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SF PERUSALS

Here Lies Jeremy Troy

A Comedy in Three Acts

Jack Sharkey

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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"HERE LIES JEREMY TROY," produced by Elliot Martin, under the direction of Ronny Graham, had its world premiere on August 2, 1965, at the Lakewood Theatre in Skowhegan, Maine, with the following cast:

JEREMY TROY, *a law clerk* ..... Will Hutchins
KATHRYN TROY, *his wife* ..... Diane Kagan
CHARLIE BICKLE, *an old friend* .... Darren McGavin
TINA WINSLOW, *an undergraduate model* . Ann Willis
SVEN IVORSEN, *Jeremy's boss* ..... Murvyn Vye

The time is the present. The action takes place during a twenty-four-hour period in February. The locale of the play is the Troy home in West Rutherford, New Jersey, just a short drive from New York City.

ACT ONE: A weekday morning.

ACT TWO: That evening.

ACT THREE: The following morning.

Critical acclaim for the play was unanimous—

"An applauding success! A smashing hit! The audience roared! A rib tickler if I ever saw one!"

Christiansen/*Bangor Daily News*

"Highly amusing . . . loaded with laughs . . . rapid-fire comical situations . . . steady laughter. During the intermissions, high praise for the new play could be heard everywhere."

Plummer/*Skowhegan Morning Sentinel*

"Even the little old ladies laughed until they wheezed, and I guffawed until my face hurt. This one will get four stars on Broadway, because it can't miss. Funnier than 'Never Too Late,' more laughs than 'Goodbye, Charlie,' and completely involves an audience better than 'The Caine Mutiny.' "

Huntington/*Lewiston Evening Journal*

"A refreshing revelation—clean, sparkling comedy—almost breathless comedy, except the audience needs its breath for the next laugh. Recommended for the whole family. Waves of laughter rolled over the performers on the stage. A five-pointed satellite that promises to sail onto Broadway and shine there for a long time!"

Henderson /*Kennebec Journal*

"Jack Sharkey has a hit on his hands!"

Kup's Column

"The backers of 'Jeremy Troy' will get their money back, year in and out. The show is sure-fire."

Syracuse Herald-Journal

"A hilarious farce, sexy but nice . . . a bright comedy with witty dialogue . . . one just can't help laughing!"

Syracuse Post-Standard

"Jack Sharkey writes better than his namesake could fight!"

Leominster Enterprise (*Massachusetts*)

Here Lies Jeremy Troy

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The Troy home in West Rutherford, New Jersey. The entire Downstage area is the living room, from the large pull-draped picture window with lidded windowseat on the Right wall to the staircase that mounts from Downstage Left to a balcony beginning Upstage left. In the living room are a sofa and coffee table before the window, a desk along the wall masking the underside of the staircase, a telephone, some blue-bound documents and a carved elephant statuette on the desk, and a sturdy hassock just Downstage of the desk. A high-backed chair stands against the wall Downstage of the window. The balcony runs the width of the Upstage wall. Supporting its center is a broad fireplace with mantel, the chimney-section continuing up to the roof on the balcony, but this section is at least three feet farther Upstage than the front of the fireplace itself. On this section hangs a large portrait of George Washington. Just over the mantel hangs a sedate pastoral scene. The two arches formed by balcony, fireplace and Left and Right walls lead to a passageway along the Upstage wall beneath the balcony; at the Right end of this passageway is the visible doorway to the kitchen; at the Left end is the unseen front door to the house. Also unseen, behind the fireplace, is an area where hats and coats can be hung, and—in the Upstage wall—the door to the cellar. Three doors give onto the balcony: at the extreme Right end, directly over the kitchen doorway, is the door to the*

bathroom; symmetrically flanking the chimney section are the door to the bedroom, Left, and the door to the guest room, Right. The time is early morning in the midst of a very cold February. The drapes of the window are open and the room is bright. As the Scene begins, KATHRYN TROY *is Onstage but unseen, on her hands and knees behind and Upstage of the sofa. A moment after Curtain-rise,* JEREMY TROY *enters from the bathroom and moves toward the bedroom, in a white shirt, tying his necktie. He is trouserless.* JEREMY *is in his early thirties, and of attractive aspect.* KATHRYN, *in her late twenties, will be—when we see her—as prettily feminine as he is handsomely male.*

JEREMY. (*Agitated.*) Honey, did you find them yet?

KATHRYN. (*Straightens from behind sofa, on knees.*) Not yet, Jeremy. Are you sure you had them on last night?

JEREMY. Of course I'm sure. I remember quite clearly.

KATHRYN. Then I wish you'd remember quite clearly where you took them off.

JEREMY. I was too tired to notice. Have you tried over by the desk? That's where I spent *most* of last night, after all. (*Exits into bedroom.*)

KATHRYN. (*Stands, hurries to the desk, searches, stands irresolute, then:*) They're not here—

JEREMY. (*Comes out, adjusting tie-tack.*) They've got to be. I can't show up at the office without them, today of all days! You know how Mr. Ivorsen feels about employees who don't appreciate his generosity. (*Vanishes again into bedroom.*)

KATHRYN. Well then, why couldn't he have given you an *extra* set of cuff links for Christmas? (*Finds empty tumbler on mantel, looks at it, gets an idea, carries it off with her into kitchen.*)

JEREMY. (*Enters, now in trousers, suit jacket over arm and briefcase in hand, starts downstairs.*) Did you try in

the—? (*Stops speaking as* KATHRYN *re-enters with ice cube tray, sets his briefcase on desk, meets her before the fireplace.*)

KATHRYN. (*Lifts out divider on:*) They were in the ice cube tray. (*As he takes them, starts inserting them into cuffs.*) You didn't tell me you had a highball last night.

JEREMY. (*Business of getting helped into suit jacket.*) I thought you would have guessed. It's no fun working all night unless I can promise myself a reward when I'm done. But there it is! (*Lifts documents on desk, flourishes and replaces them during:*) The result of three back-breaking weeks of correlating case histories, judicial decisions, regulations, by-laws and loopholes into one of the tightest defenses the firm of Ivorsen and Motz has ever possessed. And I am beat.

KATHRYN. (*Has gotten his overcoat behind fireplace, helps him into it on:*) Poor darling! Listen—why don't you take the day off? You've certainly earned it. I can take your brief into New York for you. It's not far.

JEREMY. (*Tempted, hesitates, then shakes his head.*) Nope. If it were any day but today, I might do it. But I can't very well call in sick, and then be a charming host when Mr. Ivorsen comes for dinner tonight.

KATHRYN. (*Buttoning overcoat, adjusting lapels, etc.*) Do you think it'll happen, darling? Are you sure? I mean, Mr. Motz has only been dead for two months—

JEREMY. After Mr. Ivorsen sees that brief, I'll be a shoo-in for the full partnership. (*Dreaming aloud.*) "Ivorsen and Troy"! Has a nice ring, doesn't it?

KATHRYN. (*Fondly.*) It's no more than you deserve, Jeremy. After all—seven years with the firm. Seven long, hard years.

JEREMY. (*Takes her by the shoulders to face him.*) Seven *wonderful* years. What man couldn't be a success with a woman like you at his side?

KATHRYN. (*Dryly.*) A steeplejack.

JEREMY. (*Laughs, gives her a quick peck on the lips.*) Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to run. I called a cab

from upstairs, and it'll be here any minute. (*Stoops and pulls a metal strongbox from the bottom drawer of desk.*) Listen, I think my diploma's in here someplace. Will you see if you can find it and tack it up where old Ivorsen will be sure to see it? Just in case he hasn't mentioned my promotion by the time I come home tonight. Every little nudge helps. (*Sets box on Upstage front corner of desk.*)

KATHRYN. (*Gestures kitchenward.*) Are you sure you don't want to take the car, dear?

JEREMY. You'll need it more than I do, what with all the high-priced food you're going to have to get today. We want Ivorsen— (*HORN honks Offstage Left.*) feeling jolly, remember!

KATHRYN. Your cab's here—you'd better run, darling—

JEREMY. (*Grabs briefcase from desk.*) Listen, I'll phone if I get the promotion down at the office. But if he doesn't mention it, well— You'd better be at your absolute most charming tonight, then— (*Pecks her on lips.*) and make the martinis five-to-one! (*Starts for front door.*)

KATHRYN. (*Points at his feet.*) Your galoshes! The weatherman said snow!

