

Send Me No Flowers

A Comedy in Three Acts

by Norman Barasch
and Carroll Moore

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



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SEND ME NO FLOWERS, comedy in three acts by Norman Barasch and Carroll Moore; staged by James Dyas; scenery and lighting by Frederick Fox; presented by Courtney Burr and Edward Specter Productions at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, December 5, 1960, with the following cast:

JUDY KIMBALL.....	<i>Nancy Olson</i>
GEORGE KIMBALL.....	<i>David Wayne</i>
VITO.....	<i>Michael Miguel O'Brien</i>
BERT POWER.....	<i>Richard McMurray</i>
DOCTOR MORRISSEY.....	<i>Frank Merlin</i>
ARNOLD NASH.....	<i>Peter Turgeon</i>
FIRST PASSERBY.....	<i>Bruce Brighton</i>
SECOND PASSERBY.....	<i>Joe Ponazecki</i>
MR. AKINS.....	<i>Heywood Hale Broun</i>
A GIRL.....	<i>Carolyn Olsen</i>
THIRD PASSERBY.....	<i>Helen-Jean Arthur</i>
MISS MASON.....	<i>Judy Carrol</i>

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The entire action of the play takes place in the living room of the Kimball home.

ACT ONE

Late Friday morning.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: *Two days later.*

SCENE 2: *The following morning.*

ACT THREE

One half hour later.

Send Me No Flowers

ACT ONE

TIME: *Late Friday morning.*

SCENE: *The living room of the George Kimballs' suburban ranch house. C. are sliding glass doors to a patio. U. L. is a swinging door leading into a kitchen. U. R. are three steps to a landing and off to the bedrooms. D. R. is a door leading to the den. L. is an arch to a foyer and the front door. The room is furnished in a comfortable modern style and includes: D. L. an armchair with an end table against the Upstage arm. A dinette table is U. L. C., with three chairs—R., C. and L.—around it; C. is an armchair. R. C. is a sofa with three cushions. U. C. are an occasional chair and a telephone table with a dial phone. D. R., built into the wall, is a bar cabinet with a three-shelf bookcase over it; Upstage of the bar is a fireplace.*

AT RISE: *Stage is empty for five counts, then JUDY enters from kitchen with two glasses of orange juice. She sets these on table and crosses to foot of stairs.*

JUDY. *(Calling.)* George! Breakfast, darling. Come on! *(She returns to table—sees something missing.)* Marmalade! *(She exits kitchen. GEORGE KIMBALL enters on stairs. Pauses a moment to rub his chest, then crosses down to L. of chair C. JUDY enters from kitchen, sets marmalade on table and crosses to GEORGE.)* Morning, honey. *(She gives him a quick kiss and crosses to L. of table and starts arranging napkins.)*

GEORGE. (*Weakly, hoping for a little sympathy.*) Good morning, Judy.

JUDY. (*Cheerfully.*) Want anything special for breakfast, George?

GEORGE. No. I don't think I'd better eat anything this morning, thank you. (*Rubs his chest again.*) Oooooo!

JUDY. (*Looking up from her chores.*) Did you say something, darling?

GEORGE. I just said "oooo!"

JUDY. What's the matter?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to below sofa.*) I've got this pain in my chest, that's all. (*Smiling bravely.*) Probably nothing serious.

JUDY. Oh, that's good.

GEORGE. (*He stops—turns and looks at JUDY. Pause.*) At least, I hope it's nothing serious. You can never tell. Who knows! It could be nature's warning.

JUDY. (*Lightly.*) Oh, George, nature's been warning you for years, and you're still here.

GEORGE. (*Crossing R. Picks up newspaper from table R. of sofa.*) My luck can't last forever.

JUDY. (*Refusing to pamper him.*) Now come on, have something to eat.

GEORGE. (*Opening paper to obituary page—crossing and sitting in chair C.*) No, I better not—not until Doctor Morrissey says it's okay.

JUDY. (*Surprised.*) You're going to call Doctor Morrissey?

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) I already called him.

JUDY. (*She looks at him fondly, and shakes her head.*) But, darling, you just had a complete checkup.

GEORGE. That was two weeks ago. In two weeks your body can turn on you, just like that!

JUDY. (*Chidingly—crossing Upstage of GEORGE to above sofa.*) Ohhh— (*Arranges sofa cushions and empties silent butler into waste basket.*)

GEORGE. Come to think of it, I never got the results of that electrocardiogram. I wonder why Dr. Morrissey didn't call me?

JUDY. (*Patiently.*) He didn't call you because it turned out all right.

GEORGE. I'm not so sure. Morrissey's the kind of doctor who doesn't always tell you everything. (*Waving toward the bookcase.*) If I didn't have that medical dictionary, half the time I wouldn't know what was wrong with me.

JUDY. (*She knows all about it—crossing to L. of dinette table.*) That's so true. (*Hoping to distract him.*) Would you like a piece of toast, darling?

GEORGE. No, I don't think I should have any roughage.

JUDY. Oh, a piece of toast can't hurt you, for heaven's sakes. (*Sits L. of dinette table—picks up piece of toast.*)

GEORGE. Darling, you're not a doctor.

JUDY. (*Shrugs.*) Okay. (*Eats a piece of toast.*)

GEORGE. Well—maybe just one piece. (*Rises—crosses to R. of dinette table.*)

JUDY. Good. (*She pushes bread down in toaster.* GEORGE sits at the table, and reads his newspaper. After a very slight pause, JUDY's eye falls on her newspaper. She picks it up.) Oh, George. Guess what? The Bullards are getting divorced. It's in *The Recorder*. (*Puts The Recorder in chair Upstage of dinette table.*)

GEORGE. Bullards? Who are they?

JUDY. They live on the next block. I really don't know them. (*Pause.*) But I expected this.

GEORGE. (*Lowers his paper—looks at JUDY.*) You don't know them and you expected them to get a divorce?

JUDY. Well, Cora Brooks told me all about it at the bridge club. (*Then with slight disapproval.*) I wonder what was wrong with him?

GEORGE. (*Lowering his paper again.*) Now, how do you know? Maybe there was something wrong with her.

JUDY. I met her once in the supermarket and she seemed very nice.

GEORGE. Nice in the supermarket may not be nice at home. (*The toast pops up.*)

JUDY. Oh, the toast is ready. I'll butter it for you.

GEORGE. (*Taking toast from JUDY.*) Oh, no! No butter. Butter is loaded with cholesterol!

JUDY. Oh, George. Two years ago you never *heard* of cholesterol. Now it's the biggest thing in your life.

GEORGE. Well, you can laugh about it, if you want to. Meanwhile, men my age are dropping like flies. Do you ever read the *Times* obituary page?

JUDY. Never.

GEORGE. Well, you should—it would do you a lot of good. I read it every day. It's enough to scare the hell out of you!

JUDY. If it scares you, why do you read it?

GEORGE. What should I do—bury my head in the sand? When they're dropping all around me? Like poor Henry Hoffman. (*Rising—crossing below L. end of sofa.*) Forty-two years old. One day he complained of a sharp pain— (*Turns to her.*) right here— (*Rubs his chest.*) Two weeks later he was gone! Went like that! (*Snaps his fingers—crosses to below R. end of sofa.*)

JUDY. (*Rising.*) George, why is it every time you hear that somebody has something, you think you've got it, too?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to chair C. Bridling.*) What do you mean by that?

JUDY. The year they operated on that baseball pitcher for the New York Yankees, you thought you had bone chips in your elbow.

GEORGE. (*Touching his elbow, defensively.*) Well, there definitely was pain there. (*Crosses to hassock, reading paper.*)

(*YOUNG MAN appears on patio—knocks on patio door.*)

JUDY. I'll get it, dear. (*She goes to the patio door, and opens it. A slick, blackhaired YOUNG MAN enters. He is carrying a dress on a hanger—crosses down to L. of chair C.—JUDY follows down to L. of him.*)

YOUNG MAN. Dress from the cleaners, Mrs. Kimball. We put it through special for you.

JUDY. Oh, thank you, Vito. (*She takes dress.*)

YOUNG MAN. Man, that is something. (*GEORGE crosses slowly to R. of chair C.*) Next time you wear it, walk by the store and give us slaves a treat.

JUDY. (*Amused.*) Well, I might just do that. (GEORGE, *irritated, snaps his newspaper.*)

YOUNG MAN. (*Turns, notices GEORGE.*) Check. 'Bye now. (*He exits via patio as JUDY enters with the dress.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing to patio door—JUDY crossing to below sofa.*) Say, that Vito's a pretty fresh kid, you know that?

JUDY. Oh, he doesn't mean anything. He's just friendly.

GEORGE. Just friendly—Humph! I bet he makes out pretty well in this neighborhood. (*Crosses to below dinette table.*)

JUDY. (*Ignoring this. Holding the dress against her.*) George, what do you think? Is this all right to wear tonight, for theatre?

GEORGE. Why not?

JUDY. I don't know—do you think it's too dressy?

GEORGE. (*Looking at it critically.*) Well—maybe it is a little too dressy.

JUDY. Oh, I don't think it's too dressy.

GEORGE. Then why did you ask me?

JUDY. (*Crossing to GEORGE. Sweetly.*) Well, I always like to get your opinion.

GEORGE. (*Short laugh.*) I can see that it's valuable. (*A short kiss.*)

JUDY. (*Going to hang the dress upstairs.*) I hope we don't have any trouble getting an extra ticket for Bert. (*Disappears momentarily.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing R.—sitting on sofa.*) Bert. I forgot all about that big cornball. It must be a mental block.

JUDY. (*Returning to stair landing.*) Oh, it'll be fun. After all, we haven't seen each other since college. (*Looks in mirror—primps hair.*)

GEORGE. Did you have to invite him up for dinner tonight? You knew we had tickets for the theatre.

JUDY. (*Crossing D. to L. arm of sofa.*) Well, darling, he's here from California—all alone—and when he called it was the only courteous thing to do. (*Leans on arm of sofa.*) After all, we were such good friends.

GEORGE. We? I hardly knew the man. But you two were certainly good friends.

JUDY. (*Smiles.*) Well, kind of.

GEORGE. Maybe if we're not too charming he'll go right home after dinner.

