings the champagne I'll hide behind the drapes.

SAM. You don't have to hide. Just don't tell him our personal problems, that's all.

KAREN. What should I do, lie?

SAM. Certainly, lie. Everybody else does. Tell them you have a beautiful and devoted daughter. Tell them you have a brilliant son who's on the Dean's list. Tell them you're only forty-two years old.

KAREN. There's no point to it. In two years I'll be fifty. Who's going to like me better if I'm only forty-two?

SAM. You don't have to revel in it like it's some kind of an accomplishment.

KAREN. I'm not insane about getting older. It happens to everyone. It's happened to you. You're fifty-one years old.

SAM. (*Nods his head in exasperation.*) That's the difference between us. I don't accept it. I don't have to accept being fifty-one. (*Getting up and moving to her.*) I don't accept getting older.

KAREN. Good luck to you. You'll be the youngest one in the cemetery.

SAM. We can't even have a normal discussion any more. (*He stalks into the bedroom, closes the door, and stretches out on the bed.*)

KAREN. Accept being fifty-one and I'll have a normal discussion. (*Stops as* SAM *closes door.*) Aren't you going to have your dinner? (*Gets up and examines the plate of meat. Holds up a piece to the bedroom door and calls to* SAM.) Sam, I found some very lean roast beef. (*She nibbles on a piece.*) Come inside and see how thin I'm getting. (*The DOORBELL rings.*) Hey, come on. The champagne is here. (*She opens door to bedroom and calls in.*) If you don't come out, I'll tell the waiter you wear dentures. (*She crosses and opens the front door.* JEAN MCCORMACK *stands there. She is Sam's secretary. She is a trim, attractive woman about 28. She is neatly dressed, bright, cheerful and smilingly efficient.*) Oh! Hello, Miss McCormack.

JEAN. Hello, Mrs. Nash. I hope I'm not disturbing you.

KAREN. No, no, not at all. Mr. Nash and I were just sitting around, joking. Come in. (*Still holding roast beef in her hand.*)

JEAN. Thank you. (*She enters room, closing the door behind her.*) I hate to barge in this way but I have some papers that need Mr. Nash's signature immediately.

KAREN. Certainly. (*Calls out.*) Sam. It's Miss McCormack. (*To* JEAN.) It is *Miss* McCormack now, isn't it?

JEAN. (*Taking several contracts out of briefcase.*) It *was* Mrs. Colby last year. This year it's Miss McCormack again.

KAREN. (*Sitting on arm of sofa.*) Oh. You're lucky you can remember. I've been married so long if I got divorced, I'd have to make up a maiden name . . . Have you had your dinner yet? (*Indicates roast beef in her hand.*)

JEAN. (*Laying out contracts on coffee table front of sofa.*) I don't have dinner, thank you.

KAREN. No dinner? Ever?

JEAN. (*Getting glasses and pen from purse on console table behind sofa.*) I have a large breakfast, a moderate lunch and a snack before going to bed. On this job I've worked late so often, I had to readjust my eating routine. Now I'm used to it.

(SAM *gets up from bed and moves into living room.*)

KAREN. Oh. Well, I can understand that. I miss a lot of dinners with Mr. Nash too.

SAM. Oh, hello. You got them, huh? (*Sits on sofa and examines contract.*)

JEAN. Just came in. All ready for signature.

KAREN. (*To* JEAN.) How about some black coffee? Or would that fill you up?

JEAN. Black coffee would be fine, thank you.

KAREN. One black coffee coming up. Sam, would you like some black coffee?

SAM. No.

KAREN. That's no black coffee and one black coffee.

(KAREN *crosses to table,* SAM *is looking over the contracts.* MISS MCCORMACK *sits next to him.* KAREN *pours coffee.*)

SAM. Why is there an adjustment on this figure?

JEAN. (*Looks at it.*) There was a clerical omission on the Cincinnati tabulations. It didn't show up on the 1400

but I rechecked it with my own files and made the correction. (*Points on respective pages of contract.*) So that item 17B should read three hundred and twenty-five thousand and disregard the figure on 17A.

KAREN. Cream and sugar?

JEAN. No, thank you.

SAM. But this should have been caught on the IBM.