JEREMY. No time, darling. I really have to run. (*Steps from sight toward front door, then rushes back to her.*) Good luck. To *both* of us! (*Kisses her once more; HORN honks again; toward cab:*) Okay-okay! (*Exits with a SLAM of front door.*)

KATHRYN. (*Sighs with relief at completion of the daily off-to-work ritual, starts to pick up strongbox, sees what we have seen all along: the brief still sits on the desk; grabs it up.*) Oh, no! Jeremy! (*Even as she runs with it toward door, we hear ENGINE start as the cab pulls away; she hurries back to desk, drops brief on desk, lifts phone, dials, and:*) Hello? . . . This is Mrs. Jeremy Troy, at five-thirty-one Pinecrest Drive. One of your cabs just picked up my husband and he's forgotten some very important papers—to New York . . . You will? . . . Oh, thank you. Thank you so very much! (*Hangs up, starts*

to bring ice cube tray back toward kitchen; door CHIMES sound.) Well, *that* was quick! (*Goes to front door, opens it, and we hear:*)

CHARLIE. (*Starts line off, but enters during first few words.*) Hello, hello, hello! My name is Charlie Bickle. I know the name may mean nothing to you now, but someday the whole world will know it. (CHARLIE *is dressed in slacks, sweater and open-necked shirt. He carries a duffel bag, a framed canvas, folded easel, and box of brushes and paints, all of which he drops Upstage of sofa during his swift-striding entrance, and his continuing speech is emphasized by a rapt outfling of his arms, Right, on:*) Great godfrey! That window! And a north light, too! That's what every artist dreams of, a north light—I forget exactly why.

KATHRYN. (*Following him in more slowly, a bit breathtaken.*) Bickle . . . Charlie Bickle— Are you a friend of Jeremy's?

CHARLIE. (*Has turned to her, points to her on:*) Please! Don't speak! Just stand there and let me drink in your beauty. Better yet, let me drink in your wine cellar, if you have one. Say you have a wine cellar—

KATHRYN. (*Still dazed, but becoming amused.*) But we haven't—

CHARLIE. You are *not* following *instructions* . . . But where's old Jer?

KATHRYN. You just missed him, but you're in luck. He forgot some important papers, so I called the cab company. They have radiophones or something. He should be back at any moment— You know, you're not dressed very warmly for this weather? Can I get you a cup of coffee?

CHARLIE. I make it a practice never to drink coffee on an empty stomach. You see, I have this old football injury— (*Strikes classic pigskin-hurling stance.*)

KATHRYN. (*Places him.*) Charlie Bickle—from the university! No wonder your name was familiar! Why, you were the star quarterback for four years—

CHARLIE. *You* went to the university? How did I ever miss *meeting* you?

KATHRYN. Oh, I didn't attend the school. I lived in town, but I used to go up to the campus for all the social activities. That's how I met Jeremy. At one of the dances. He'll be awfully pleased to see you after all these years. Do you know, you're the first school friend we've seen since Jeremy's graduation?

CHARLIE. (*Who's been casing the place during her speech.*) This room—it's magnificent! I can't tell you what I'd give just to own those ten square feet of carpet in front of that window! . . . Did I tell you I'm a painter?

KATHRYN. Not in so many words. But you drop your clues very deftly.

CHARLIE. (*A bit of sincerity pokes through the brusque facade.*) Was I as bad as all that, Mrs. Troy?

KATHRYN. "Kathryn," please! Not bad, Charlie. Just —overwhelming . . . Oh, but I'm forgetting your empty stomach. (*Starts for kitchen.*) What kind of football injury did you have, anyway?

CHARLIE. (*Calls, as she exits:*) An ulcer! I had this deepseated anxiety against getting tackled. It hurts. I was the only player on the team who used to scream during scrimmage. For me the water boy carried crackers and milk.

KATHRYN. (*Enters with hastily assembled tray of coffeecake, coffeepot, etc.*) But you were the fastest quarterback the university ever had. (*Sets tray on coffee table, sits on sofa, pours for them, during:*) When you took that ball down the field you never let an opposing player anywhere near you.

CHARLIE. (*Munching, sipping, etc.*) Now you know why: I was terrified!

KATHRYN. (*Laughs; then:*) But tell me, Charlie, what brings you to this part of the country?

CHARLIE. A bus. From the Port Authority Terminal. I've lived in New York for years, now. You know: Green-

wich Village, sidewalk shows, bongo drums, espresso coffee— I even had a beard for awhile, but people kept mistaking me for Commander Whitehead, so I gave it up. The only "jolly little Bubbles" *I* knew was this exotic dancer who— Hmm, I guess I should know you a bit better before telling you *that* story . . . (*Paces restlessly as he munches, drinking in the fascination of the picture window, a bundle of exuberant energy.*)

KATHRYN. But if you live so close by, why haven't you dropped in before?

CHARLIE. Oh—you know how it is: One of those things you keep *meaning* to do, but never get around to—like writing your congressman. (*Eager to change the subject from this patent evasion:*) Say, where's your bathroom? My fingers are a little sticky from your generosity . . . (*Starts upstairs without waiting for:*)

KATHRYN. Right up there—

CHARLIE. (*At bedroom.*) In here?

KATHRYN. No, that's our bedroom—

CHARLIE. (*At guest room.*) In here?

KATHRYN. No, that's the guest room—

CHARLIE. Guest room! (*Kisses his hand, slaps kiss on door, then:*) In *here!* (*Exits into bathroom on:*)

KATHRYN. Yes! (*Slumps back in place on sofa, recovering from this whirlwind, and then front door SLAMS.*) Is that you, dear?

JEREMY. (*Enters, busily starts stuffing brief into case, on:*) No, it's *me!*

KATHRYN. (*Rises, starts for him, a woman with a surprise; gets hinty:*) You have a visitor, Jeremy. An old friend.

JEREMY. (*Still busy fastening case, etc.*) Male or female?

KATHRYN. His name is Charlie. Does that help?

JEREMY. (*Finishing up.*) The world is full of Charlies, darling. Which one is this, and where is he? I really have to dash—

(*Upstairs,* CHARLIE *comes from bathroom, sees* JEREMY, *and starts fast, on tiptoe, for stairs, during:*)

KATHRYN. (*Sotto voce:*) He's up in the bathroom.

JEREMY. Look, will you tell him I couldn't wait? If he wanted to see me, why'd he go to the bathroom?

KATHRYN. I guess *he* couldn't wait, either. Well, don't worry, I'll make your excuses, Jeremy. You'd better scoot.

JEREMY. (*Back toward stairs, doesn't see* CHARLIE *descending.*) Okay. I'm *really* in a rush, now. Would've been back sooner, but we got stuck in the middle lane of tunnel traffic, and couldn't turn around till Union City—

CHARLIE. (*From vantage point a few stairs up, flings out arms.*) Jeremy-boy!

JEREMY. (*Turns, sees him.*) Charlie . . . Charlie Bickle—from the *university!* (*Falls backward in dead faint onto floor.*)

KATHRYN. Jeremy!

CHARLIE. (*Beat; lowers his arms; then:*) Well—he remembers me, all right!

(*He and* KATHRYN *now hurry to* JEREMY, *loosening his coat, etc.*)

KATHRYN. I was afraid this would happen. Drive, drive, drive, day and night, and *now* look!

JEREMY. (*Seated on floor between them, wakes facing* KATHRYN.) What happened? What time is it? (*Turns head, sees* CHARLIE.) Oh. It *is* you, Charlie! (*Faints again.*)

CHARLIE. (*To a still-stunned* KATHRYN.) You know . . . I'm honored. This is the first time in my life anybody was so glad to see me that he passed out cold. (*As* JEREMY *starts reviving again, helps him to his feet, during:*) Here, you'd better sit down, Jer. You don't look so good.

JEREMY. (*Wobbly, getting onto sofa.*) I don't feel so good, either.

KATHRYN. (*Anger overriding concern.*) Then that settles it. You're taking the day off, and I'm taking that brief into New York for you.

JEREMY. Kathy— Would you? (*Rises, voice grateful, but manner urgent; is practically pushing here into her coat and out of the house, on:*) I sure do appreciate it, darling. You're a wife in a million—

KATHRYN. What'll I tell Mr. Ivorsen about tonight? Is dinner on or off?