(*SOUND: Tea kettle whistling.*)

JUDY. (*Crossing to kitchen door.*) George, I have some water boiling. Would you like a cup of tea?

GEORGE. Tea? (*Pause.*) Well, all right. I don't suppose a cup of weak tea will hurt me—no matter what's wrong with me.

JUDY. George, your hypochondria's showing again. (*She exits to kitchen. Tea kettle WHISTLE out.*)

GEORGE. Hypochondria! Hmph! There hasn't been a woman with compassion since Florence Nightingale. Well, women— (*LIGHTS fade to spot on GEORGE.*) that's the way they are—you work and slave and as long as the money's coming in everything is fine. But as soon as the old machine starts to break down— Well, some day when I'm lying in the hospital on my bed of pain, she may change her tune—I only hope by then it's not too late—

(*We hear the sound of a VOICE over the loudspeaker calling "Dr. Morrissey, Dr. Morrissey, Dr. Ralph Morrissey," and the ringing of a hospital BELL. D. L. FANTASY LIGHTING up. We see DOCTOR MORRISSEY, dressed in a surgical gown and cap, with a surgical mask hanging from his neck. He has obviously just emerged from the operating room. He stands L. of a small hospital table and tall waste can. He calls over his shoulder.*)

DOCTOR. I don't care what they cost—I want special nurses, day and night on George Kimball! He's got to be watched every minute!

JUDY. (*Entering from L.*) Ralph! Ralph— How is he?

DOCTOR. Well, it was a close call, but I think he'll live.

JUDY. Oh, thank God! Thank God!

DOCTOR. He wouldn't have had all this trouble if we

had caught it sooner. Judy, you're his wife—didn't you know he was suffering?

JUDY. Well, he kept trying to tell me but I thought he was just a hypochondriac.

DOCTOR. Hypochondriac? That man lying in there, in traction? (*Crossing L. of JUDY—pointing off.*) Why, with his condition anyone else would have buckled long ago. He must have kept going on sheer grit!

JUDY. (*Crossing to R. of hospital table.*) Oh, why didn't I listen to him?

DOCTOR. (*Crossing to waste can.*) Well, you women better learn to take your husbands' health seriously. As a reminder,— (*Takes newspaper from waste can.*)—I want you to read this every day. (*He hands JUDY newspaper.*)

JUDY. (*Taking paper.*) What is it?

DOCTOR. The *Times* obituary page.

JUDY. Thank you, Ralph. And now—when—when can I see him?

DOCTOR. He's under heavy sedation. Maybe tomorrow.

JUDY. Not until then?

DOCTOR. Don't forget, he was on the table for eight hours. Two teams of surgeons. One surgeon did nothing but take the bone chips out of his elbow.

JUDY. (*Shocked.*) Bone chips?

DOCTOR. Worst case I've seen since that baseball player for the New York Yankees!

(*BLACKOUT. We hear the voice repeating "Dr. Morrissey, etc." As the REAL LIGHTING comes up, the hospital bell has become the insistent ringing of the front DOORBELL. GEORGE sits with a look of vindication—nods his head as if to say, "that'll teach her." JUDY enters hurriedly from kitchen with the cup of tea, which she puts on the table.*)

JUDY. George, for heaven's sakes, didn't you hear the door bell?

GEORGE. (*Blinking.*) Er, no.

JUDY. (*Crossing to L. of chair C.*) Well, that's Bert at the door!

GEORGE. (*Astonished.*) Bert? I thought he was coming for dinner?

JUDY. Well, I told him to come up early, but I didn't expect him this early.

GEORGE. Well, when you're free-loading, why miss a lunch? Frankly, I was hoping he'd get lost.

JUDY. Shhhhhh. . . . (*She pats her hair in place, and exits foyer.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing R., grumbling.*) You buy a place in the country, and people think you're running a hotel. (*Puts newspaper on bar.*)

JUDY. Bert?

BERT. (*Off.*) Yes. Judy? (*BERT enters, backing on and pulling JUDY by both hands. He gives a big hearty laugh as he puts his arms around JUDY and lifts her off her feet and swings her around.*) Great to see you! (*He puts her down Downstage of table.*)

JUDY. (*Breathlessly.*) Oh, Bert. Well, it's nice to see you.

BERT. Gosh, you look wonderful. Pretty as ever!

JUDY. Thank you. You're looking just marvelous yourself. (*He hugs her again. She sees GEORGE. He waves at her—she waves back.*) Oh, darling,— (*Crosses Downstage of BERT to chair C.*) here's Bert.

GEORGE. (*Who has been observing the proceedings balefully.*) Yeah. How are you, Bert?

BERT. Well, for heaven's sakes! (*Bounds toward GEORGE, hand outstretched.*) Good to see you again, Joe.

GEORGE. George.

BERT. Of course. I'm sorry. George. (*They shake hands. In a sweeping gesture, BERT indicates JUDY. Then, admiringly:*) What do you think of our girl here, huh?

GEORGE. (*Flatly.*) I like her!

BERT. Say, it was wonderful of you folks to invite me out. I hope I'm not too early.

GEORGE. No, no at all. (*Significantly.*) Have some breakfast?

BERT. No. Nothing for me, thanks. (*Taking in the room.*) Gosh, this is a cute place. (*Crosses to patio door. JUDY crosses to R. of chair C.*) Regular little doll's

house. (*Crossing Down to L. of chair C.*) How many acres have you got here?

JUDY. I don't really know. (*To GEORGE.*) How many acres *do* we have, dear?

GEORGE. (*Flatly.*) One third.

BERT. Oh. (*Comfortingly.*) I guess that's plenty if you have no livestock.

GEORGE. Yeah!

JUDY. (*Sensing GEORGE's edginess, and anxious to change the subject. Motioning BERT to sit.*) Bert, I just can't get over how young you look. So fit.

BERT. (*Sitting chair C.*) Well, I'm a real nut on physical fitness. I play a lot of tennis and handball, and believe it or not, I still do quite a bit of sculling.

JUDY. (*Sitting on L. arm of sofa.*) Sculling? Is that so?

BERT. Yes, I bought myself a little lake in California. I can hop in my plane and be there in an hour. Great sport. Ever try it, George?

GEORGE. No, it's hard to pick up a lake around here.

BERT. (*Densely.*) Oh, that's too bad.

JUDY. (*Anxious to change the subject.*) Tell me, Bert, what are you doing these days?

BERT. I'm in oil. (*He sits and unconsciously crosses his legs, revealing handsome high tan leather boot. GEORGE crosses to below sofa—BOTH look at the boots—then at each other. GEORGE sits R. on sofa.*)

JUDY. (*Back to BERT.*) Oil. Isn't that fascinating?

BERT. I tell you, it's just marvelous, tax-wise. The government lets the first twenty-seven-and-a-half percent go right in your pocket. Listen, these people who are always bellyaching about not having any money should all get into oil.

GEORGE. Yes, it would certainly wipe out poverty.

BERT. By the way, George, what business are you in?

(*During following speeches, JUDY looks at each in turn.*)

GEORGE. I'm with Connell Electronics Corporation.

BERT. Uh-huh. Are you on the Big Board?

GEORGE. No. We're not on the Little Board, either. It's just a small company.

BERT. Oh.

JUDY. (*Rising to GEORGE's defense.*) Well, it's small, but it's very important. They manufacture a little transistor, only about this big— (*Demonstrates with her thumb and forefinger.*) but as George said once in a speech, without it a whole city like Pittsburgh would be blacked out. (*GEORGE smiles proudly.*)

BERT. Say, that'd be a damn shame. (*GEORGE looks front, the smile fading.*)

JUDY. (*Again trying to change the subject.*) Bert, I'm curious—how on earth did you ever locate us?

BERT. (*Rising—crossing L. around C. chair to U. C. of sofa.*) Well, I don't get east much, but yesterday, by accident, I ran into Ted Barry at the Men's Bar at the Waldorf. Well, we started talking about the old college gang and I asked him about you, naturally. Well, Ted told me you had married somebody from college. I said, "Who?" and Ted said, "George Kimball." Well, I almost fell out of my chair! (*He laughs—GEORGE looks at him—then he stops quickly.*) Oh, no offense. I just meant that Judy was always kind of the campus queen. so I figured she'd probably marry somebody like Harrison Ford.

GEORGE. (*Forced smile.*) No, she just married me. (*Takes pillbox from trousers pocket.*)

BERT. (*Patronizingly.*) Well, I think she did darn well.

JUDY. (*Loyally.*) And so do I.

GEORGE. (*Crossing L.—taking pill—stopping R. end of dinette table—picks up teacup and saucer. Starts putting cream and sugar in it. Drily.*) That's very nice of both of you.

JUDY. How about you, Bert? Whom did you marry?

BERT. Me? Oh, I'm not married. Never have been.

JUDY. (*Surprised.*) You, Bert? I can hardly believe it. How did you escape?

BERT. (*Lightly.*) Well, if you must know, it's partly your fault, Judy.

JUDY. (*Puzzled.*) Mine?

BERT. Yes. After you threw me over, I couldn't settle for second-best.

JUDY. I threw *you* over? (*Chidingly.*) Why, you went to South America, said you'd be back in a year, and that was the end of you.

BERT. (*Taking her hand.*) Oh, now wait a minute, Passion Girl . . . (*GEORGE drops cup into saucer.*) Didn't I write and ask you to come down to Brazil? (*GEORGE puts cup and saucer down.*)

JUDY. All that did was torment me. I was dying to come, but my parents wouldn't hear of it. I cried for a month.

GEORGE. (*Groans, more for attention than anything else.*) Oooh! (*Sits R. of dinette table.*)

BERT. Something wrong, old man?

GEORGE. I just have this little pain in my chest.

BERT. Oh, I'm sorry.

JUDY. It's nothing to worry about. Besides, the doctor's coming.

BERT. Doctor? I hope it's nothing serious.

JUDY. I'm sure it isn't, but George felt he ought to call the doctor anyway.

BERT. (*Laughs.*) Oh, one of those.

GEORGE. (*To JUDY, bridling.*) We'll just let the doctor decide that, shall we?