JEAN. It should have but it wasn't. Obviously it wasn't fed properly.

KAREN. No cream and no sugar or no cream and yes, sugar?

JEAN. No cream and *no* sugar.

KAREN. So it's yes, no cream and no sugar.

SAM. Did you call this to Purcell's attention?

KAREN. (*Handing cup to* JEAN.) Would you like some pastry or cookies? I could call down. They have beautiful pastry and cookies here.

JEAN. This is fine, thank you. (*To* SAM.) Mr. Purcell says this happened once before this month. He can't pin it down until he rechecks the whole 66 file.

KAREN. (*Leaning on console table behind sofa.*) You're sure? A sandwich? A Welsh rarebit?

JEAN. No, I'm really quite happy, thank you. (*Takes saccharine from purse and puts it in coffee.*)

SAM. Well, I'm just going to have to go over this whole thing tonight with Howard. If we give Henderson any room for doubt, we can blow our entire presentation.

JEAN. (*Sips coffee.*) I told him there was a possibility of this so he made plans to stay in town tonight.

SAM. Damn! Of all nights to have this happen. (*Putting down contract.*) What time is it now?

JEAN. (*Looks at watch.*) Ten past five.

KAREN. (*Looking over* JEAN'S *shoulder.*) Ten past five.

SAM. All right, you tell Howard I'll meet him in the office between six-fifteen and six-thirty. Tell him I want to see every one of last year's 1400 forms.

KAREN. (*Moving around sofa to* SAM.) You're going to the office? Tonight?

SAM. It can't be helped, Karen. (JEAN *puts coffee cup down.*) We're having that same damned trouble with the computer again.

KAREN. I could go with you. Maybe all it needs is a little dusting.

SAM. Something in that office sure as hell needs dusting. (*Getting up and moving to bedroom.* JEAN *gathers up the contracts and moves to put them in briefcase at the console table.*) All right, Miss McCormack, why don't you hop in a cab now and get started on these figures with Howard? I just want to clean up and I'll meet you in about twenty minutes.

JEAN. Yes, sir.

SAM. I hope I'm not ruining any plans you had for tonight?

JEAN. When I saw the figures this morning, I expected it. (*Closes case.* SAM *takes bottle of pills from attaché case and crosses to bathroom.*) Mrs. Nash, thank you very much for the coffee.

KAREN. You really should eat something. You'll faint right over the IBM machine.

JEAN. (*Opening front door.*) I'll be all right.

KAREN. (*Moving to her above sofa.*) It's a pity you can't stay two more minutes. I just ordered champagne. Can I tell her why, Sam?

SAM. (*Returns from bathroom, having taken pills. Throws pills back into case.*) What's that? (*Drinks from glass on dresser. Takes jacket from back of chair and puts it on.*)

KAREN. Well, I'm not supposed to go around blurting these things out but it's our twenty third anniversary . . .

JEAN. Oh? I didn't know. Congratulations.

KAREN. (*To* JEAN, *but for* SAM's *benefit.*) Thank you . . . Yes, life has been very good to me. I have a beautiful and devoted daughter, a brilliant son who's on the Dean's list, I'm forty-two years old, what more can I ask?

SAM. (*Moving into living room.*) Karen, Miss McCormack has to get back to the office. (SAM *goes back into*

bedroom, takes hair brushes from overnight bag and brushes hair in front of closet mirror.)

KAREN. Oh, I'm sorry. (*To* JEAN.) Don't let him work you too late.

JEAN. It's all right. I'm used to it now. Best wishes again, Mrs. Nash.

KAREN. (*As* JEAN *starts out.*) Thanks, dear. And see that he buys me a nice gift.

JEAN. (*Smiles.*) I definitely will. (*Closes door.*)

KAREN. (*To* SAM.) What a sweet girl. That's a very sweet girl, Sam.

SAM. Karen, listen, I'm very sorry about tonight. It just can't be helped. (*Puts brushes back.*)

KAREN. That's a sweet, young, skinny girl.

SAM. (*Takes a cordless electric razor from attaché case and crosses to bathroom.*) The thing is, if I leave now maybe I can still get back in time for us to have a late dinner.