JEREMY. *On,* of course! Now hurry. Tell Ivorsen I'll try to get in to the office this afternoon. (*Shoves her out of sight toward front door, turns, starts toward* CHARLIE *with index finger pointing, as if about to rage, when:*)

KATHRYN. (*Re-enters, arms akimbo.*) The BRIEF!

JEREMY. (*Grabs case from desk so fast it sends strong-box flying onto floor, disgorging contents all over: papers, photos, etc.*) Here! Now hurry, darling—the meter's running!

KATHRYN. Jeremy, if you're sick—

JEREMY. All I need is a short nap and I'll be good as new. Now, please *scram,* dear! (*Pushes her out again, and we hear front door SLAM;* CHARLIE *begins picking up papers from floor;* JEREMY *re-enters, sees him.*) What do you think you're *doing?*

CHARLIE. Just cleaning up after the hurricane, old buddy—

JEREMY. Well, stop it. I mean— You're my guest, Charlie. It's not your place to do the housework for me—

CHARLIE. Say, are you all right, Jer? Maybe you *should* take that nap—

JEREMY. I'm perfectly fine. Now, just give me those.

CHARLIE. (*About to hand papers over, pauses to look at one.*) Gee, *I* didn't know you made summa cum laude.

JEREMY. My diploma! What are you doing with it?

CHARLIE. (*Increasingly uneasy in the presence of his maniacal host.*) Just reading it, is all. And admiring it. I think what you did takes a lot of courage. Your wife sure admires you.

JEREMY. Good grief, you didn't tell *Kathryn* what I did, did you? She loves me, trusts me, admires me—

CHARLIE. And why shouldn't she? Any guy who works his way through college the way you did— What do you mean, "tell her"? She already knows. Doesn't she?

JEREMY. (*Frozen, with semi-hysterical grin:*) Of *course* she knows . . . I was only *joking.*

CHARLIE. (*Now eager to be gone.*) Uh—look, old buddy—maybe I better be on my way and you can take that nap like you were supposed to, huh—?

JEREMY. (*Still in overcoat, hat, lies back on sofa, head toward window and hands folded on stomach over bulk of strongbox.*) Yes!—yes, do that—so I can nap! Nice seeing you again! You'd better hurry. There may be snow.

CHARLIE. (*Backing into archway.*) Don't get up. (*Steps from sight;* JEREMY *bounds to his feet, rushes to desk, sets down strongbox, starts to dial phone.* CHARLIE *reenters behind him, as if about to speak to him on sofa, sees him at phone, reacts, then says uncomfortably:*) There's just one thing, Jeremy— (JEREMY *stiffens, shuts eyes briefly, hangs up phone, waits.*) the *real* reason I came by, today. . .

JEREMY. (*Thinks "it has happened" at last; sighs resignedly, echoes:*) The real reason. All right. How much do you want, Charlie?

CHARLIE. (*Hurt, angry.*) Aww . . . You've been talking to Henry Schmidlapp!

JEREMY. (*Blankly.*) I have?

CHARLIE. Whose word are you going to take, his or mine?

JEREMY. About *what,* Charlie?

CHARLIE. Oh, stop trying to spare my feelings, Jer. Henry *must've* told you about me. Just because I overextended my stay at his apartment in 1962!

JEREMY. How long did you stay?

CHARLIE. Till 1964 . . . See, Jer, the way I figure, an artist doesn't need much in life except a place to work. And what with the alumni numbering in the thousands,

it's only natural that a good percentage of them live in or near New York City, so—

JEREMY. You've been leeching off the alumni!

CHARLIE. (*Proudly impartial:*) In alphabetical order. Now I'm up to the *T*'s. Take your turn like a man.

JEREMY. But—where were you between Schmidlapp and Troy?

CHARLIE. (*Ticks them off on his fingers:*) With, uh—Sheridan . . . Sherman . . . Slaughter . . . Sloane . . . Smith . . . Smith . . . Smith . . . uh . . . *Smith!* . . . Stokey . . . Thompson— And then I sold a painting for five hundred bucks and got my own place in the Village.

JEREMY. Then what are you doing *here?*

CHARLIE. Oh, I frittered away the five hundred on frivolities like food, rent, gas, electricity, water—

JEREMY. (*Overjoyed with relief.*) Well, why didn't you *say* so? Here, take a hundred bucks, old pal— (*Fumbles bills out of wallet.*)

CHARLIE. Oh, no, Jer, I couldn't—really, that's too much! I— (*Grabs money and pockets it swiftly on:*) Twenty bucks would've been fine! (*As* JEREMY *puts wallet back in pocket, starts to pick up last of papers from floor.*)

JEREMY. Here, now, *I'll* do that—

CHARLIE. Hell, for a hundred bucks it's the least I can— (*Stops, looking at photograph.*) Gee, it's funny how all these old graduation pictures look alike! Everybody on the steps of the administration building in their caps and gowns. You can't tell 'em apart from one year to the next. Why, a guy couldn't tell this group from the one in *my* old graduation picture. I remember I was standing right over— (*Runs finger along photograph, stops.*) Hey. That's me. How'd you get hold of *my* graduation picture, Jer? (JEREMY *just stands mute, frozen with fear.*) It's the damnedest thing . . . I never paid much attention before, but there's a guy right behind me, at the end

of the back row, who looks just like *you* . . . What'd they do, chum, stick you with the wrong picture?

JEREMY. (*Faintly.*) Wr-wrong picture?

CHARLIE. Well, sure! I mean, this picture is the wrong year.

JEREMY. (*Sickly echo:*) Wrong year.

CHARLIE. (*Takes diploma from papers at desk.*) Hell, just look at the date on your diploma: "Class of—" (*Beat.*) Hey, that's the same year *I* graduated. But that's impossible. I mean, I know for a fact that while *I* was finishing up my senior year, you hadn't even *begun* the college yet. You were still saving for your tuition, working as— (*It starts to hit him.*) as the file clerk— (*It's almost upon him.*) in the *reg-is-trar's of-fice. . . !* (*Wheels slowly to read the truth in* JEREMY'S *stricken grin.*)

JEREMY. Uh. Funny. How they could make *two* errors. Picture *and* diploma.

CHARLIE. (*Stunned.*) Jeremy—you never *did* go to law school! You never got a degree at *all!*

JEREMY. (*Grasping at straws.*) Does this look like the home of a man without a college education?

CHARLIE. Does this look like the graduation picture of a man in law school? This is the Liberal Arts Class!

JEREMY. Charlie—I can explain—

CHARLIE. Well, I should certainly *hope* so! How the hell did you manage to get where you are today on a phony diploma? (*Sits on sofa, dazed by developments.*)

JEREMY. (*Not quite wringing his hands, but almost, remains standing, for:*) Wellll— It was just—one of those things. One day I was a clerk in the registrar's office and the next thing I knew I was up for a full partnership in a big law firm.

CHARLIE. Sure. Just like that. Happens every day.

JEREMY. (*Slightly more relaxed, tries to delve into circumstances himself, as if never having really thought it through until now.*) Actually—I guess you might say it all began with Kathryn. In a way, even, you might say it was all her fault—

CHARLIE. Aw, come off it, Jer! Just how did *Kathryn* start you on your life of sin?

JEREMY. She said she loved me.

CHARLIE. That'll *do* it!

JEREMY. (*Suddenly eager to confess, as if a pent-up inner dam had burst, sits down half-turned to face* CHARLIE *on sofa, appealing to him.*) You've got to understand, Charlie! Here I was—a nothing, a nobody—working all day, just filing, filing, filing at a big university. Thousands of new students each year. Files, grades, classes, courses of study—*you* know. Then one night, at a dance, I meet Kathryn. She's young, she's beautiful, and she *likes* me. We get to talking. She tells me if there's one thing she's nuts about, it's men who use their brains, men who don't squander their time away fussing at menial work, men who aspire to higher things—

CHARLIE. In short, she loves everything you ain't—

JEREMY. Exactly. So instead of correcting her assumption that I'm a student, I say nothing. It's too late to tell her I'm just a simple clerk.

CHARLIE. Nothing simple about the way *you* clerked!

JEREMY. Well. Be that as it may. She finally asked me which school I was attending. I said law. I don't know why. It was the first thing popped into my head, law.