JUDY. (*Rising—crossing to L. of dinette table.*) Oh, darling, while he's examining you, I can get my shopping done. (*She picks up juice glasses.*) Anything special you boys want for lunch?

BERT. (*Rising.*) Doesn't matter. I can digest anything. (*GEORGE gives him a look.*)

JUDY. George?

GEORGE. Get whatever he wants to digest.

JUDY. (*Ignoring this.*) Bert, maybe you'd like to come along.

BERT. (*Crossing to R. of chair C.*) I'd love it. Looked like a cute little town.

JUDY. Oh, it's very quaint. The A & P looks like Independence Hall! (*She exits through the kitchen door.*)

BERT. (*Crossing L. Pats GEORGE on shoulder.*) Third

of an acre, eh? (*Crossing to kitchen door.*) You know, I don't think I ever saw a third of an acre before. (*Exits into kitchen.*)

GEORGE. (*He looks after them, dourly.*) Humph! (*He rubs his chest, and his eye falls on the bookcase. He goes to bookcase and takes down a large medical dictionary. He riffles through it, crossing to C., until he finds the page he is looking for. He reads aloud.*) "Angina pectoris. A muscular spasm of the chest, often accompanied by an affection of the heart. Frequently fatal." (*He looks up. Pause.*) They shouldn't be allowed to print stuff like this. (*The front DOORBELL rings. GEORGE goes to the front door and opens it.*) Good morning, Ralph.

DOCTOR. Hello, George. (*DOCTOR enters with bag to L. end of sofa—GEORGE follows to below dinette table—places dictionary on it.*) Oh, boy. Eleven in the morning, and this is my eighth call already. I'm pooped. (*Puts hat and bag on L. end of sofa.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing to L. C.*) Can I get you something, Ralph?

DOCTOR. No, I just want to rest a minute. Why in hell didn't I specialize, so I could sleep in the morning! (*Crossing to chair C.*) You never hear of an Ear, Nose and Throat man being yanked out of bed at five A. M. Or those damn allergists! Jeez, they've got hours like a banker. And the same kind of money, too. I know one has a million dollar house just built on ragweed. What a business! When the pollen count goes up it's just like the Stock Market.

GEORGE. (*Touching his chest.*) Well, Ralph, I have this pain—

DOCTOR. (*Sitting chair C.*) Boy, I'm pooped! Thank God I'm going fishing this weekend. Friend of mine has a cabine cruiser. Gastro-enterologist. Won't look at anything but gall bladders. He's cleaning up. *Cleaning up!*

GEORGE. (*Anxiously.*) You'll be on a boat? For a whole week end?

DOCTOR. Yes, sir!

GEORGE. (*Stepping L. Apprehensively.*) Well, isn't it wonderful that you can just take off? Although—what

happens— (*Turning back to DOCTOR.*) if somebody has to reach you? Like an emergency? I mean, when you're out on a boat like that?

DOCTOR. Emergency? What emergencies? Hell, ninety percent of my patients have nothing wrong with them. The five percent who've got something serious, I send to a specialist. The other five percent you can't do anything for, anyway, what's your trouble, George?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to DOCTOR. Taken aback.*) What? Oh. I have this pain.

DOCTOR. M-hm. Show me where.

GEORGE. (*Indicating the spot.*) Right here. (*He presses his chest.*) It hurts like the devil when I press it.

DOCTOR. Then why press it? Now, is it a sharp pain, or a dull pain, or does it grip like a vise—?

GEORGE. (*Eagerly.*) Yes! Yes!

DOCTOR. No, no. Pick one.

GEORGE. Oh. Well, then I'd say it was more of a sharp pain.

DOCTOR. M-hm. Was the pain severe enough to wake you up during the night?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to below table.*) Actually, I never got to sleep. So I don't know.

DOCTOR. Couldn't sleep, eh? Worried about something?

GEORGE. Yes. This pain.

DOCTOR. (*Rising to L. end of sofa.*) M-hm. I'd better take a listen. (*Reaches into his bag for his stethoscope— GEORGE takes chair R. of dinette table to D. C. and sits on it and opens shirt.*)

GEORGE. (*Anxiously.*) Do you have any idea what it might be, Ralph?

DOCTOR. (*Turns to GEORGE.*) Not yet. (*Takes stethoscope from bag.*)

GEORGE. (*Trying to be casual.*) It's probably nothing. But you know how much Judy worries.

DOCTOR. Yeah! (*Applies the stethoscope to GEORGE's chest.*) Deep breath. (*GEORGE takes a deep breath, as the DOCTOR moves the stethoscope from spot to spot.*) Good. Another one. (*GEORGE breathes deeply.*) Okay. One more. (*GEORGE takes another breath.*) Good. You can

button up. (*GEORGE buttons his shirt, as the DOCTOR crosses to sofa and puts his stethoscope in the bag.*)

GEORGE. Well—what's the bad news, Ralph?

DOCTOR. (*Vaguely.*) What?

GEORGE. This pain in my chest—is there some medical term for it?

DOCTOR. Yes. It's called indigestion. (*Reaching into his bag.*) Here. (*Pulls out bottle of pills.*) I want you to take these pills. One before each meal, and one before retiring.

GEORGE. (*Crosses to DOCTOR and takes bottle of pills.*) Oh. What kind of pills are they?

DOCTOR. You wouldn't know if I told you. Just take them. (*Crosses to bar and opens bottle of "7-Up."*)

GEORGE. (*Shrugs.*) All right. (*Crosses to chair in which he was sitting—replaces it. Pause.*) Oh, Ralph—

DOCTOR. Yes?

GEORGE. About that cardiogram I had taken—when I had my checkup—?

DOCTOR. (*Pouring "7-Up" into glass.*) What about it?

GEORGE. (*Crossing D. to below chair C.*) That's what I was going to ask you—what about it?

DOCTOR. What do you mean? (*Puts bottle down.*)

GEORGE. Well—how did it turn out?

DOCTOR. (*Crossing to L. of hassock.*) I don't know. I won't get the results from Dr. Petersen for another week.

GEORGE. (*Trying to be casual.*) He had it for two weeks. He's certainly studying it for quite a while, isn't he?

DOCTOR. Well, Petersen's a busy man. Biggest cardiologist in the city. Got a gold mine there! (*Sips "7-Up."*)

GEORGE. Then in your considered opinion, everything is okay?

DOCTOR. Sound as a bell. I wish all my patients were as healthy as you—speaking non-professionally, of course.

GEORGE. And this pain in my chest—I can just go right ahead and live a normal life?

DOCTOR. (*Dryly.*) I would. Take one of those pills right now, with a glass of water.

GEORGE. Right now? You make it sound sort of urgent.

DOCTOR. Then take it whenever you want. It doesn't make much difference. (*Puts glass on end table R. of sofa.*)

GEORGE. No, no. I'll take it right away, if it's that important. (*GEORGE exits to the kitchen with the pills. DR. MORRISSEY goes to phone and dials.*)

DOCTOR. (*On phone.*) Hello, Dr. Petersen, please. Dr. Morrissey— Hello, Petersen? Morrissey— Thank you. Same to you. Say, I'm on my way now to see that patient of mine, William Malone— That's right, William Malone, that old feller down in Yonkers— I don't want to rush you, but I'm leaving town for a few days— (*GEORGE enters from kitchen unseen by DOCTOR.*) and I was wondering if you got the results of his cardiogram— Uh-huh—uh-huh— What! (*Down.*) That's a damn shame. Well, what can you do? Give him a few pills to ease the pain in his chest— There's not much you can do when the old ticker goes. (*On hearing this, GEORGE retreats into foyer, out of sight.*) How much time you figure the poor devil's got?— M-hm—a few weeks— Oh, I know, I've seen 'em go like that! (*Snaps his fingers.*) Well, whataya gonna do? I'll tell you what I'm gonna do. I'm going fishing! (*Big, hearty laugh.*) Damn right! Gotta beat 'em out of a weekend once in a while. Well, thanks, Doctor Petersen— What?— No, I'm not going to tell him. He's better off not knowing— Right. You have a nice weekend, too. 'Bye, Doctor. (*He hangs up the phone. Crosses to L. of sofa and closes bag.*)

GEORGE. (*He enters with pills. He appears pale and shaken. He comes into the room, to below dinette table. Weakly.*) I'm back, Ralph.

DOCTOR. (*Picking up bag.*) Good.

GEORGE. (*Pause, then holds up the bottle.*) Do you— still want me to take these pills?

DOCTOR. (*Picking up hat.*) Sure. Ease that pain in your chest. Well, I guess I'll be off, George. Got a couple of more calls. (*Crosses L.*)

GEORGE. (*Intercepting him C.*) Ralph, wait a minute—

DOCTOR. Yes?

GEORGE. Do you mind if I ask you a sort of hypothetical question?

DOCTOR. Shoot.

GEORGE. Well—suppose you had a patient, and you knew he didn't have much longer to live—I mean, if you knew he could go— (*Snaps his fingers.*) Just like that. In a few weeks?

DOCTOR. Yeah?

GEORGE. Would you tell him?

DOCTOR. (*Crossing to L. of GEORGE to below dinette table. Musing.*) Hmmm—well, now that decision often confronts a doctor. Offhand, I'd say it would all depend on the circumstances.

GEORGE. Circumstances?

DOCTOR. (*Crossing back to GEORGE.*) Yes. If I knew that the man's affairs were in order, will made out properly, insurance paid up, no loose ends—why—I'd see no reason to tell him.

GEORGE. Well, suppose this patient were an old friend, like me?

DOCTOR. Your affairs in order, will made out, insurance paid up?

GEORGE. Yes.

DOCTOR. (*Flatly.*) Then I wouldn't tell you— Anything else, George?

GEORGE. No, no. I—I guess that's it.

DOCTOR. Right. (*Slaps GEORGE on the shoulder.*) Well, so long, boy. See you in church! (*He exits. GEORGE waves weakly. He looks stricken.*)

GEORGE. Oh, my God! My God!

(*He paces around, then goes to dinette table and sits R. After a moment, he reaches for a piece of toast, butters it heavily and takes a large bite. ARNOLD NASH enters through the patio to above C. chair, wearing a pair of work gloves.*)

ARNOLD. Morning, George.

GEORGE. Arnold.