KAREN. (*Enters bedroom and sits in armchair.*) Oh, don't worry about me, Sam. (SAM *begins to shave.*) I understand. I just feel badly for you. You could have really relaxed tonight and instead you'll be cooped up in that stuffy office until all hours working over some boring contracts with your smooth shaven face.

SAM. (*Still shaving, moves into bedroom.*) Well, I can't very well walk through the lobby of the Plaza Hotel with a stubbly chin. (*Returns to bathroom.*)

KAREN. They wouldn't let you into the elevator. Don't forget your Jade East.

SAM'S VOICE. My what?

KAREN. Your sexy cologne. The doorman will never get you a cab if you don't smell nice.

SAM. (*Enters bedroom. Looks at* KAREN *for a moment and then shuts razor off.*) What are you doing, Karen?

KAREN. Oh, I'm just joking. Can't you tell when I'm kidding around any more, Sam?

SAM. No, I can't. (*Crosses around bed and puts razor back in case.*)

KAREN. (*Playfully pats his fanny, and then sits on bed.*) Well, of course I am. I'm just teasing you by intimating you're having an affair with your secretary.

SAM. I see. (*Takes overcoat from top of bureau and puts it on.*)

KAREN. Are you, Sam? Is sweet, skinny Miss McCormack your mistress?

SAM. For God's sakes, Karen, what kind of a thing is that to say?

KAREN. If you're not, it's a lousy thing to say. If you are, it's a hell of a question.

SAM. I'm not even going to dignify that with an answer.

KAREN. (*On her knees, bouncing up and down like a child.*) Oh, come on, Sam, dignify it. I'm dying to know. Just tell me if you're having an affair with her or not.

SAM. And you'll believe me?

KAREN. Of course.

SAM. No, I'm not having an affair with her.

KAREN. (*Big smile.*) Yes, you are.

SAM. Curses, trapped again. (*Looks out window.*) It looks like snow. I hope I can get a cab.

KAREN. (*Starting to take off hairpiece.*) Even if you're not, Sam, it's all right if you do. I approve of Miss McCormack. She's a nice girl.

SAM. (*Getting attaché case from bed.*) Thank you. She'll be pleased to know. Look, I could call downstairs and get you a ticket for a show tonight. There's no reason for you to sit alone like this. Is there something you'd like to see?

KAREN. (*Smiles.*) Yeah. What you and Miss McCormack will be doing later.

SAM. Really, Karen, I find this in very poor taste. (*Moving to living room, puts attaché case down on console table behind sofa.*)

KAREN. (*Getting brush from overnight case.*) Why? I'm just being honest again. I'm saying that if at this stage of your life you wanted to have a small, quiet affair

with a young, skinny woman, I would understand. (*Sits back on bed and begins to brush out hairpiece.*)

SAM. (*Stops abruptly in his gathering of the contracts from coffee table and returns to bedroom.*) What do you mean at this stage of my life?

KAREN. (*Continues her brushing.*) Well, you're blankety years old. I would say the number but I know you don't accept it. And I realize that when a man becomes blankety-one or blankety-two, he is feeling insecure, that he's losing his virility, (*Smiles broadly at* SAM.) and that a quiet fling may be the best thing for him. I know, I read the New York Post.

SAM. I'm glad to know I have Rose Franzblau's permission.

KAREN. And mine if you really want it.

SAM. (*Yells.*) Well, I don't want it and *I'm not having an affair!*

KAREN. Then why are you yelling?

SAM. (*Crosses to living room.*) Because this is an idiotic conversation.

KAREN. (*Collapses on bed.*) Oh, Sam, I'm so glad.

SAM. (*Takes contracts from coffee table and puts them in case.*) Now you're happy? You're happy because *now* you don't think I'm having an affair?

KAREN. Well, of course I'm happy. You think I'm some kind of a domestic mental case? I don't want you having an affair. I'm just saying that if you *are* having one, I understand.

SAM. (*Crosses to bedroom, picks up contract from bed.*) Karen, I have a hard night's work ahead of me. I'll be back about twelve. (*Starts to leave.*)

KAREN. Sam, stay and talk to me for five minutes.

SAM. They're waiting for me at the office. I've got work to do.

KAREN. You've got help in the office. I've been with the firm longer than all of them . . . (*After a moment,* SAM *sits on the edge of the bureau.*) Sam, I know we haven't been very happy lately. I know you've been busy,

you may not have noticed it, but we have definitely not been very happy.