CHARLIE. Probably because you were breaking it—

JEREMY. Anyhow, she told me she was just wild about lawyers. That's when I decided that's what I'd have to become. So the next day, when nobody was in the office, I got at the files, filled out a registration card for the five previous years in my name. I made up classes, courses, attendance records, marks—

CHARLIE. *Good* marks, too. It's not everyone graduates summa cum laude.

JEREMY. Well. You know. If you're gonna tell a lie, make it a good one. Besides, Kathryn was looking forward to attending my graduation. I didn't want to be at the bottom of the class.

CHARLIE. No, I guess not. What rank *were* you?

JEREMY. First.

CHARLIE. (*Lurches to his feet, aghast.*) *First?*

JEREMY. (*Reminiscence has his face aglow with joy, now.*) Yeah, I took top honors. You should've heard the applause when I ascended to the podium for my diploma. The governor was there. He shook my hand.

CHARLIE. (*Pacing distractedly.*) But that's crazy! How could you get away with it? How could you even have *hoped* to get away with it?

JEREMY. (*Stops him, speaks in an almost fatherly manner.*) Charlie, you don't understand big—really big—universities: Nobody knows your name. You're only a little card with a lot of grades on it. Even the teachers don't know who's who. Why, the head of the law department congratulated me, said he'd been keeping his eye on me and knew I had it in me all along!

CHARLIE. (*Mind reeling, gamely stays on his feet.*) But—how'd you end up in the Liberal Arts Class picture, then?

JEREMY. Well, like you said before, all those class pictures look alike. So I just rented a cap and gown and joined the first group I could find posing . . . It's a damn nice picture . . . (*Looks at it wistfully, puts it back on desk.*)

CHARLIE. (*Still struggling to surface from under this flood of revelation.*) But how'd you get into this law firm? You couldn't pass the bar exam—

JEREMY. Never had to take it. Mostly, I only do what I used to do back in the registrar's office: I file things.

CHARLIE. But you don't know anything about *law*—

JEREMY. Filing is filing. All you really need to know is the alphabet.

CHARLIE. But the technical things—what if somebody asks you a legal question?

JEREMY. I answer it. Like the other day, Mr. Ivorsen said to me, "Jeremy, I'm preparing a speech for next month's convention in Philadelphia. What's a good example of a really rough property settlement case?"

CHARLIE. And you said—?

JEREMY. "Johnson versus Weems, Appellate Court of Denver, Colorado, April the 18th, 1934!" He thanked me and wrote it into his speech.

CHARLIE. But what if he looks it up?

JEREMY. Nobody *ever* looks it up. The important thing about being a lawyer is to *sound* as if you're right.

CHARLIE. You are smack out of your mind! *How* long do you think you can keep this kind of thing *up?*

JEREMY. Forever, far as I can see. After all these years, it's become a way of life. Besides, what possible *harm* am I doing?

CHARLIE. (*Looking on the bright side.*) Not as much as if Kathryn had been wild about *brain surgeons!* (*Imagines consequences of that, winces visibly.*)

JEREMY. Kathryn must never learn the truth. It would ruin everything.

CHARLIE. (*Trying to plead his friend back to sanity.*) But she's *bound* to find out, *some* day. She almost did today. Why, if I'd said the wrong thing— "Ruin everything"?

JEREMY. If the truth came out, I'd lose my job, this house, the furniture. Everything's been bought on credit and credit cards. (*Slumps unhappily on sofa, facing Downstage.*) Charlie, don't you realize what keeping my secret *means?*

CHARLIE. (*While visions of sugarplums, etc.*) Yeah. *Yeah!* (*On* JEREMY'S *next speech, rubs hands together gleefully, takes painting down from over mantel, sticks it out of sight in kitchen, takes impressionistic horror of his own from gear behind sofa, hangs it in other picture's stead.*)

JEREMY. (*Brooding aloud, pays no attention to* CHARLIE.) Oh, I've wanted to tell her the truth, so many times. I plan to do it as a surprise, every anniversary. But I always lose my nerve. (CHARLIE, *meanwhile, goes to desk, rummages in drawers, finds phone book, starts searching through yellow pages.*) In effect, I'd be telling

her that all these years she's been living with a stranger.

CHARLIE. (*Still searching, with extra meaning:*) What's so tough about living with a stranger?

JEREMY. She might take it terribly hard. She might even leave me.

CHARLIE. (*Finds number, pulls phone to him, rattles off emotionlessly:*) Jeremy-don't-be-silly-Kathryn-would-never-leave-you-she-loves-you! (*Starts to dial.*)

JEREMY. (*Bemused, starts back slowly toward him, thinking aloud:*) If I lost Kathryn, nothing else would matter. What good is all this nice suburban living, alone?

CHARLIE. Jeremy, if I were you, I would never worry about being alone again. (*Finishes dialing, waits, and to fill hiatus says:*) What would *your* reaction be if *Kathryn* had a deep, dark past? Would you turn on her—throw her out—stop loving her?

JEREMY. Of course not! I'm crazy about her—

CHARLIE. Yet by your own admission— (*Listens at phone, hangs up.*) Busy. Yet by your own admission, you're a sneak and a liar. If *you* can be loyal, why not credit *her* with as much loyalty? (*Re-dials.*)

JEREMY. No. I won't tell her. After all, your showing up here today was a chance in a million.

CHARLIE. You're telling me! A chance like this comes once in a lifetime. (*Hangs up.*) Still busy.

JEREMY. And even if she did forgive me, even if she stayed with me—how long could she go on loving a husband who was living a lie at the office every day? (*Sees painting over fireplace, gazes at it appraisingly.*)

CHARLIE. What lie? Once she knows, she could help you go through night school and *get* a degree. You could become what you claim to be.

JEREMY. Why are we even discussing it? Once you've gone, things will be right back to normal again, with the odds against discovery increased in my favor . . . (*The presence of the painting registers; asks, curious and pleased:*) Hey, what's that for?

CHARLIE. Try to think of it as your reward for the wonderful windfall you dropped in my lap.

JEREMY. Aw, you didn't have to do that. What's a hundred dollars?

CHARLIE. (*Dialing again.*) I didn't mean the hundred dollars. Some gifts are more precious than gold.

JEREMY. (*Uneasy, but uncertain why.*) Name two.

CHARLIE. I was referring to your confidence in my discretion. Imagine—the one person in the world who knows your secret is little old me! (*Points at his gear Upstage of sofa.*) Say, would you mind putting that stuff up in the guest room? (JEREMY *starts to, automatically, then stops, stunned, during:*) Hel-lo! Is this the Left Bank Modeling Academy?

JEREMY. (*Turns, reeling, gaping and horrified.*) Now, Charlie—uh—let's discuss this thing calmly—

CHARLIE. I'd like to rent one of your girls for the day—

JEREMY. Look—we're both men of the world—

CHARLIE. Oh, that's too bad . . . Isn't there anybody—? . . . Who?—

JEREMY. Listen, this has gone far enough—

CHARLIE. What did you say her name was?

JEREMY. It's invasion of privacy—

CHARLIE. Why, she should be perfect—

JEREMY. Criminal extortion!

CHARLIE. I'm at five-thirty-one—uh—?

JEREMY. (*As* CHARLIE *looks at him, responds out of reflex:*) Pinecrest Drive. (*Shuts eyes, smacks forehead with palm at own stupidity.*)

CHARLIE. —Pinecrest Drive!

JEREMY. An outrage against all common decency—

CHARLIE. It's the Jeremy Troy residence—the name's on the bell.

JEREMY. (*Realizes—and is furious at—the double insult:*) Charlie Bickle, you're not *listening* to me!

CHARLIE. Swell! (*Hangs up, rubs hands, starts toward gear.*) They're sending me a Miss Winslow. She's only

an undergraduate but she needs the experience for her thesis. (*Grabs duffel bag, starts for stairs.*) You'll like her. *She* hasn't got a diploma yet, *either*—

JEREMY. There are *laws* against this sort of thing—

CHARLIE. (*Stops on first stair, turns.*) Are you sure?

JEREMY. (*Goes to speak, then slumps.*) No.

CHARLIE. (*Relieved, trots cheerily upstairs, on:*) Since she's an undergraduate, it'll only cost five dollars an hour. Which—thanks to your generous donation—leaves me financially set for the next twenty hours!