ARNOLD. Thanks for the loan of the hedge clipper. It's back in your garage. (*GEORGE nods glumly—ARNOLD*

starts to remove gloves.) Well, I just put Ruth on the train to her Mother's. (*Reflective pause.*) Gee, y'know, tomorrow will be the only club dance in ten years that the four of us haven't been together? (*Short pause.*) Oh, well, we'll make it up when she gets back. Oh, listen, George, we changed the golf date. We're teeing off at ten tomorrow. Okay, kid? (*Crossing L. to below kitchen door.*) I think we'll take 'em this week. I was out at the driving range last night, and boy! I was really belting those woods. I think I got this game licked. You know what does it? (*Does a nice slow backswing, and as he follows through he sees GEORGE with the toast—crosses in to dinette table.*) Hey, what are you doing?

GEORGE. (*Flatly.*) I'm eating.

ARNOLD. (*Sitting L. side of dinette table.*) You ought to go easy on the butter—haven't you ever heard of cholesterol? I won't let Ruth even bring butter in the house any more. I'm telling you, these days you've got to watch every bite you put in your mouth. I don't want to worry you, George, but do you know what we're doing every time we sit down at the table to eat? We're poisoning ourselves! They spray all the fruits and vegetables with arsenic, and DDT, and God-knows-what. Frankly, we don't eat a thing any more that grows above ground! (*Pause.*) What's the matter, George? You seem kind of down today.

GEORGE. Yes, I suppose I am.

ARNOLD. (*Pause.*) Anything wrong?

GEORGE. Well— (*Long pause.*) Arnold, can I take you into my confidence?

ARNOLD. (*Slowly.*) Sure, George. What?

GEORGE. Well, I just heard some rather bad news. But you've got to promise to keep it quiet. I wouldn't want it to get around the neighborhood.

ARNOLD. (*Rising—anxiously.*) It's nothing that's going to affect property values, is it?

GEORGE. (*Shaking his head.*) I wouldn't think so.

ARNOLD. (*Sitting again.*) That's a relief. Then what?

GEORGE. Well, do you know this little pain in my chest I've complained about?

ARNOLD. You mean your indigestion.

GEORGE. Well, it's not indigestion—

ARNOLD. Anything serious?

GEORGE. (*Nods. Pause.*) It's curtains, Arnold.

ARNOLD. (*Pause. Slowly.*) Curtains? What do you mean—curtains?

GEORGE. The doctor was just here. He only gives me a few weeks more to live.

ARNOLD. (*Rising.*) My God! I can't believe it.

GEORGE. Well, it's true.

ARNOLD. What is it, George?

GEORGE. It's the old ticker, Arnold.

ARNOLD. (*Sitting down, shocked.*) Holy cow! Are they sure?

GEORGE. (*Shrugs.*) I had Petersen, the biggest cardiologist in the city.

ARNOLD. Holy cow! (*Pause.*) Gee, George, I don't know what to say— (*With sudden emotion—crossing to above chair C.*) Dammit, George, if you're going to die shouldn't you do something about it?

GEORGE. (*Resigned.*) What?

ARNOLD. Shouldn't you at least be in bed?— I mean, saving your strength for it? (*Turning to GEORGE.*) I'm sorry, George. I'm just so shocked, I don't know what I'm saying.

GEORGE. That's all right, Arnold.

ARNOLD. I mean, it's so sudden! (*Pause.*) How old are you, George?

GEORGE. Forty-one.

ARNOLD. (*Turning front.*) Forty-one! My God! *I'm* forty-one! (*Turns to GEORGE.*) Oh, excuse me, George. (*Backs R. a step.*) Here I am thinking about me— (*Crossing Downstage.*) when it's you who's going to— (*Sits chair C. Makes a vague rippling gesture with his fingers toward heaven.*) May I have a drink, George?

GEORGE. Of course, Arnold. By God, I'll have one with you. (*Goes to the bar.*)

ARNOLD. (*After a pause.*) George—how are you going to—tell Judy?

GEORGE. Judy? Oh, I'm not going to tell her.

ARNOLD. No?

GEORGE. (*Putting ice in glasses.*) I couldn't bear it.

She'd probably go to pieces—weeping and wailing— You know Judy! (*Picks up bottle of Scotch and pours a drink.*)

ARNOLD. Yeah. I remember how she was when the dog died— (*GEORGE slams bottle down.*) I don't mean there's any comparison! (*GEORGE pours another drink.*) This would be much worse! (*GEORGE slams bottle down again.* ARNOLD *thinks about this; then, rising.*) Well, you know what I mean, George.

GEORGE. (*Coming back with the drinks.*) Of course, Arnold. (*Hands ARNOLD a drink.*)

ARNOLD. Thanks. (*BOTH take long sips of their drinks.*) George—is there anything I can do? Anything at all? Not only as a lawyer, but as your best friend.

GEORGE. I—I don't know, Arnold. I really haven't had time to think. (*Pause; crossing to L. of chair C.*) Yes. There is something you can do—

ARNOLD. Just name it!

GEORGE. (*Turning to ARNOLD.*) I'd like you to take care of the funeral details.

ARNOLD. Oh, my God! (*Finishes his drink in one gulp.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing to D. L. C.*) Well, you understand the reason. It's Judy. Anybody can sell her anything, especially at a time like this. If she had her way she'd probably have me buried like King Tut! And this is no time for extravagance. (*Crossing to chair C.*) Will you do it, Arnold?

ARNOLD. (*With great emotion.*) Yes, George. Of course I will. (*He gets up and goes quickly to the bar and pours himself a stiff drink.*) George, are you fixed all right—I mean, financially?

GEORGE. (*Sitting chair C.*) Well, it's largely insurance. Like most of us, I'm in lousy shape now, but I'll be all right after I'm gone.

ARNOLD. Well, your house is free and clear now, isn't it?

GEORGE. No more. It was free and clear last year—but I took out another mortgage to build that den on. Then we stopped watching television, and I haven't been in the damn thing since!

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to GEORGE with drink and bottle.*) George, if you'd asked me, I'd have advised you against it. No matter what you put into a house, you never get it out when you sell.

GEORGE. I know, Arnold.

ARNOLD. It's the damndest thing about a house. Everybody can stick you, but you can never stick anybody else!

GEORGE. Judy'll probably have to sell, anyway, so keep an eye on it, will you? See that she gets something out of it.

ARNOLD. (*Sitting L. end of sofa.*) I will, George.

GEORGE. Poor Judy. How will she possibly get along? She depends on me for everything. Alone, she'll be absolutely helpless. What's wrong with us, anyway, Arnold?

ARNOLD. Who, George?

GEORGE. Us husbands! (*Rising and crossing L. C.*) Why don't we teach our wives to be self-sufficient so they can be sensible, practical widows! I mean it! We know we're going to go first, so— (*Turning to ARNOLD, who takes quick drink.*) instead of taking them to the theatre, and restaurants, and parties, we should send them to night school! (*Crossing to C.*)

JUDY. (*Enters through the kitchen door.*) Hi. We're back.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to her. With a little start.*) Oh, Judy! It's nice to see you again, darling—how is everything?

JUDY. (*Puzzled by his attitude.*) Why, everything is fine, dear.

GEORGE. That's wonderful. Wonderful! (*Kisses her on both cheeks.*)

JUDY. Bert's out on the lawn, getting some sun. Why don't you go out? It's so lovely.

GEORGE. Maybe later. (*Kisses her again.*)

JUDY. (*Seeing ARNOLD for the first time.*) Hi, Arnold!

ARNOLD. Hi!

JUDY. Did Ruth get off all right?

ARNOLD. (*Thickly.*) Yeah—left this morning. (*Goes to JUDY and puts his arms around her. With great*

sympathy.) How are you, Judy? (*He kisses her on both cheeks.*)

JUDY. Why, Arnold! Goodness, a man's wife leaves for a few days, and right away he gets sexy.

ARNOLD. Judy, I jus' wan' you to know you can always count on me. F'r anything.

JUDY. (*Looks at him strangely. Then sees the bottle of liquor.*) Ohhhh. Arnold! So early in the morning?

ARNOLD. Judy, I want to tell you that I live right next door. Right?

JUDY. (*Humoring him.*) Of course you do, Arnold.

ARNOLD. And if you ever need me for anything, day or night, that's where I'll be. Right next door.

GEORGE. Arnold, maybe you ought to go home and lie down for a while—

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to GEORGE.*) Okay, okay, buddy. I getcha. (*Turns to JUDY.*) G'bye, Judy. (*Turns back to GEORGE.*) G'bye, George. (*Walks to the patio entrance. He exits through patio doors, turning back for last look at GEORGE.*)

JUDY. Well! What's he celebrating!

GEORGE. I really don't know.

JUDY. (*Going to GEORGE, sniffs suspiciously.*) Let me put it another way—what are you celebrating?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to bar.*) Me? Nothing. I just had a short one with Arnold. (*Puts glass on bar.*)

JUDY. Well, that's smart. You won't eat butter, but you can drink Scotch. By the way, did the doctor come?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to R. end sofa.*) Yes, he did.

JUDY. (*A step R.*) And what did he say it was?

GEORGE. (*Sitting R. on sofa.*) Oh, er—indigestion.

JUDY. See? I told you.

GEORGE. Yes, you were right again, dear.

JUDY. Have I ever been wrong about your little aches and pains?

GEORGE. No, never have.

JUDY. (*Crossing and sitting L. of him.*) Well, then stop worrying so much. (*Lying back in his lap.*)

GEORGE. (*Suddenly embracing her.*) Gee, I love you, honey.

JUDY. And I love you. (*They kiss.*) George, you

should do your drinking at night! (*Then, her eyes wander about the ceiling.*) Oh, that girl never really cleans!

GEORGE. (*Raises head and looks at her, puzzled.*) What?

JUDY. Nine dollars plus carfare, and there's a cobweb!

GEORGE. Y'know, you're really adorable.

JUDY. So are you. (*Gives him another long kiss—rises—crossing to below C. chair.*) Now I've got things to do in the kitchen. Oh, darling, I forgot— (*Takes bill and check from pocket. Crossing to U. C. of sofa.*) I stopped at the gas station, and Joe gave me back this check because he said it's the wrong amount, and that I should make out a new one. (*Shows him the check and the bill.*) See? (*He takes bill and check.*) The bill was only forty-five fifty-eight, and somehow I sent this check for seventy-eight sixty. I can't think how I did a thing like that.