SAM. Yes, Karen, I've noticed it.

KAREN. (*Continues to brush hairpiece.*) What's wrong? We have a twelve-room house in the country, two sweet children, a maid who doesn't drink, is there something we're missing?

SAM. I—don't know.

KAREN. Can you at least think about it? I need hints, Sam . . . (*Quoting.*) "Is there something else you want?" (SAM *doesn't answer.*) "Is there something I can give you that I'm not giving you?" (*Again no answer.*) Could you please speak up, we're closing in ten minutes.

SAM. It's me, Karen, it's not you. (*Crosses to living room, puts contract in case, closes it.*)

KAREN. (*Puts hair and brush on dresser and follows him into living room.*) I'll buy that. What's wrong with you, Sam?

SAM. (*There is a long pause.*) I don't know . . . (*Moves to mantel and then paces in front of sofa.*) I don't know if you can understand this . . . but when I came home after the war . . . I had my whole life in front of me. And all I dreamed about, all I wanted, was to get married, and to have children . . . and to make a success of my life . . . Well, I was very lucky . . . I got it all . . . Marriage, the children . . . more money than I ever dreamed of making . . .

KAREN. (*Sitting on sofa.*) Then what is it you want?

SAM. (*Stopping by fireplace.*) I just want to do it all over again . . . I would like to start the whole damned thing right from the beginning.

KAREN. (*Long pause.*) I see. Well, frankly, Sam, I don't think the Navy will take you again.

SAM. (*Smiles ruefully.*) Well, it won't be because I can't pass the physical. (*Takes case and starts for door again.*) I told you it's stupid talking about it. It'll work itself out. If not, I'll dye my hair. (*He opens the door.*)

KAREN. You know what I think? I think you want to get out and you don't know how to tell me.

SAM. (*Stops in door. Turns back to* KAREN.) That's not true.

KAREN. Which isn't? That you want to get out or that you don't know how to tell me?

SAM. Why do you always start the most serious discussions in our life when I'm halfway out the door?

KAREN. If that's what you want, just tell me straight out. Just say, "Karen, there's no point in going on." I'd rather hear it from you personally, than getting a message on our service.

SAM. Look, we'll talk about it when I get back, okay? (*He starts out again.*)

KAREN. (*Can no longer contain herself. There is none of that "playful, toying" attitude in her voice now. Jumping up.*) *No, God dammit, we'll talk about it now!* I'm not going to sit around a hotel room half the night waiting to hear how my life is going to come out . . . If you've got something to say, then have the decency to say it before you walk out that door.

(*There is a moment's silence while they try to compose themselves.* SAM *turns back into the room and closes the door.*)

SAM. Is there any coffee left?

KAREN. It's that bad, huh? . . . All right, sit down, I'll get you some coffee. (*She starts to cross to table and stops, looking at her hands.* SAM *crosses to sofa. Puts down attaché case by coffee table and sits.*) Look at this. I'm shaking like a leaf. Pour it yourself. I have a feeling in a few minutes I'm not going to be too crazy about you (KAREN *crosses and sits on ottoman next to sofa, hands clasped together.*)

SAM. (*He finds it difficult to look at her.*) No matter what, Karen, in twenty-three years my feelings for you have never changed. You're my wife, I still love you.

KAREN. Oh, God, am I in trouble.

SAM. It has nothing to do with you. It's something that just happened . . . It's true, I am having an affair with her . . . (SAM *waits for* KAREN *to react. She merely sits and looks at her hands.*) It's been going on for about six months now . . . I tried stopping it a few times, it didn't work . . . After a couple of days I'd start it again . . . And then—well, what's the point in going on with this? You wanted honesty, I'm giving it to you. I'm having an affair with Jean, that's all there is to it.

KAREN. (*Looks up.*) Who's Jean?

SAM. Jean! Miss McCormack.

KAREN. Oh. For a minute I thought there were two of them.

SAM. I'm not very good at this. I don't know what I'm supposed to say now.

KAREN. Don't worry about it. You're doing fine. (*She gets up and moves to table.*) You want that coffee now? I just stopped shaking.