JEREMY. (*Remains downstairs, dazed, almost babbling with apprehension.*) Charlie— You're not going to paint her in *here?*

CHARLIE. Well, I *could* use your front lawn . . . but that'd be kind of chilly for the model. (*At guest room door.*) And now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to take a shower and get into my working clothes. (*Exits into guest room.*)

JEREMY. (*Fear-paralyzed, moves upstairs at last, zombie-like, wild-eyed.*) Charlie—if it were any other night—but my entire career—everything I've worked for all these years—it all hinges on the outcome of dinner tonight—my boss is coming—things are gonna be tense enough—

CHARLIE. (*Emerges from guest room, minus duffel bag and bare from waist up, en route to bathroom, as* JEREMY *reaches head of stairs.*) And you're afraid of what might happen if he meets me? Well, I wouldn't put you in a spot like that—

JEREMY. (*Lurches toward him, hopefully.*) You mean you're *going?*

CHARLIE. (*Holds* JEREMY *off with hand to chest at bathroom doorway.*) No. But I promise not to sell him a painting— (JEREMY *groans, turns, lurches back toward bedroom.*) Was it something I said?

JEREMY. I need a tranquillizer—I need a *lot* of tranquillizers! (*Reels into bedroom.*)

CHARLIE. Say, would you mind getting the door when

Miss Winslow arrives? (*We hear an incoherent scream from* JEREMY *in bedroom;* CHARLIE *shrugs, as if puzzled by his host's behavior, exits into bathroom;* JEREMY *re-emerges from bedroom, has to support himself on stair railing as he starts downstairs, clutching tranquillizer bottle; when he's halfway down,* CHARLIE *pops head out of bathroom.*) By the way, Kathryn makes great coffee. Pour me a cup, will you? With the late hours we artists keep, I'm gonna need all the caffeine I can get. (CHARLIE *pops in again;* JEREMY, *mouth working soundlessly, raises his fist to shake it at bathroom door before speaking, then stops as he sees the bottle the hand holds; he looks more closely at it, then over at coffee pot on coffee table; slowly, and almost stealthily, he makes his way over to the pot, looks at it and at the bottle again, then back up over shoulder at bathroom, and back to bottle; as though frightened at his own deed, pulls the cap from the bottle, then reaches for the lid of coffee pot, then straightens, fists clenched to chest, eyes shut, and shakes his head; he is about to replace cap when* CHARLIE *pops head out of bathroom again.*) Hey, Jer—?

JEREMY. (*Jumps guiltily, keeps bottle tight to chest, does not turn head to face* CHARLIE.) What?

CHARLIE. I hope your boss likes chicken cacciatore.

JEREMY. Why?

CHARLIE. 'Cause that's what I've decided we're having.

(CHARLIE *pops out again, shuts bathroom door;* JEREMY'S *face is a study in fury at this last straw; swiftly, without any more hesitation, whips lid from pot, dumps contents of bottle into it, slams lid back on, swirls pot to dissolve pills, during:*)

JEREMY. Oh, Char-leee! . . . I'm putting the coffee and stuff on the tab-le! . . . I guess you've got me over a barrel, all right . . . Make yourself— (*Starts for desk, drops bottle in drawer, finds listing in open phonebook, starts to dial rapidly.*) at home, old buddy—drink *all* the

coffee you want! (*Lowers voice to urgent whisper, on:*) Hello? Is this the Left Bank? . . . Well, this is Jeremy Troy. One of your models was supposed to come over here, but the artist contracted an unexpected case of sleeping sickness, and— What? . . . *When?* . . . Oh, okay, thanks, I'll head her off at the bus stop! (*Slams down phone, bolts for kitchen doorway, but stops in archway as we hear front DOOR slam.*)

KATHRYN. (*Off.*) Honey? (*Enters Left, anxiously, removing coat.*) Honey, I'm home—

JEREMY. (*Looks in bewilderment at watch, whirls to face her.*) You *can't* be!

KATHRYN. I was so worried about you, I decided to send the brief with the cab driver, and took another cab back here. You looked so ghastly when I left—

JEREMY. Well. Um. I'm fine, now. I—uh—I suppose you'll be starting dinner pretty soon, huh?

KATHRYN. At ten o'clock in the morning? I haven't even done my shopping—

JEREMY. I mean—what with peeling potatoes and all—

KATHRYN. I'm using instant mashed. With enough butter and milk, he'll never know the difference! (*Has left coat over back of desk chair, purse on desk, and is moving toward him when her gaze falls on the painting.*) Jeremy, what in the world is *that?*

JEREMY. Uh. A sort of gift from Charlie.

KATHRYN. Charlie—? Good heavens, I'd forgotten all about him—

JEREMY. *How?*

KATHRYN. (*Another step toward him, sees gear still behind sofa.*) His things—? I don't— Jeremy! You *didn't* ask him to *stay?*

JEREMY. Uh. Not exactly . . . (*His mind is working furiously; he moves toward desk.*)

KATHRYN. But he *can't* stay—not tonight! I have everything planned—you'll have to tell him *no.*

JEREMY. *Charlie?*

KATHYRN. Well, he can't *stay*—

JEREMY. But he's *got* to stay—

KATHRYN. Why?

JEREMY. There's a reason—

KATHRYN. What reason?

JEREMY. A good reason—

KATHRYN. I hope it *is*—

JEREMY. Oh, it is—

KATHRYN. Well, what is it?

JEREMY. (*He has been stalling for time; now his eye lights upon the carved elephant on the desk; he grabs it up, thinks fast, then turns to face her, solemnly, holding it at chest height.*) Kathryn. You remember the legend about the elephant's graveyard?

KATHRYN. You mean like in that Tarzan movie? Yes—

JEREMY. Well—it's the same thing with Charlie—

KATHRYN. He's searching for ivory?

JEREMY. No, no! You know how in the legend, when an elephant knows it's going to die, it seeks out a certain spot in the jungle and goes there to spend its last hours on earth? Well, Charlie has decided that this is the place for him. He wants to stay here.

KATHRYN. (*As if completing his line:*) Till the elephants show up. (*Starts for him.*) Jeremy, you're not well!

JEREMY. I'm perfectly fine, I assure you—

KATHRYN. But there hasn't been an elephant in this part of New Jersey since— (*Realizes she's speaking like an idiot, stops; goes for stairs.*) I'm going to take your temperature—

JEREMY. (*Remains by desk as she passes, shouts desperately:*) Darling, you don't understand! Charlie has come here to *die!*

(*She takes one more step, then it sinks in; she turns, wide-eyed; he solemnly hands elephant to her.*)

KATHRYN. (*Holds it between palms, looks down at it; beat; then:*) But— Mr. Ivorsen's coming— And— Charlie looked so healthy!

JEREMY. Darling, Charlie may *look* hale and hearty, but deep down inside—

KATHRYN. His ulcer!

JEREMY. Ulcer?

KATHRYN. (*Absently stroking elephant's back, as if it were the man himself.*) Oh, the poor man . . . I had no idea his ulcer was so serious . . . (*Suddenly regains her level-headedness.*) Now, wait a minute—*he* can't have an ulcer! Jeremy, that man *eats* like an elephant— (*Thumps statuette back onto desk with finality.*)

JEREMY. (*Improvising desperately.*) It—it doesn't act up *all* the time, darling . . . only if you mention the university—

KATHRYN. The football part!

JEREMY. *Any* part! So whatever you do, don't let Charlie talk about the university. It could be fatal—

KATHRYN. How do I stop him?

JEREMY. How do *I* know? Change the subject! Hold your ears! Run out of the room!

KATHRYN. (*Looks at him, absorbing this, for one beat; then surges for phone.*) I'm going to call a doctor—

JEREMY. I tell you, I'm all right—I never felt better—

KATHRYN. (*Okay, we'll* play *your game:*) Well, then, are you going in to the office, dear?

JEREMY. (*Caught:*) Oh. Oh, I—I guess so. Yes. I will. I suppose.

KATHRYN. (*With real concern.*) Jeremy, darling, *what* is making you so *nervous?* I've never in our whole life together seen you act this way.

JEREMY. You'd be nervous, too, if you had a dying man in your house— (*Remembers.*) and you have! So—please —don't mention the university to Charlie—

KATHRYN. All right, I promise.

JEREMY. Raise your right hand—

KATHRYN. (*Starts to do so, then yanks it down, pushed too far at this.*) Jeremy Troy, if you think—!