GEORGE. (*Looking at the check.*) This figure is not seventy-eight dollars and sixty cents. It is seven, eight, six-o. My God, you paid your license plate!

JUDY. Oh! Well, that's a hot one! (*Starts to laugh.*)

GEORGE. (*Ironically.*) Yes, that's certainly a hot one. (*As she starts off, he rises.*) Judy, please! (*She stops below chair C.*) Sit down. (*She sits chair C.*) I have something to say to you. (*He kneels beside her.*)

JUDY. (*Puzzled.*) What?

GEORGE. (*Kneeling R. of her.*) Judy—how would you like to go to night school?

JUDY. (*Surprised.*) Night school?

GEORGE. Just for a couple of evenings a week. Learn bookkeeping, banking, a little accounting—

JUDY. But why?

GEORGE. Because these are the things that keep our little ship afloat. For example—what does "amortization of a mortgage" mean? (*Pause, as JUDY simply stares vacantly front.*) Well?

JUDY. Ah—would you repeat that, please?

GEORGE. "Amortization of a mortgage."

JUDY. (*Vaguely.*) Oh.

GEORGE. You see? You don't know, do you?

JUDY. No. I never even heard of it. But what's the difference? That's your department.

GEORGE. But I think that you should know about it, too.

JUDY. That's silly. What's the sense in both of us knowing the same thing? (*Rising, crossing to below dinette table.*) Now, darling, I have to take care of those cold cuts.

GEORGE. (*Rising, stepping Downstage.*) Judy, please.

JUDY. (*Protesting.*) George, really, I'm much too busy to talk about "amortization" now.

GEORGE. We're not going to talk about amortization. We're going to talk about cold cuts.

JUDY. (*Interested now.*) Oh!

GEORGE. (*Pursuing his subject.*) What kind of cold cuts did you buy?

JUDY. (*Crossing to Downstage of chair C.*) Well, I got some nice corned beef—lean, the way you like it—and imported Swiss cheese, and some Virginia ham.

GEORGE. M-hm. And how much is a pound of Virginia ham these days?

JUDY. I don't know. I didn't buy a pound.

GEORGE. How much did you buy?

JUDY. A half pound.

GEORGE. And how much was that?

JUDY. Well, really, George, if I don't know how much a pound costs, how would I know how much a half-pound costs?

GEORGE. (*Crossing R.*) That's just my point. How do you know they're not cheating you if you don't know what anything costs?

JUDY. (*Suspiciously.*) George, why are you getting so worked up over Virginia ham all of a sudden?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to her.*) It's not just Virginia ham. It's a whole big principle.

JUDY. George, when you start talking like this, I know that something is wrong.

GEORGE. (*Crossing away right. Suddenly anxious.*) Oh, no. No!

JUDY. (*Decisively.*) You lost your job!

GEORGE. (*Stopping R. C. Relieved.*) Oh. No, no, I didn't lose my job.

JUDY. Then stop making me nervous. Now, darling, I have things to do in the kitchen.

GEORGE. (*Drops his arms, utterly defeated.*) All right, Judy.

JUDY. Now stop fretting. (*Crosses to kitchen door.*) You take care of amortization and I'll take care of the cold cuts! (*She exits kitchen.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing to Downstage of dinette table. Shaking his head sadly.*) Ohhh. She'll never make it. She'll lose everything! (*Sigh. Sitting on dinette table.*) Ah, it's cruel for a woman to be left alone in the world. The Hindus had the right idea. Suttee. When the husband died, the wife went with him—threw herself right on the funeral pyre. Then he didn't have to worry about her any more. (*LIGHTS dim to spot on GEORGE.*) Poor Judy. What'll become of her? She may end up in shame and disgrace—a public charge. She might even be reduced to begging on the streets—

(*GEORGE holds his head as the REAL LIGHTING fades to BLACKOUT. As the FANTASY LIGHTS come up we see JUDY, dressed in rags, a shawl around her head, holding a tin cup filled with pencils in front of a cutout representing Carnegie Hall.*)

JUDY. (*As LIGHTS come up.*) Pencils! Pencils! Buy a pencil, somebody? (*A MAN enters the scene, crosses to L. of her.*) Buy some pencils, sir? (*He stops—turns back to her.*)

MAN. Oh, all right. (*Then, staring at her intently.*) Say, aren't you the Widow Kimball?

JUDY. Yes, I am.

MAN. What are you doing selling pencils in front of Carnegie Hall?

JUDY. (*Plaintively.*) Well, I have to eat.

MAN. You poor woman. All right, I'll buy some pencils. How much are they?

JUDY. They're six for a quarter, sir.

MAN. That's awfully cheap, isn't it? They cost a nickel apiece at the stationery store.

JUDY. I know. That's where I buy them.

MAN. You pay a nickel apiece? Then how can you sell them six for a quarter?

JUDY. (*Sweetly.*) I'm content with a small profit.

MAN. (*Crossing to R. of her.*) Look, Mrs. Kimball, you're not making a profit. Every time you sell six pencils, you're losing a nickel.

JUDY. I am?

MAN. Yes. You should sell the pencils for ten cents apiece.

JUDY. I see. Ten cents apiece.

MAN. That's right. And to get you started, I'll take ten pencils. Here's a dollar. (*He gives her a dollar bill, and she gives him ten pencils.*)

JUDY. Thank you.

MAN. You're welcome. (*He crosses to L. of her.*) Good luck, Mrs. Kimball.

JUDY. God bless you, sir. (*The MAN exits L.*) Pencils? Pencils? (*A SECOND MAN enters from R.*) Buy some pencils from a poor widow?

SECOND MAN. (*Stopping L. of her.*) Oh, okay. How much are they?

JUDY. (*Triumphantly.*) They're ten cents apiece.

SECOND MAN. I'll take three.

JUDY. Yes, sir. That will be thirty cents.

SECOND MAN. On second thought—let me have six.

JUDY. Oh. Well, if you want six, they're six for a quarter!

(*BLACKOUT. The SPOT comes up.*)

GEORGE. She'll never make it! (*REAL LIGHTING comes up.*) She'll never make it!

ARNOLD. (*Enters through the patio. He is quite drunk now.*) George—!

GEORGE. Huh? Oh, Arnold—

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to GEORGE.*) George, I've been thinking—and I wanta do it, so don't say no. Fact, it'd be my privilege—

GEORGE. (*Abstracted.*) What, Arnold?

ARNOLD. I'd like to deliver the eulogy.

GEORGE. (*Preoccupied.*) Yes, sure. That's fine, Arnold.

ARNOLD. And don't you worry—I'll give you one helluva send-off.

GEORGE. (*Crossing D. L.*) I'm sure you will, Arnold—I only wish I could be around to hear it.

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to him.*) Well, say—maybe I can knock out a rough draft before you go!

GEORGE. Thanks a lot.

ARNOLD. Gee, George, I'm sorry. Maybe this was the wrong time to bring it up.

GEORGE. No, that's not what's bothering me, Arnold. It's Judy. She'll never make it alone!

ARNOLD. I know how you feel, George. But look at it this way—Judy is young and attractive. She'll probably get married again and— (*GEORGE turns to him.*) oh, excuse me! I shouldn't say that to you, with you standing right here—

GEORGE. No. No, that's all right, Arnold. Of course, that's a possibility. She might get married again. But . . . suppose she marries the wrong man? Like poor Janet Hart. It was disastrous.

ARNOLD. Who's she?

GEORGE. Bill and Janet Hart were very good friends of ours. A very devoted couple. And like Judy, Janet depended on her husband for everything. Then Bill died, quite suddenly. Poor Janet was grief-stricken. She needed someone to lean on, so she turned to the first man who came along. One week after the funeral she ran off with a bongo player from Birdland.

ARNOLD. A bongo player?

GEORGE. Took her for every cent.

ARNOLD. But, George, that doesn't mean it would happen to Judy.

GEORGE. (*Crossing D. L.*) Who knows? Don't forget, Judy is at that impressionable age. Who knows what could happen? (*GEORGE sits D. L. chair. REAL LIGHTS start to fade to a SPOT on GEORGE.*) A lonely, bereaved widow—sad and bewildered—Judy, too, might turn to the first man who comes along—

(BLACKOUT. MUSIC. We hear a PHONE ringing. ARNOLD crosses to U. L. of GEORGE. The FANTASY LIGHTS come up.)

JUDY. (*Enters down stairs, flashily dressed. Picks up phone. On phone.*) Hello?— Oh, hello, Cora— Oh, we'd just love to come to dinner. I'm dying for you to meet him— Well, I wanted to introduce him to everybody but we were married so fast. And, man, I mean fast! I only went out with him one night, but he was so romantic, it was Flipsville! (*Schoolgirl giggle. VITO whistles offstage.*) Oh, Cora, I have to hang up now. I hear him coming. And he always likes me to be ready. 'Bye, Cora. (*She hangs up the phone, and an ecstatic look comes over her face.*) VITO!

(*He enters to patio door. We see that it is the delivery boy from the dry cleaner, this time dressed very sharply. He also does the Cha-Cha, and they move to D. C., start a Cha-Cha dance until they are together, doing a very sexy dance. Then he throws her back in his arms and kisses her. The MUSIC stops.*)

VITO. Hello, Chick.

JUDY. Hello, Vito. (*He swings her up to R. of him.*)

VITO. I got big news, baby. This here big shot from Canada called me. That deal with the uranium mine is all set. He's gonna let me invest.

JUDY. Oh, Vito, you're wonderful!

VITO. Did it come yet, baby?

JUDY. What, mi amore?

VITO. The fifty thou. The old boy's life insurance.

JUDY. Yes, the check is here some place. Let me see. (*She takes out a check from her bosom.*) Here it is. Are you sure that's enough?

VITO. For now. If I need more, you can sell the house!

JUDY. Oh, Vito. You're such a good business man. George would have adored you!

(*They dance again—she throws him back in her arms.*)

BLACKOUT. As REAL LIGHTING comes up, we see GEORGE seated. He groans.)