SAM. . . . What are we going to do?

KAREN. (*Turns back to* SAM.) Well, you're taken care of. You're having an affair. I'm the one who needs an activity.

SAM. Karen, I'll do whatever you want.

KAREN. Whatever *I* want?

SAM. I'll leave. I'll get out tonight . . . Or I'll stop seeing her. I'll get rid of her in the office. I'll try it any way you want.

KAREN. (*Moves to sofa.*) Oh. Okay. I choose "Stop Seeing Jean" . . . Gee, that was easy. (*Snaps her fingers.*) Now we can go back to our old normal life and live happily ever after. (*Starts to pour coffee, but stops and puts pot down.*) It's not my day. Even the coffee's cold.

SAM. Oh, come on, Karen, don't play "Aren't we civilized?" Call me a bastard. Throw the coffee at me.

KAREN. You're a bastard. You want cream and sugar?

SAM. It's funny how our attitudes have suddenly

changed. What happened to "I think a man of your age *should* have an affair"?

KAREN. It looked good in the window but terrible when I got it home.

SAM. If it's any solace to you, I never thought it would go this far. I don't even remember how it started . . .

KAREN. Think, it'll come back to you.

SAM. Do you know she worked for me for two years and I never batted an eye at her?

KAREN. Good for you, Sam.

SAM. (*Angry.*) Oh, come on. (*Crosses to bedroom, and stretches out across bed.*)

KAREN. (*She follows him into bedroom.*) No, Sam, I want to hear about it. She worked for you for two years and you didn't know her first name was Jean. And then one night you were both working late and suddenly you let down your hair and took off your glasses and she said, "Why, Mr. Nash, you're beautiful."

SAM. (*Takes pillow and places it over his head.*) That's it, word for word. You must have been hiding in the closet.

KAREN. (*Tears the pillow away and throws it back down on bed.*) All right, you want to know when I think the exact date your crummy little affair started? I'll tell you. It was June nineteenth. It was your birthday and you just turned fifty years old. Five oh, count 'em, folks, and you were feeling good and sorry for yourself. Right?

SAM. Oh, God, here comes Doctor Franzblau again.

KAREN. And the only reason you picked on Miss McCormack was because she was probably the first one you saw that morning . . . If she was sick that day, this affair very well could have been with your elevator operator.

SAM. Wrong. He's fifty-two and I don't go for older men.

KAREN. (*Breaks away and crosses to living room.*) You were right before, Sam. Let's discuss this later tonight.

SAM. (*Sitting up on side of bed.*) No, no. We've opened this up, let's bring it all out. I've told you the truth, I'm

involved with another woman. I'm not proud of it, Karen, but those are the facts. Now what am I supposed to do about it?

KAREN. (*Moves back to bedroom doorway.*) Well, I *would* suggest committing suicide but I'm afraid you might think I meant *me* . . . (*Goes back to living room.*) I have one other suggestion. Forget it.

SAM. (*Sharply.*) Forget it?

KAREN. (*Pacing above sofa.*) I understand it, Sam. It's not your fault. But maybe I can live with it until it's over. What else can I do, Sam? I'm attached to you. So go out, have a good time tonight and when you come home, bring me the Daily News, I'm getting sick of the Post. (*Sits on sofa.*)

SAM. If I lived with you another twenty-three years, I don't think I'd ever understand you.

KAREN. If that's a proposition, I accept.

SAM. (*Gets up and moves to* KAREN.) Dammit, Karen, stop accepting everything in life that's thrown at you. Fight back once in a while. Don't understand me. Hate me! I am *not* going through a middle-aged adjustment. I'm having an affair. A cheating, sneaking, sordid affair.

KAREN. If it helps you to romanticize it, Sam, all right. I happen to know better.

SAM. (*Crossing above sofa to fireplace.*) You don't know better at all. You didn't even know I was having an affair.

KAREN. I suspected it. You were working three nights a week and we weren't getting any richer.

SAM. (*Leaning on mantlepiece.*) I see. And now that you know the truth I have your blessings.

KAREN. No, just my permission. I'm your wife, not your mother.

SAM. That's indecent. I never heard such a thing in my life. For crying out loud, Karen, I'm losing all respect for you.