JEREMY. Okay, okay, I'm sorry. But remember, you

promised. (*Starts for front door.*) Is that cab still waiting?

KATHRYN. No, I let him go. I'll call you another one.

JEREMY. You don't have to do that—

KATHRYN. Yes I do. If you're going to be the nutsy husband, the least I can do is be the model wife.

JEREMY. (*Remembers.*) Model! Excuse me— (*Lurches across room toward kitchen doorway.*) but I have to use the car!

KATHRYN. What for?

JEREMY. To catch a bus! (*Exits into kitchen.*)

KATHRYN. (*Calls.*) But how am I going to do my shopping?

JEREMY. (*Off.*) We'll send out for pizza!

(*We hear back DOOR slam, on:*)

KATHRYN. Jeremy Troy—! (*Starts toward kitchen; stops as front door CHIMES sound; flings arms overhead in exasperation and starts for front door on:*) *Now* what? (*Exits through archway, opens door, steps back into view.*)

TINA. (*A trim little redhead, hair backswept into a bun, dark-rimmed glasses, carrying large purse, and bundled up in overcoat, enters.*) Is this the Jeremy Troy residence?

KATHRYN. Yes, it is . . .

TINA. (*Relieved, comes down into living room, undoing coat.*) I'm Tina Winslow, from the Left Bank.

KATHRYN. Oh? . . . Well—won't you come in? (*Belatedly shuts front door, comes down after* TINA, *during:*)

TINA. Thank you. My, what a pretty place! (*The coat comes off, revealing her in a bright yellow sleeveless dress, setting off a fantastic figure.*)

KATHRYN. Thank you very much— (*Repeating the name, as if to give it meaning for herself.*) Miss Winslow . . . ?

(*For the remainder of their scene, the effect is this:* TINA

is like a butterfly KATHRYN *can never quite pin down, in her words and actions, babbling on in friendly chattiness, moving here and there, undoing her hair into a titian cascade, trying "poses" in the light from the window, only really half-hearing* KATHRYN *at all.*)

TINA. I'm so excited. This is my first real assignment.

KATHRYN. I don't understand. Is my husband *expecting* you?

TINA. Well, I hope so! He has to pay me for all the time I'm here, whether he uses me or not.

KATHRYN. Could you—uh—make that just a little clearer?

TINA. (*Starts unsnapping garters, rolling down and removing nylons.*) Well, you see, I get five dollars an hour. That's not as much as the other girls get, but that's because I'm still an amateur. Do you have any idea how long he wants me for?

KATHRYN. (*Too amazed at the nylon-doffing to react with indignation.*) Young lady— Miss Winslow— Are you sure you have the right house?

TINA. If this is five-thirty-one Pinecrest Drive. You *said* it was the home of Jeremy Troy . . .

KATHRYN. And you say my husband sent for you?

TINA. (*Placing stockings neatly in bag, along with shoes, and getting into fluffy slippers matching her dress.*) Well, not me *personally*, if you know what I mean. He just called and tried to get one of the regular girls, but they were all out so he said he'd take anybody at all and they decided I should have my first chance. I can really use the experience. I'm so lucky he called just as I was passing the switchboard—

KATHRYN. Switchboard?

TINA. Well, sure . . . What do you think we do, walk the streets trying to get somebody interested? (*Laughs at her little joke, as* KATHRYN *goggles.*)

KATHRYN. Are you telling me my husband uses your—place of employment—on a regular basis—?!

TINA. I guess so, I mean, he called *us*, we didn't call *him.*

KATHRYN. There *must* be a mistake! *My* husband is a very successful lawyer in New York City—

TINA. What's that got to do with it? Every man should have a hobby. (*As* KATHRYN *reacts.*) Say—I wonder—could I trouble you for a cup of coffee? It's awfully cold outside, and I'm very susceptible—

KATHRYN. (*A haven of normalcy beckons amid all this madness.*) By all means. I could use a cup myself. (*Sits, pours two cupfuls as* TINA *sits beside her on sofa.* KATHRYN *takes fortifying sip, turns to get to the bottom of this thing.*) *Now,* Miss Winslow—

TINA. (*Has taken sip, too; reacts to strange flavor which* KATHRYN *is far too bemused to notice herself.*) Say—do you have any Coffeemate?

KATHRYN. (*Foiled in mid-purpose, echoes the word with resignation.*) Coffeemate. (*Gets up, starts doggedly toward kitchen.*)

TINA. (*Has taken second sip, found it not bad as she thought, gets up and follows* KATHRYN *as far as right archway, stands before fireplace, facing mostly Downstage, but speaking Off Right.*) You know, it's nice to meet a wife who's so broadminded.

KATHRYN. (*As she exits into kitchen.*) My dear Miss Winslow, if there is one thing I am *not,* it is broadminded. I am merely giving Jeremy the benefit of the doubt until I have heard *his* side of the story— (*Half a beat; then, despite herself, adds:*) and it had better be good!

TINA. Oh. Then you don't approve of his hobby?

KATHRYN. (*Off.*) If you care to put it mildly!

TINA. (*Prattling on, oblivious to the charged atmosphere.*) Some women would get terribly upset. Like my father, for example. He's very upset about my job, but—I'm over twenty-one and this is what I want to be, so he's given his grudging approval. I guess the main thing he objects to is when I take my clothes off. (*There is a CRASH of glass from the kitchen.*) Did you drop some-

thing? (*Ambles under archway;* CHARLIE *at that moment comes out of bathroom, crosses into guest room, shuts door; she hears door shut, comes out, peers up curiously as:*)

KATHRYN. (*Entering from kitchen with jagged jar-bottom.*) Yes-I-dropped-something! (*Hands it to her.*) Coffeemate! (*The pills are hitting her; she wobbles back to her seat on sofa.*)

TINA. Have I offended you somehow, Mrs. Troy?

KATHRYN. You have offended me, *and* how! The only reason you are not lying dead on the carpet is that I am saving myself for Jeremy!

TINA. Dead? But it's *only* five dollars . . . ?! (*Stares dismayed at broken jar, then sets it gingerly on mantel.*) This situation wasn't covered in my course of instruction . . . (*Yawns delicately.*) My, but it's *warm* in here! (*Blinks, sips coffee, wobbles down to sit beside* KATHRYN.)

KATHRYN. Not as warm as it's going to get when *Jeremy* comes home! No *wonder* he was jittery.

TINA. (*Almost weepily.*) I'm sorry you're so upset . . . Is it—is it the *money?*

KATHRYN. (*This aspect hadn't occurred to her, but it does now.*) Among other things—*yes!* (KATHRYN *turns to glare righteously at* TINA *after saying this line, when something unaccountable happens: a giggly laugh comes bubbling up, unbidden, and bursts tinkling from her lips; she blinks in surprise, but can't muster up anger; turning to cool decorum, instead, she is her most dignified as she continues:*) Would you like another coff of cuppee?

TINA. Yes, if you don't mind. I feel so terribly sleepy . . .

(*Watches, glassy-eyed, as* KATHRYN *fills her cup where it has been set down on the coffee table, then—without uptilting the spout—swings the pot the length of the table and refills her own cup, letting the interim-poured coffee lie in a spatter-line on the table.*)

KATHRYN. (*Sets down pot, solemnly feels flesh of* TINA'S *near upper arm.*) You know— You *do* feel sleepy! (BOTH *nodding solemnly, they slowly burst into matched giggles, rock back limply toward opposite ends of sofa, subside, and:*) Well, if you get too tired, you can always sack out in our guest room.

TINA. (*Glasses a bit askew, removes them to peer myopically around, on:*) Where is it?

KATHRYN. (*Disdainfully.*) Don't play innocent with me— (*Beat; then, archly.*) I'll play by myself!

(BOTH *whoop giddily,* TINA *meanwhile rising with care and starting determinedly—but zigzaggedly—toward stairs.*)

TINA. (*Peers myopically.*) Which way are the stairs? I can't see a thing without my glasses.

KATHRYN. Then why don't— (*Yawns.*) —why don't you put them on?

TINA. All right. (*Yawns.*) Where are they?

KATHRYN. (*Squints.*) Try your left hand. (TINA *does, finds glasses, gets them on.*)

TINA. I feel so foolish. Can you imagine me going to bed on my first assignment?