ARNOLD. You all right, George? You look a little green.

GEORGE. I was just thinking, Arnold, there's no question about it—Judy must get married again. But to the right man. Someone who will take care of her, and protect her . . . after I'm gone.

ARNOLD. That'd be swell, George. But there's nothing you can do about that.

GEORGE. (*Rising.*) Yes, there is. (*Crossing to L. C.*) And I've got to do it.

ARNOLD. What?

GEORGE. I've got to find her another husband!

ARNOLD. Another husband? Who, George?

GEORGE. I don't know. But somebody! Yes, I do know. I know just the man!

BERT. Say, George— (*Enters from patio to L. of chair C.*) that's a cute little yard you've got out there. (*Sees ARNOLD.*) Oh, I hope I'm not interrupting.

GEORGE. No, no, not at all. (*Looks meaningfully toward ARNOLD.*) As a matter of fact, we were just talking about you! (*They slowly cross to BERT.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

TIME: *Late afternoon, two days later.*

AT RISE: GEORGE *is seated at the dinette table putting the final touches on a letter he is writing. He finishes writing, crumples up two half-finished pages and throws them in U. L. waste basket, then leans back to read what he has written. As he does so we hear his VOICE on tape. He reacts throughout to what he is hearing.*

GEORGE'S VOICE. My dearest Judy— By the time you read this letter, I will be dead. Yes, my hypochondria has finally paid off, ha-ha. Forgive the jest, but as you see, I retained my sense of humor till the end. (GEORGE *smiles appreciatively to himself and rises, crossing D. L.*) Now that I am gone you will find that all my affairs are in order. There is, however, one thing I couldn't attend to, as I did not know the exact date of my passing. I wish you would take care of this immediately. I want you to destroy my Diners Club card so that it doesn't fall into the wrong hands. I would not like to feel I am being charged for meals I haven't eaten. (*Crossing to C.*) My darling, I want to tell you how much I loved you, and what happiness you gave me these past fifteen years. Perhaps I didn't contribute to *your* happiness as much as I should have, but as you now know, I was often very ill. (*Crossing to D. R.*) And now, my sweetheart, I come to a very delicate subject; one which I hope you will understand. When I found out that I was dying, I had grave anxieties about you and your future welfare. It was for this reason that I felt that you should remarry, and that Bert would make an ideal second husband. (*Crossing to below sofa.*) Even as you read this, I

am sure the pieces are fitting together. It was no accident that you and Bert were alone together so often—tennis, golf, swimming, theatre. It was all planned by me—a plan designed to rekindle a romantic spark without either of you knowing it. (*Crossing to D. C.*) Please, darling, no tears. I am telling you all this so you will feel no guilt about marrying Bert after whatever is considered a decent interval by your Bridge Club. (*Crossing Up and into chair above dinette table.*) And now, my dearest, I must close with sincerest wishes for your future happiness— (*Now, off tape.*) Your loving husband, the late George Kimball. (*GEORGE puts the letter down, somewhat overcome by the poignancy of his own masterpiece.*) My God, that's beautiful. (*DOORBELL.*) A letter like this could bring a fortune from the *Reader's Digest*. (*DOORBELL again. GEORGE puts letter in envelope and seals it, leaving it on table. AKINS in from off L. to above patio doors and knocks. GEORGE opens door.*) Yes?

(*Standing outside is AKINS, wearing a sports jacket and slacks, and a sporty summer hat with a feather. He carries a briefcase.*)

MR. AKINS. Excuse me, you didn't answer the doorbell. I'm Mr. Akins.

GEORGE. Mr. Akins?

MR. AKINS. Mr. Akins, the salesman from Eternal Gardens. You phoned us about the purchase of a cemetery plot.

GEORGE. Oh, yes—well, come in.

MR. AKINS. Thank you. (*Enters, puts briefcase and hat on chair C. GEORGE follows to Downstage of table.*) I would've been here sooner, but I had another call over on Meadow Road. The Archers. You know them?

GEORGE. I don't think so.

MR. AKINS. They're a family of eight. Wonderful to see them. You don't get those big families any more.

GEORGE. I can understand your point of view. Won't you sit down?

MR. AKINS. Thank you. (*Sits himself R. at dinette*

table.) Tell me, are you familiar with Eternal Gardens? Do you have anyone residing with us?

GEORGE. Not as yet. (*Sits L. at table.*)

MR. AKINS. Seen our advertising campaign in the papers?

GEORGE. No, I must have missed it.

MR. AKINS. I have a reprint of our ad here. (*Crosses to C. chair, pulling it out.*) Ah, yes. Here she be. (*Crosses to R. of dinette table and places it facing GEORGE.*) Really hits you in the eye, doesn't it?

GEORGE. (*Looks at ad nervously.*) Yes, it really does.

MR. AKINS. (*Sitting R. at table.*) As you can see, we suggest that the entire family—Mother, Dad, the little ones—all go out and select the final resting place together. The kids love it. They have a ball!

GEORGE. I'll bet they do.

MR. AKINS. (*Pointing to ad.*) Now, if you notice—all the monuments in Eternal Gardens are exactly the same height. Four feet. As you see, it gives a wonderful impression of uniformity.

GEORGE. Sort of the Levittown of the Hereafter.

MR. AKINS. (*Taking out notebook.*) I like that, I like that. (*Makes note.*)

GEORGE. If you don't mind, could we get down to business?

MR. AKINS. Yessiree bob! Just let me get out the old order pad. (*Withdraws leather order book from pocket; moves ad to GEORGE. GEORGE winces and turns it face down on table. MR. AKINS writes.*) Now—how many in your family, Mr. Kimball?

GEORGE. Just my wife and myself.

MR. AKINS. (*Magnanimously.*) Oh, well, that's all right. (*Hopefully.*) Chance of any little additions, maybe?

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) Well—there may be another man along later.

MR. AKINS. I beg your pardon?

GEORGE. (*Rising crossing to R. of chair C.*) Mr. Akins, let me ask you—assuming the husband dies first, and then later on the wife remarries—

MR. AKINS. Mmmmmmm-Hmmmmmm?

GEORGE. Then assuming that the wife dies next and is buried with the first husband—

MR. AKINS. Mmmm—Hmmm?

GEORGE. (*A step C.*) Well, when the *second* husband dies, is he buried with the other two? I mean, are they all put together?

MR. AKINS. Yes, that happens.

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) Well, make it for three, what the hell I might as well go all the way. (*Crosses to hassock.*)

MR. AKINS. All right—reservations for three. (*Makes a note.*)

GEORGE. (*Turns to him.*) How, er—how much is this? (*Takes checkbook and pen from pocket.*)

MR. AKINS. A thousand dollars.

GEORGE. A thousand dollars—

MR. AKINS. We throw in the first year's gardening. How's that hit you?

GEORGE. (*Hollowly.*) Swell. (*Sits R. on sofa, making out check.*) Now, I'd like to make this check out to cash, if it's all right with you.

MR. AKINS. Suit yourself.

GEORGE. (*Writing in checkbook.*) You see, I'd rather my wife didn't know about this.

MR. AKINS. (*Archly.*) Oh— (*Rising.*) you want to surprise her.

GEORGE. Yes, that's it.

MR. AKINS. (*Crossing to U. L. end of sofa.*) Well, this will give her a real thrill. It makes a very thoughtful gift.

GEORGE. (*Rising and giving him the check.*) Here you are. One thousand dollars.

MR. AKINS. (*Taking check—puts it in pocket.*) Rightee-ho. (*Consulting his notebook.*) We'll put you in—K3. Let me show you, we've got a lovely layout. (*He pulls out a chart from briefcase and rolls it out on the floor R. of chair C. He observes it, kneels Upstage of it.*) K1, K2—K3. Oh, you're lucky. That's nice high ground. Lovely view from there.

GEORGE. Sounds marvelous.

MR. AKINS. It's a honey.

GEORGE. When will it be available—to—move in?

MR. AKINS. (*Rolling up chart, puts in briefcase.*) It's kept in tip-top shape at all times. Whenever you're ready, we're ready. (*Crosses to L. of dinette table.*)

GEORGE. That's a comforting thought.

ARNOLD. (*Enters patio to L. of chair C. He has obviously been drinking for two days.*) Hya, George.

GEORGE. Oh, hello, Arnold.

ARNOLD. How are you, George? You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. (*He sees AKINS.*) Oh, excuse me. I didn't know you had company.

GEORGE. That's all right. (*To AKINS.*) My neighbor, Mr. Nash. (*To ARNOLD.*) This is Mr. Akins.

(*ARNOLD starts to shake hands; AKINS hands him his card.*)

MR. AKINS. —from Eternal Gardens.

ARNOLD. Oh, my God! (*Takes the card with his fingertips and gingerly hands it back. AKINS shrugs. ARNOLD crosses to GEORGE.*) Care for a little drink, George?

GEORGE. No, thank you, Arnold.

ARNOLD. (*To AKINS.*) You like a little drink?

MR. AKINS. No, thank you.

ARNOLD. Oh. Well, I'll have one just to be sociable. (*He goes to the bar—pours drink.*)

MR. AKINS. (*Crossing to L. of C. chair with ad and order book.*) Well, I guess that wraps it up. (*Puts things in briefcase and closes it.*) I'll get the deed to you in a day or so.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to below dinette table.*) Thank you, Mr. Akins.

MR. AKINS. Oh, there's just one other thing. I think you should be made aware of it.

GEORGE. Yes?

MR. AKINS. It's of no immediate concern, of course. But there are plans on the books for a state highway that would go right through Eternal Gardens.

GEORGE. State highway?

MR. AKINS. Oh, not until 2004, perhaps. And it's not definite. But in the event it does come to pass, we will take care of everything, at our expense.

GEORGE. What does that mean?

MR. AKINS. Well, we will either move you to another location or, if you wish, put you deeper under the Thruway!

GEORGE. Oh. Well. Either way. Whatever the others do, I'll go along with them.

MR. AKINS. Fine and dandy! (*Crosses to foyer.*)

GEORGE. Mr. Akins— (*Stopping him at foyer.*) You really enjoy your work, don't you?