KAREN. What's the matter, Sam, am I robbing you of

all those delicious guilt feelings? Will you feel better if I go to pieces and try to lash back at you?

SAM. (*Crosses below sofa.*) At least I would understand it. It's normal. I don't know why you're not having hysterics and screaming for a lawyer.

KAREN. (*Getting up to confront him.*) All right, Sam, if it'll make you happier . . . I think you stink. You're a vain, self-pitying, deceiving, ten-pound box of rancid no-Cal cottage cheese. How'm I doing?

SAM. Swell. Now we're finally getting somewhere.

KAREN. Oh, you like this, don't you? It makes everything nice and simple for you. Now you can leave here the martyred, misunderstood husband. Well, I won't give you the satisfaction. I take it back, Sam. (*Sits on sofa. Pleasantly, with great control.*) You're a pussycat. I'll have milk and cookies for you when you get home.

SAM. (*Sits on ottoman.*) No, no. Finish what you were saying. Get it off your chest, Karen. It's been building up for twenty-three years. I want to hear everything. Vain, self-pitying, what else? Go on, what else?

KAREN. You're adorable. Eat your heart out.

SAM. (*Furious.*) Karen, don't do this to me.

KAREN. I'm sorry, I'm a forgiving woman. I can't help myself.

SAM. (*Gets up, takes case and crosses to door.*) You're driving me right out of here, you know that, don't you?

KAREN. There'll always be room for you in my garage.

SAM. If I walk out this door now, I don't come back.

KAREN. I think you will.

SAM. What makes you so sure?

KAREN. You forgot to take your eye drops.

SAM. (*He storms to coffee table, snatches up drops and crosses back to door. Stops.*) Before I go I just want to say one thing. Whatever you think of me is probably true. No, not probably, *definitely*. I have been a bastard right from the beginning. I don't expect you to forgive me.

KAREN. But I do.

SAM. (*Whirling back to her.*) Let me finish. I don't ex-

pect you to forgive me. But I ask you with all conscience, with all your understanding, not to blame Jean for any of this.

KAREN. (*Collapses on couch. Then pulling herself together.*) I'll send her a nice gift.

SAM. (*Puts down case beside sofa.*) She's been torturing herself ever since this started. *I'm* the one who forced the issue.

KAREN. (*Moving away from him on sofa, mimics* JEAN.) "It didn't show up on the 1400 but I rechecked it with my own files and made the correction on the 640." . . . You know as well as I do that's code for "I'll meet you at the Picadilly Hotel."

SAM. (*Kneeling beside sofa.*) You won't believe me, will you? That she's a nice girl.

KAREN. Nice for you and nice for me are two different things.

SAM. If it's that Sunday supplement psychology you're using, Karen, it's backfiring because you're just making it easier for me.

KAREN. Well, you like things easy, don't you? You don't even have an affair the hard way.

SAM. Meaning what?

KAREN. (*Getting up.*) Meaning you could have at least taken the trouble to look outside your office for a girl . . . (*Picks up imaginary phone.*) "Miss McCormack, would you please come inside and take an affair!" . . . Honestly, Sam. (*Moves above sofa.*)

SAM. Karen, don't force me to say nice things about her to you.

KAREN. I can't help it. I'm just disappointed in you. It's so damned unoriginal.

SAM. What did you want her to be, a fighter pilot with the Israeli Air Force?

KAREN. *Everyone* cheats with their secretary. I expected more from *my* husband!

SAM. (*Shaking his head.*) I never saw you like this.

You live with a person your whole life, you don't really know them.

KAREN. (*Crossing below sofa to bedroom.*) Go on, Sam, go have your affair. You're fifty-one years old. In an hour it may be too late. (*Sits at dresser, and brushes hair.*)

SAM. (*Getting up and crossing to her in bedroom.*) By God, you are something. You are really something special, Karen. Twenty-three years I'm married to you and I still can't make you out. You don't look much different than the ordinary woman but I promise you there is nothing walking around on two legs that compares in any way, shape or form to the likes of you.

KAREN. (*Drops brush and turns to him. Laughing.*) So if I'm so special, what are you carrying on with secretaries for?

SAM. I'll be God-damned if I know . . .