KATHRYN. (*Watches her till she's up a few stairs; then:*) *I'll* say I can!

TINA. (*Half-flops over stair rail, sensing a possible slur:*) Would you mind explaining that remark?

KATHRYN. *Yes!*

(BOTH *laugh wildly,* TINA *continuing jauntily-if-wobbly upstairs,* KATHRYN *lolling back on sofa, studying coffee cup dangling by its handle from her thumb, as if utterly fascinated by this bauble.*)

TINA. (*Near bathroom door, leans limply over balcony rail for:*) Say . . . do you know if your husband plans to put me on a pedestal?

KATHRYN. (*With cheery resignation, and without look-*

ing upward, carols:) Well, if he *does,* you're one up on *me!*

(BOTH *laugh wildly;* TINA'S *laugh carries her hurtling into bathroom; door closes after her;* KATHRYN'S *laugh, as she breaks it again and again to catch her breath, slowly changes into heartbroken sobbing, and all at once she is wailing miserably as* CHARLIE—*in paint-daubed smock and matching pants—enters from guest room. He sees her as she sees him. She rises on:*)

CHARLIE. Kathryn—? (*Sensing something is amiss, hurries toward stairs, as:*)

KATHRYN. (*Reeling, starts a dead lunge toward foot of stairs.*) Charlie— Charlie Bickle from the university—am I ever glad to see *you!*

(CHARLIE *has broken speed records to do it, but he gets to foot of stairs, and her, just as she falls straight forward, and flops into his arms, so limp as to be apparently boneless.*)

CHARLIE. (*Staggering, half-dragging her toward sofa again.*) Kathryn! Kathryn, what's the matter?

KATHRYN. (*Perched briefly on sofa arm, flings up a hand to cry:*) Everything! (*Gesture carries her back supine on sofa for:*) Oh, Charlie! To think Jeremy could deceive me this way—a lie, a rotten lie, our whole life together!

CHARLIE. (*Glumly, thinking he understands.*) Oh. I see. Then he's told you.

KATHRYN. (*Struggles to perch upon sofa arm again.*) Ha! Fat chance of that! I had to find out for myself. 'Sfunny how a woman can live with a man—and think she knows him—and then— Wham!— (*Another extravagant gesture brings her to her feet in a limp pirouette which lets her fall backward, Left, into his arms.*) —the whole bottom drops out of everything!

CHARLIE. (*Stares at her dangling form in deep perplexity.*) Kathryn . . . aren't you taking this a little—*hard?* How much have you *had,* anyway?

KATHRYN. (*Raises back of hand up till it supports her chin.*) Right up to here!

CHARLIE. (*Gets her to her feet, so they face one another, she Left, he Right.*) I can believe it. But listen, this is no solution. Sure, Jeremy made a mistake. But he wouldn't have done it at all if he didn't love you so much—

KATHRYN. (*Fleetingly sobered.*) How's that again? (*Leans toward him to peer into his face, keeps leaning till he has to catch her again, on:*)

CHARLIE. It's true. He told me so himself. He did the whole thing for love of you. It's been a long and terrible struggle for him.

KATHRYN. Now, just a minute— Do you mean to say you don't think this is the worst thing that could happen in a marriage?

(*Has chest-thumped him backward for emphasis, and he suddenly sprawls backward over sofa-arm, on:*)

CHARLIE. Of course not! (*Sees* KATHRYN *is still toppling his way; rolls to safety on:*) I mean, all he did was practice a little deception—

(*On hands and knees behind coffee table as she flops face down onto sofa, starts getting to his feet during:*)

KATHRYN. (*A mumble lost in the cushions:*) You call it *little?* (CHARLIE *stares, grunts curiously, lifts her face so he can hear:*) You call it *little!* I was never so shocked in my life!

CHARLIE. But don't you see? He wanted to make an impression on you—

KATHRYN. (*More a shudder than a laugh:*) Oh-ho-ho, he did—he made an impression, all right! (*Now up on hands and knees on sofa, lurches toward coffee pot.*) I need more coffee.

CHARLIE. (*Catches her, gets her seated on sofa.*) *I'll* get it! I'll get it. (*As he pours cup of coffee,* KATHRYN *tries to get off sofa, Left, ends up seated on arm again, feet dangling above floor, head almost resting on knees;* CHARLIE *turns with coffee, rushes around her, drops on Downstage knee to face her, and starts to gently feed her sip after sip of coffee, during:*) Try to see Jeremy's point of view in this thing. Here he is, a man with a dull, uninteresting job. Then he meets a girl, a sweet, young, loving girl. He falls for her, hard. He wants her. He has to have her, no matter what, even if it means practicing a life of deception. Because, she's something special!

KATHRYN. (*Now very bewildered.*) But I understood—I mean—this isn't the same sweet innocent girl he *started* with—?

CHARLIE. (*Gently, fondly.*) Oh, yes. Yes it is. No matter what changes the years may have wrought, this is still the same girl he's always loved. And I can honestly say I approve.

KATHRYN. (*An arctic chill even amid the fuzziness:*) Oh, you *approve,* do you—?

CHARLIE. Take the word of an artist, Kathryn. I have an eye for lovely things. I think that Jeremy's a very lucky man—

(*And* KATHRYN'S *Downstage arm suddenly comes up with a fist on the end of it, in a roundhouse uppercut that sends* CHARLIE *sprawling onto his back before the fireplace, out cold; the follow-through of the blow brings her to her feet and headed toward the stairs, and she scrambles up them monkey-like on hands and feet, growling like a wild woman, pausing at the top of the flight to shout down at him:*)

KATHRYN. You damn four-letter men are all alike! (*Lurches into bedroom, slams door.*)

JEREMY. (*Off, Left:*) Coffee! *Coffee!* (*Bursts into house through front door, down into living room, on:*) Kathryn, don't drink the— (*Sees* CHARLIE; *stops; then*

stoops, lifts wrist and notes cup still dangling from his limp fingers.) Aha! It worked!

(*Drops arm to floor, rushes to coffee pot, lifts lid, reacts to lack of contents with horror, slams lid on, rushes back to* CHARLIE, *takes his pulse, sighs with relief; then hefts him under arms, starts to drag him backward toward archway.*)

CHARLIE. (*Blearily.*) Um. Huh. Hey— What the hell d'ya think y're doin'?

JEREMY. (*Shocked, lets go, rushes back for second look into pot.*) Charlie, you're not out!

CHARLIE. (*Mumbling dazedly, massaging jaw.*) Out? Out cold! She knocked me cold—

JEREMY. (*Not even hearing.*) But the whole *pot's* gone! How can you be awake?

CHARLIE. (*Swaying like a sailor on a tossing deck, holding jaw, comes down.*) Jeremy— I got three things to tell you about your wife: *One,* she's got a hell of a right cross, *two,* she knows, *three,* everything!

JEREMY. (*Still on his own tack.*) Charlie, I don't get it: I put almost a full bottle of tranquillizers in this coffee and you're not out—

CHARLIE. (*Blinking to awareness.*) In—*that* pot, Jeremy—?

JEREMY. (*Short, sheepish laugh:*) Yeah. I was going to stash you in the cellar till after dinner—

CHARLIE. (*A laugh of self-reproof.*) And *I* thought she'd been hitting the *bottle*— (*Laugh freezes on face, then panic takes its place.*) Jeremy— *Kathryn's* been drinking that coffee!

JEREMY. Omigosh! Where *is* she?

CHARLIE. (*Aghast to realize.*) I don't *know!*

(*There is instant pandemonium: With* CHARLIE *shouting "Kathryn!" and* JEREMY *shouting "Kathy!," in ad-lib repetition, the* MEN *run all over the place, looking out on the front porch, in the windowseat, up the chimney, in a desk-drawer, etc., till finally they*

rush behind the fireplace from opposite sides, cry out in twin grunts of pain, and stagger back into view, clutching foreheads.)

JEREMY. Upstairs!

CHARLIE. (*Moving ahead of him.*) Quick! (*Gallops upstairs.*)

JEREMY. (*Following him.*) I'll never forgive myself if— Kathy!

(*They dash into the two bedrooms,* CHARLIE *choosing correctly.*)

CHARLIE. (*Off.*) I've got her! (*Enters balcony, carrying a rag-limp* KATHRYN *in his arms.*)

JEREMY. (*Rushes to him, and they rotate around her in a circle, holding her.*) Listen, *I* can manage her. You run downstairs and makes a fresh pot of coffee—I'll bring her down.