MR. AKINS. Sure do. Wouldn't want to do anything else— (*Slight pause. Then heartily.*) I like people! (*Blinks at GEORGE and exits.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing to C. chair.*) Well—that's that.

ARNOLD. You didn't have to do that, George. I would've handled it for you.

GEORGE. That's all right, Arnold.

ARNOLD. Is there anything I can do for you? Want me to mow your lawn?

GEORGE. No, thanks. There's nothing you can do for me now. Arnold, shouldn't you go easy? You've been hittin' that bottle pretty hard the past couple of days.

ARNOLD. Yeah, and I'm gonna keep right on hittin' it. You may not need it, George, but it's the only way I can get through this damn thing. (*Crossing to below hassock.*) George, I wanna tell you how proud I am of you—the wonnerful thing you're doing for Judy, so unselfish, and noble.

GEORGE. Thank you, Arnold.

ARNOLD. I mean— (*Sitting R. on sofa.*) actually fixing your wife up with another man. (*Pause.*) Where are they, George?

GEORGE. (*Crossing and sitting L. on sofa.*) Getting dressed. Bert's taking Judy to that dance tonight.

ARNOLD. Yeah. (*Looks furtively again toward the bedroom stairs.*) George, doesn't it ever bother you that Judy may marry this guy, and—you know—?

GEORGE. You mean?

ARNOLD. Yeah.

GEORGE. No, Arnold. Judy won't care for sex any more. She's had that. No, all Judy needs now, in the golden afternoon of her life, is a companion—someone

to walk with, over the hill, and down the other side—

ARNOLD. That's a beautiful thought, George. I'm gonna miss you, buddy.

GEORGE. I know you will, buddy. (*He sighs mournfully.*)

ARNOLD. What is it, George?

GEORGE. Nothing. Just thinking.

ARNOLD. What are you thinking about, George?

GEORGE. I was thinking how many days, months, years I've wasted, not really appreciating the things around me. And do you know why, Arnold?

ARNOLD. Why, George?

GEORGE. Because like most people, I've taken life for granted. But that's wrong. Very wrong. Being alive is a miraculous thing. And so mysterious. Think of it. Before each of us was born the universe existed for billions of years. Then suddenly— (*Rising—crossing D. C.*) we're given the gift of consciousness. We can see, hear, feel, touch, smell. Amazing. But for such a brief time. A pinpoint in eternity. And then we're gone. (*Crossing to R. in patio doorway.*) But the universe continues for more millions, billions, trillions of years.

ARNOLD. It won't be the same without you, George.

GEORGE. And you know, Arnold? The fact that I'm dying seems to have sharpened all my senses. (*Takes a deep breath.*) There. You know, I've been breathing all my life, but the air never smelled quite like this before. Never so clean and pure and fresh. (*Steps back into room a step. He looks around the room.*) And look! See that rose over there?

ARNOLD. (*Squinting through a Scotch haze.*) Not too well, George.

GEORGE. (*Crossing Upstage of sofa to fireplace.*) It's magnificent. Such color! Beautiful. We've always had flowers in the house, but I never really noticed them— And everything *feels* so wonderful. (*Leans on table R. of sofa.*) It's a privilege just to be able to touch things when you know you may not be touching them much longer. This table— (*Runs his hand over the table lovingly.*) It feels so good just to run my hand over it. It's so cool and smooth. (*A step Downstage. Sighs.*)

Well, this is all coming a little late for me, Arnold. This awareness. Why couldn't I have felt this way every day of my life? But you! You still have life ahead of you. (*Almost shouting.*) Wake up, Arnold! (*ARNOLD's head is drooping.*) Arnold? (*Crosses to ARNOLD, shakes him.*) Feel alive! Appreciate the beauty all around you. Do you understand what I mean?

ARNOLD. (*Vaguely.*) Yeah, sure. (*Reaches out and runs his hand over the table, self-consciously.*) Feels damn smooth.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to L. C.*) Well, Arnold, if I have communicated a little of this *joie de vivre* to someone else, it will make me happy!

ARNOLD. Oh, you have, George. Every chance I get I'm gonna feel a table. (*ARNOLD takes a drink, puts glass down on R. end table. GEORGE lights a cigarette. ARNOLD crossing to GEORGE.*) George, are you sure there's nothing I can do for you?

GEORGE. No, nothing. (*ARNOLD blows his match out for him.*) Oh, yes there is.

ARNOLD. What?

GEORGE. Well, when my—time comes—I want you to find my wallet, pick out my commutation ticket, and if there's anything left on it, take it down and get a refund. Will you do it, Arnold?

ARNOLD. Sure, George. But are you that hard up for money?

GEORGE. It's not the money. I just hate that damn New Haven.

ARNOLD. You're going out fighting, George. Just for that, Buddy, I'm gonna mow your lawn— (*Crosses to patio doors, turns back.*) and after I mow it, by God, I'm gonna rake it. (*He exits.*)

(*JUDY enters stairs wearing a beautiful, low-cut cocktail dress. She is struggling with the catch on her choker.*)

JUDY. (*On landing.*) George, would you help me? I can never work this catch.

GEORGE. Certainly, darling. (*Crosses to U. C. She*

comes to him and gives him the necklace. He looks at her approvingly.) You look gorgeous. When did you get the new dress?

JUDY. (*Turning her back to him. He puts necklace on her and fastens clasp.*) New? Oh, this is old. I bought it for the Community Fund dance last year. Don't you remember?

GEORGE. Oh, that's right. (*Finishes snapping the catch, crosses to C. chair.*) There.

JUDY. (*Crossing to below sofa.*) Thank you. (*Turning to show the dress.*) How does it look?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to below chair C., indicating the low cut.*) Isn't it a little—low cut?

JUDY. You loved it on me when I wore it before.

GEORGE. Well, that was for charity.

JUDY. Isn't Bert ready yet?

GEORGE. (*Crossing U. C.*) I think he's getting dressed. He'll be out in a few minutes, I'm sure.

JUDY. May I have a cigarette, George?

GEORGE. Yes, certainly, darling. (*He gets cigarette from phone table, crosses to her and gives it to her and lights it.*)

JUDY. Thank you. I wish you were coming along tonight.

GEORGE. Oh, so do I. I really do. (*Crossing to chair C.*) But—(*Taps his chest.*) you know. (*Sits.*)

JUDY. I feel so guilty about leaving you here alone.

GEORGE. Oh, don't worry about me. I feel fine.

JUDY. You do? (*Crossing to him.*) Then why aren't you coming to the dance?

GEORGE. Well, I mean for *me* I feel fine—but that's not really what you'd call feeling fine.

JUDY. (*Crossing above him to Downstage of dinette table.*) Oh, I see.

GEORGE. Oh, you'll have a good time. I'll bet Bert's a marvelous dancer. I mean, he does everything else so well. Great fellow, Bert, isn't he?

JUDY. Yes. He's very charming.

GEORGE. In fact, I'd say that he was the perfect companion for a woman.

JUDY. Yes.

GEORGE. And he seems genuinely fond of you, too, Judy.

JUDY. Well, I'm fond of him. (*Puts cigarette out in ash tray.*)

GEORGE. Good! I'm glad to hear that.

JUDY. (*Speculatively.*) George, I'd like to ask you something—

GEORGE. Certainly.

JUDY. Well—don't you mind at all that Bert and I have been going out by ourselves so much?

GEORGE. Oh, is it so much? I didn't know it was so much. But even so, why should I mind?

JUDY. Well, it's so unlike you. I mean, normally if a man showed me any special attention, you'd get terribly jealous. You've *always* been like that.

GEORGE. (*Rising, taking a step R.*) Me? I'm not the jealous type at all.

JUDY. (*Crossing to below C. chair.*) Oh, George, really! That last party at the Kellers' house, you became incensed just because Larry was helping me on with my coat.

GEORGE. (*A step to her, flaring up.*) Helping you on with your coat, hell! He was helping himself! (*Makes appropriate gesture.*)

JUDY. There, you see! You *were* jealous!

GEORGE. (*Calming himself.*) Well—maybe I was—but I'm not that way, any more.

JUDY. But that was only three months ago. What's happened?

GEORGE. (*Turning front.*) I've matured!

JUDY. (*Knowingly.*) Ah hah—

GEORGE. (*Uncomfortably, crossing on stairs.*) Er, where's Bert? You'll be late.

JUDY. (*Follows him to above chair C.*) George—

GEORGE. (*Peering toward the corridor.*) Yes?

JUDY. Turn around. (*He does.*) Look at me. (*He does.*) Now—I want you to tell me why you're doing this?

GEORGE. Doing what?

JUDY. Did you think I wouldn't notice? Why, for the

past two days you've been practically throwing me at Bert.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to below R. end sofa.*) Why, I don't know what you're talking about. Just because I haven't been feeling well enough to go out, why should I spoil your fun? (*Sits R. on sofa.*)

JUDY. (*Crossing to L. arm of sofa.*) Well, usually when you weren't feeling well you'd spoil my fun and think nothing of it. When I remember the nights I sat here playing scrabble with you next to that vaporizer—so what's changed?

GEORGE. Why, nothing, nothing at all.

JUDY. (*Crossing to U. C. of sofa.*) Oh, yes, George. You've changed. And as far as I'm concerned, there's only one explanation.

GEORGE. What's that?

JUDY. You've got another woman!

GEORGE. (*Rising—turning to her.*) What?!

JUDY. I'm sure of it! While you've been sending me off with Bert, where have you been?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to D. L. C.*) Oh, no, Judy! You've got it all wrong.

JUDY. (*Crossing to below chair C.*) What I can't understand is why? Are you tired of me, George? Is that it?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to her.*) Of course I'm not tired of you. I love you very much. (*Reaches for her.*)

JUDY. (*Stepping back away from him.*) Oh. But you want a little something on the side!

GEORGE. (*Shocked.*) Judy!

JUDY. Well, isn't that the way you men say it?

GEORGE. (*Flaring up.*) I don't know how we say it! I've never said it! I've never done it! (*Taking another step to her.*) There is no other woman!

JUDY. (*Drawing away.*) But of course there is! Look at you!

GEORGE. What?