(*They look at each other. He turns and starts to front door, taking attaché case.*)

KAREN. (*Following him into living room.*) Sam! (SAM *stops.*) Sam . . . do I still have my two choices? (*He turns and looks at her.*) Because if I do . . . I choose "Get rid of Miss McCormack." (*He looks away.*) I pick "Stay here and work it out with me, Sam." (KAREN *turns her back to him and leans against the arm of the sofa.*) Because the other way I think I'm going to lose. Don't go to the office tonight, Sam . . . Stay with me . . . Please.

SAM. (*Leaning on console table, looks at her.*) I swear, I wish we could go back the way it was before. A couple of years ago, before there were any problems

KAREN. Maybe we can, Sam. We'll do what you said before. We'll lie. We'll tell each other everything is all right . . . There is nothing wrong in the office tonight, there is no Miss McCormack and I'm twenty-seven God-damned years old . . . What do you say, Sam?

SAM. (*Moves about indecisively.*) Maybe tomorrow, Karen . . . I can't—tonight! (*He opens door.*) I'll— I'll see you.

KAREN. When? (*He exits, leaving door open.*) Never mind. I love surprises.

(*As* SAM *leaves, the* WAITER *appears with a tray with an ice bucket filled with a bottle of champagne and two glasses.*)

WAITER. The champagne . . . I brought two glasses just in case. (*He closes the door and places the ice bucket and glasses on the desk. He glances back.*) Is he coming back?

KAREN. (*Remains leaning on sofa.*) Funny you should ask that.

(*He begins to open the bottle.*)

CURTAIN

VISITOR FROM HOLLYWOOD

CAST

WAITER

JESSE KIPLINGER

MURIEL TATE

ACT TWO

SCENE: *Suite 719 at the Plaza.*

TIME: *About three in the afternoon on a warm, sunny, spring day.*

AT RISE: *The* WAITER *is just finishing setting up some fresh glasses and bottles of liquor on top of the bureau between the windows in the living room. The TELEPHONE in the bedroom rings.* JESSE KIPLINGER *emerges from the bathroom.* JESSE *is about 40, a confident, self-assured man. He is applying after shave lotion to his face. He is dressed in "Hollywood Mod," with a tan turtleneck sweater and tight blue suede pants. His shoes are highly polished and buckled. He has the latest-style haircut, with bangs falling over his forehead. He crosses to the phone and picks it up.*

JESSE. Hello? . . . Oh, just a minute. (*He drops phone and crosses to the* WAITER.) I'll take that. (*He indicates the check, which the* WAITER *hands him. He signs it and returns it to the* WAITER, *who nods and crosses to the door.* JESSE *picks up the phone and holds his hand over the phone until the* WAITER *is gone, closing the door behind him. Then into phone.*) Put her on . . . (*Waits, then in a much softer, romantically persuasive tone.*) Hello? . . . Muriel? Where are you? . . . Well, come on up . . . Yes, I'm positive it's all right . . . (*More insistently.*) Muriel, do you want me to come down and get you? . . . All right then, take the elevator and come to suite 719 . . . And stop being so silly, I'm dying to see you. (*He hangs up. Thinks a second, then picks up phone again.*) Hello, operator? This is Mr. Kiplinger in suite

719. Would you please hold all local calls for the next hour, I'm going to be in conference . . . (*Checks appointment book on night table.*) Make that an hour and a half . . . Thank you. (*He hangs up and begins to clear the bed of a collection of scripts, trade papers, and galley proofs. Kneeling, he pushes them under the bed. Rising, he carefully smooths the spread. He snatches up a section of colored comics from the arm of the armchair and throws it into the waste basket. Taking a blue button-down sweater from the back of chair at dresser, he puts it on with a great flair and carefully examines himself in the mirror on the closet door. Satisfied with his appearance, he crosses to living room and checks the bar set-up on the bureau. The front DOORBELL rings.* JESSE *crosses to answer it, checking his hair in the mirror over the mantle as he does. He is finally ready. Taking a deep breath, he opens the door.* MURIEL TATE *stands there.* MURIEL *is in her late thirties and is extremely attractive. She wears a bright yellow spring coat and a simple, demure, high-necked grey dress which shows off her svelte, still girlish figure. Her hair falls simply to her shoulders, held back by a wide, white band.* MURIEL *is a warm, easy-smiling woman who seems as naïve and vulnerable as the day she graduated from Tenafly High School. When the door opens, the* TWO *of them greet each other with enormous smiles.* JESSE *throws out his arms.*) Muriel!