CHARLIE. (*Tries to descend, can't.*) Gimme my *arm* back. (*Tugs arm from under her, dashes downstairs.*)

JEREMY. (*Descending clumsily,* KATHRYN *sagging lower and lower in his arms:*) Kathryn! Kathy, darling, wake up! Please wake up! Ice cubes! Charlie, bring me ice cubes! We'll put them down her back—

CHARLIE. (*By now off in kitchen, pops back in for:*) You ought to call your doctor—

JEREMY. (*At foot of stairs, crossing toward center.*) We don't have a regular doctor—we've always been so damned healthy!

(*Sits her on floor, hefts her to her feet, as* CHARLIE *pops back into kitchen, returning seconds later with tray of ice cubes.*)

CHARLIE Here they are—how many do you want?

JEREMY. All of them! Here, I'll hold her . . . (*He is facing Upstage, now, at Center,* KATHRYN'S *sweetly slumbering face visible over his shoulder, on which her chin rests.*) you put them down her back—

CHARLIE. Here goes. Boy, are they *cold!* (*Gingerly drops a few down neck of her dress.*)

KATHRYN. (*Instantly awake, popeyed and shrieking, leaping straight up.*) Stop! Stop it! What are you doing? Let me go! (*The shrieks become hilarious giggles.*)

JEREMY. It's for your own good, darling. More, Charlie, more! (CHARLIE *unzips back of dress at neck, dumps rest of tray inside.*)

KATHRYN. Have you two gone crazy? Stop it—what's the matter with you?

CHARLIE. That's all of them—shall I make some more?

JEREMY. No! Coffee—as strong as possible!

KATHRYN. (*As* CHARLIE *dashes into kitchen again.*) Jeremy! Let me go! Jeremeeeee—! (*Wrenches free, wriggling madly, laughing wildly.*)

JEREMY. That's it, darling: Don't stand still—keep moving!

(*Amid flying ice cubes,* KATHRYN *is doing just that, like a go-go girl gone berserk; then, in mid-paroxysm, sights on* JEREMY, *and launches a wide-swinging punch at his head; he ducks, the spin twirls her about, and she falls back into his arms just as* CHARLIE *rushes from kitchen with a full coffee cup in his two hands.*)

CHARLIE. I found a jar of instant—

JEREMY. (*Struggling to hold a writhing wife.*) Quick, give it to her! (CHARLIE *force-feeds* KATHRYN; *she swallows, then stiffens like a ramrod canted against* JEREMY, *who rocks her to a vertical stance; when she just stands there, mouth guppying and eyes popping:*) How much instant did you *put* in that, anyhow?

CHARLIE. Half a cup of powder to half a cup of water. I thought it'd speed things up.

JEREMY. (*As* KATHRYN, *still gasping, gropes her way to sofa, follows with:*) Feeling better, darling?

KATHRYN. (*Sitting, slowly coming out of shock, more heartbroken than angry.*) Better? I wasn't feeling bad at *all* till you two *maniacs* started in on me. At least—not physically . . . (*Tries to smooth dress as* CHARLIE *scurries about collecting fallen ice cubes and replacing them*

in tray.) Oh, Jeremy—! What hurts me the worst of all is the deception. All these years—living with a stranger—and I didn't know it!

JEREMY. I'm sorry, darling. I—I was *afraid* to tell you the truth—

CHARLIE. (*Prodding tender jaw.*) You had good reason to be— (*Exits to kitchen with tray and ice cubes.*)

JEREMY. Well . . . Where do we go from here, Kathy?

KATHRYN. I wish I knew. If—maybe if you had told me —had only told me when it first happened—we could have— I mean—*one* mistake is bad enough, but if you had been really sorry for it—but—to keep it *up*, year after year after *year*—

JEREMY. (*Has been hovering solicitously; now turns away dejectedly.*) What can I say? I did it. There's no changing that fact. (CHARLIE *re-enters from kitchen in time to hear:*) I guess it's all too far gone for apologies—

CHARLIE. No, don't say that! No matter what a man has done, if his wife cares for him at all, she offers her help, not her scorn. Don't make a hasty decision, please. There's no problem too tough for two intelligent people in open, honest discussion.

KATHRYN. (*Confused, covers face, shakes head, rises.*) Before we do *anything*, I'm going to dry my neck! (*Lost and bewildered, exits into kitchen.*)

CHARLIE. (*Admiringly.*) Jeremy-boy, you've got yourself a real woman there! Now all you have to do is sell her on the idea of your going to night school, and your troubles are over.

JEREMY. It's too late. It's all over. You saw her face. Nothing I promise is going to change that.

CHARLIE. Don't worry, old buddy. Charlie is here. I'll sell her on the night school idea, you just watch—

JEREMY. Charlie, I can't believe you don't have some kind of an angle.

CHARLIE. Of *course* I've got an angle— (*Grips* JEREMY'S *shoulder with one hand, points dramatically toward kitchen with the other.*) I'm not going to let that woman break up our home! (KATHRYN *appears in*

kitchen doorway.) Ssh, here she comes. Leave everything to me.

(*Turns toward the entering* KATHRYN, *opens mouth to speak, but she walks right by him to her coat and purse on desk chair.*)

JEREMY. Kathy . . . where are you going?

KATHRYN. Anywhere!

JEREMY. Darling, don't go. I'll change my ways. I'm sorry I got you so upset. I apologize!

KATHRYN. Ha! (*Tries to get to front door, but he blocks her path.*) Get out of my way, or I won't be responsible for my actions!

CHARLIE. Kathryn, be reasonable—

KATHRYN. *Reasonable?*

CHARLIE. You said what hurt the most was the deception, right? So—now that you know the truth, your basic objection is all taken care of, huh?

JEREMY. Yes! That's right! And, so long as I tell you the truth from now on, everything's fine, hmm?

KATHRYN. You're crazy—both of you are stark, staring crazy. Any forgiving of Jeremy would be conditional to his not going *on* with this thing any more—I hope *that's* not too difficult for you to grasp!

JEREMY. Well, naturally! And I promise you, darling, that I will rectify the situation just as soon as possible.

(CHARLIE *nods his support of the plan vigorously.*)

KATHRYN. Hold on— What do you mean, as soon as possible?

CHARLIE. Well, it's not the sort of thing that can be rectified overnight.

KATHRYN. Oh? And why not, may I ask?

CHARLIE. Well—I—um— It's a complicated affair, Kathryn—

JEREMY. Yes, darling. It may take me *years* to get out of it—

KATHRYN. *Years?*

CHARLIE. Certainly. Night after night—

JEREMY. —out to all hours—

CHARLIE. —staggering home red-eyed and weary—

KATHRYN. I never *heard* such an outrageous suggestion! (*Backs away from them, toward now-clear Left archway.*)

JEREMY. But darling, I was counting on your help—

KATHRYN. (*Stops in archway, thunderstruck.*) *Help?*

JEREMY. Certainly! If you don't get a part-time job, how can I *afford* it?

(KATHRYN *gives an incoherent scream, lurches from sight, and we hear the slam of the front DOOR; the two* MEN *just stand, numb.*)

CHARLIE. Well . . . what can I say?

JEREMY. Damned if I know. I never, in all my wildest nightmares of discovery, thought she'd take it *this* hard.

CHARLIE. Yeah. I never saw anyone get *so* angry so *fast.*

(*Each lost in his own thoughts, they are coming down to sofa and sitting, puzzled and bemused by the unexpected hurricane.*)

JEREMY. You know what baffles me more than anything? *How* she found out! It's downright supernatural.

(*Unnoticed by either,* TINA *enters from bathroom, somewhat recovered; she sees the two* MEN, *adjusts her glasses and pats her hair, then descends slowly to living room, during:*)

CHARLIE. Let's think it through, logically.

JEREMY. Okay. Now, fact number one: Kathryn knows.

CHARLIE. Right!

JEREMY. So, if she knows, someone told her.

CHARLIE. Exactly!

JEREMY. Now, *I* certainly didn't tell her . . . and the only *other* person who knew *is*—

CHARLIE. (*Sees where logic is heading; groans.*) Aw, c'mon, Jer! *I* didn't tell her—why *would* I?

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