MURIEL. (*Smiles, cocks her head.*) Jesse?

JESSE. It's not.

MURIEL. It is.

JESSE. Muriel, I can't believe it. Is it really you?

MURIEL. It's me, Muriel.

JESSE. Well, come on in, for pete's sakes, come on in.

MURIEL. (*Enters with a rush and crosses below sofa to far side of sofa.*) I can only stay for a few minutes.

JESSE. (*Closes door, follows to below near side of sofa.*) My God, it's good to see you.

(*They stand and confront each other.*)

MURIEL. I just dropped in to say hello. I really can't stay.

JESSE. You sounded good on the phone but you look even better.

MURIEL. Because I've got to get back to New Jersey. I'm parked in a one-hour zone. Hello, Jesse, I think I'm very nervous.

JESSE. Hey! Hello, Muriel.

MURIEL. Same old Muriel, heh?

JESSE. What do you mean, same old Muriel? You look fantastic. (*Arms outstretched, moves to her.*) Come here, let me take a good look at you.

MURIEL. (*Evading him, crosses below coffee table.*) Oh, don't, Jesse. Don't look at me. I've been stuck in the Holland Tunnel for two hours. What time is it? Tell me when it's three o'clock. I can't stay. (*Sits in armchair.*)

JESSE. (*Moves towards her.*) Muriel, I can't get over it. You look absolutely wonderful.

MURIEL. Well, I *feel* absolutely wonderful.

JESSE. (*Sitting on arm of sofa.*) I really, sincerely mean that. You simply look incredibly fantastic.

MURIEL. Well, I *feel* incredibly fantastic.

JESSE. Well, you look it.

MURIEL. Well, I *feel* it.

JESSE. And how are you?

MURIEL. (*Without enthusiasm.*) I'm all right . . . I don't know why I'm so nervous, do you? (*Shrugging coat off shoulders, and arranging it over back of chair.*)

JESSE. No. I can't imagine why you should be so nervous.

MURIEL. Neither can I. I just am . . . Should I be here?

JESSE. Why not? Is there anything wrong in it?

MURIEL. Oh, no. No, of course not. There's nothing wrong in it. My God, no. I don't see anything wrong. I just dropped by from New Jersey to say hello. What's wrong with that? . . . I just don't think I should be here.

(*Getting up, and moving towards mantel.*) Is it three o'clock yet?

JESSE. (*Moving towards her.*) Little Muriel Tate, all grown up and married. How many kids you got now?

MURIEL. Three.

JESSE. No kidding? Three kids . . . What are they?

MURIEL. A boy and a girl.

JESSE. A boy and a girl?

MURIEL. (*Breaking away to other side of sofa.*) And another boy who's away in camp. I can't even think straight. Isn't this terrible?

JESSE. (*Moving to sofa. Good-naturedly.*) What's wrong?

MURIEL. I don't know, I can't catch my breath. Well, it's *you,* that's the simple explanation. I'm nervous about meeting you.

JESSE. Me? Me? Jesse Kiplinger, your high-school boy friend from Tenafly, New Jersey. Ohh, Muriel.

MURIEL. You know what I mean, Mr. "Famous Hollywood Producer" staying at the Plaza Hotel.

JESSE. Mr. Famous Hollywood Producer. (*Sitting on sofa.*) Muriel, you know me better than that. I haven't changed. I made a couple of pictures, that's all.

MURIEL. (*Moving to sofa.*) A couple of pictures? The Easter show at the Radio City Music Hall? I stood on line with my children for three hours in the rain.

JESSE. What did you do that for? You could have called my office in New York. My girl would have gotten you right in. Any time you want to see one of my pictures—

MURIEL. Oh, I couldn't do that.

JESSE. Why not?

MURIEL. I couldn't. I couldn't impose like that.

JESSE. You're *not* imposing.

MURIEL. I am.

JESSE. I *want* you to.

MURIEL. What's the number?

JESSE. I'll give it to you before you go. (*Getting up.*)

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