JUDY. That guilty look on your face! Oh, I can tell! (*Stoutly.*) A wife can always tell! (*Crossing to him. He backs away to C. She follows.*) It all fits now. Even that

sneaky way you were conniving to get a couple of more evenings free.

GEORGE. What do you mean?

JUDY. (*Turning front.*) Trying to send me to night school! Oh, George!

GEORGE. Judy, you're making a terrible mistake! Another woman? How could you even think of such a thing?

JUDY. What else can I think? What would any wife think? The strange way you've been acting!

GEORGE. (*Crossing to bar.*) Well, maybe I have—but not for the reason you imagine! (*He pours drink.*)

JUDY. Oh, no? Then what is it?

GEORGE. (*Hesitantly.*) Well, er—it's—I don't want to talk about it!

JUDY. (*Convinced she's right.*) I see. Then I guess that's that! (*Starts for the bedroom corridor.*)

GEORGE. (*Puts drink on bar, crosses to D. R. C., facing landing.*) What are you doing?

JUDY. (*Stopping on landing.*) I'm leaving, George. Bert will drive me to New York. I won't spend another night under the same roof with an adulterer! (*She starts to enter the corridor, but GEORGE stops her.*)

GEORGE. Adulterer? Judy!

JUDY. (*Icily.*) Yes?

GEORGE. I've got something to say to you.

JUDY. Then say it!

GEORGE. (*Crossing to R. end sofa.*) Come here. (*She crosses to L. end sofa.*) Sit down. (*JUDY starts to sit, then rises abruptly.*) What—?

JUDY. Did you ever—use this couch?

GEORGE. I never used anything! I never did anything! (*Tenderly, indicating the couch.*) Please.

JUDY. (*Sits. Tensely.*) Well?

GEORGE. Judy, I—I didn't want to tell you this. But you've got to know the truth. I couldn't have you thinking I was ever unfaithful to you—especially now—at the ebb-tide of my life.

JUDY. What are you talking about?

GEORGE. Judy, it's true that I did everything to match you up with Bert. But it was for a completely unselfish—

yes, even a noble reason. I wanted you to have somebody—

JUDY. Have somebody? What do you mean?

GEORGE. After I'm gone.

JUDY. You're going away with her?

GEORGE. (*Quietly.*) I'm not going with anybody. (*Pause; he sits R. of her.*) Judy, you know when Dr. Morrissey came to see me about this pain in my chest?

JUDY. Yes. What about it?

GEORGE. Well, when I told you it was indigestion, I lied to you.

JUDY. (*Anxiously.*) What do you mean you lied to me?

GEORGE. I didn't want you to know—Judy—I'm dying.

JUDY. Dying? Oh, my God! No, it's not true!

GEORGE. I may only have a few weeks to live.

JUDY. Oh, my God!! Oh, George! George! (*Starts to sob against GEORGE's shoulder. He puts his arms around her.*)

GEORGE. (*Consolingly.*) There, there, dear. Chin up. At least— isn't it better than having another woman?

(*JUDY is convulsed by sobs.*)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

SCENE: *The next morning.*

AT RISE: JUDY is alone on stage, on the phone, Upstage of sofa. She is making notes on a pad resting on the back of the sofa.

JUDY. Yes, I'm holding— Yes?— Oh, wonderful! What time does that flight leave?—Seven-forty-five, Flight 17, tickets in the name of Mr. and Mrs. George Kimball?—Thank you. Oh! Could you tell me? When we arrive in Rochester, is there a limousine direct to the Mayo Clinic? You do think there is. Thank you so much.

(BERT enters from upstairs as JUDY hangs up.) I got the tickets, Bert.

BERT. (*Crossing downstairs to U. C. of sofa.*) Oh, good. Is there anything I can do? Do you want me to try to reach Doctor Morrissey again?

JUDY. (*Crossing to U. S. of chair C. Angrily.*) No. I'm through with Dr. Ralph Morrissey. Every time I think of him, I just boil. At a time like this he goes fishing, Hippocratic oath and all!

BERT. Judy, it's marvelous the way you're bearing up. (*Crossing to between chair C. and sofa.*) You've got real courage, girl.

JUDY. (*Crossing to Downstage of dinette table.*) I've got to have, Bert. I simply refuse to accept the idea that it's hopeless. I'll never give up.

BERT. God, what a woman you are!

JUDY. Bert, no matter what I do I'll never be able to make it up to George. All those years when he complained and I thought he was nothing but a hypochondriac. I feel so guilty.

BERT. (*Sitting on L. arm of sofa.*) So do I. Here I was, taking you out, enjoying every minute of it, when all the time that poor devil was—I feel like a ghoul!

JUDY. (*Crossing to Upstage of chair C.*) Bert, you couldn't have known. When I think that I accused him of having an affair, when actually his motives were so unselfish. So noble. Who would believe that any man would think only of his wife at a time like this?

BERT. You've got one helluva guy there, Judy! When they made George Kimball, they threw away the mold!

JUDY. I know it, Bert. (*Crossing D. R.*) Now, I'd better go in and tell him about the plane tickets. He should be prepared. (*She exits through D. R. door. He looks after her, shaking his head in admiration. Slight pause, then as he sees GEORGE:*)

BERT. (*Rising, and calling to GEORGE Downstage.*) Hiya, boy.

GEORGE. (*Rolling on.*) Hello, Bert. (*JUDY appears pushing GEORGE in a wheelchair. She stops C.*)

JUDY. How are you feeling, darling?

GEORGE. Well—perhaps a little weaker than yesterday.

I think sitting in this wheelchair is sapping my strength.

JUDY. Well, dear, we put you in it to conserve your energy. When we get there they may have to operate.

BERT. Judy's absolutely right. And that plane trip will take a lot out of you.

GEORGE. Judy, don't you think it's useless? This trip out to the Mayo Clinic?

JUDY. (*Vehemently.*) Nothing is useless! Nothing is hopeless!

GEORGE. But, darling, it could be very costly. They may do nothing but prolong this, and I'll just linger. One of the most expensive things you can do these days is to linger.

JUDY. I don't care about the expense! I'll spend every penny if I have to!

BERT. (*Interjecting.*) Now, see here! I won't have either of you worrying about money at a time like this. You've got enough to think about. Why don't you let me help?

JUDY. (*Turns chair R. C., stands with arm around GEORGE.*) Thank you, Bert, but no. I wouldn't dream of taking a penny from you.

BERT. Then let me give you an oil well. It's tremendous—the first twenty-seven-and-a-half per cent goes right in your pocket!

GEORGE. No, no. Judy's right. We'll manage somehow, the two of us. (*Gives a courageous smile to JUDY.*)

BERT. I understand and I admire that. (*A little uncomfortably.*) Well—excuse me—I want to finish packing. (*Leans to GEORGE.*) Can I give you a push some place, old man?

GEORGE. No, I think I'll park here for a while.

BERT. Well—then I'll see you later. (*Exits up stairs.*)

JUDY. (*Turning him, pulls him to R. C.*) Is there anything I can get for you, darling?

GEORGE. No, sweetheart. Nothing. (*Pause.*) You know, Judy, you really surprise me.

JUDY. (*Kneeling L. of him, tucking blanket around him.*) I do?

GEORGE. Yes. I always thought of you as being so dependent. So feminine. But here you are, taking this like a Trojan. Handling everything.

JUDY. Well, darling, I never had to do it before, that's all. You were the one who took care of everything.

GEORGE. You don't realize how much better it makes me feel, seeing how strong you are. There may be unpleasant decisions ahead that you'll have to make—For example, the funeral arrangements.

JUDY. (*Rising; quickly, vehemently.*) George, there's not going to be any funeral! You're going to get better and that's all there is to it.

GEORGE. Judy—you're—you're just wonderful!

JUDY. (*Rising—stepping behind him.*) Wonderful? (*Embracing him.*) Why? Because I love you so much?

GEORGE. You know something, darling?

JUDY. What, my sweetheart?

GEORGE. If I had known it would be like this, I would have told you right away I was dying.

JUDY. You should have. Promise you'll never keep anything like that from me again.

GEORGE. I won't, dear.

JUDY. Oh, George, if anything were to happen, I'd miss you so much.

GEORGE. There, there, darling, try not to think about it. Instead, think of all the wonderful times we had together.

JUDY. Yes, George, they were wonderful times. Fifteen years. It hardly seems possible.

GEORGE. Actually, we've known each other for sixteen years, counting college. Remember Chuckie's Corner . . . that little soda shop just off the campus?

JUDY. (*Massaging his shoulders.*) Chuckie's Corner—Of course I remember—that was the first time we met each other. (*She starts massaging his temples. As she talks, his eyes glaze over and then close.*) Even then I knew that I was destined to take care of you—because on our very first date, you got a headache—remember? And when I began massaging your head, you were so cute—you said, "Oh, I wish you could keep doing this forever—and ever—and ever— (*GEORGE'S head slumps onto his chest.*) George? (*Suddenly frightened.*) George! (*She quickly puts her ear to his chest.*) Oh, thank God! He's just asleep. (*The DOORBELL rings. JUDY in-*

instinctively says.) Shh! You'll wake him up. (*She pushes the wheelchair gently to the den. DOORBELL rings again.*) Shhhh! I'm coming. (*She exits.*)

DOCTOR. (*Off.*) Hoo, hoo! (*He enters to Downstage of dinette table. He is dressed in typical fisherman's garb—khaki jacket, pants, heavy shoes, a cap.*) Anybody home? (*Puts bag of fish on table.*)

JUDY. (*Entering, closing den door.*) Dr. Morrissey!

DOCTOR. (*Heartily.*) Just dropped by to see if you folks would like some fish.

JUDY. (*Crossing to him, icily.*) No thank you, Doctor.

DOCTOR. Oh, take 'em. I've got plenty more out in the car. I've been fishing all week end.

JUDY. (*Ironically.*) So I understand. Isn't it wonderful that you can just forget everything and get away like that?

DOCTOR. (*Crossing to chair C.*) Well, it doesn't happen very often. Fortunately, I had nothing urgent to keep me. (*Sits.*)

JUDY. (*Exploding.*) Nothing urgent? (*Crossing to him.*) The fact that you have a patient who may be dying isn't urgent?

DOCTOR. Oh, hell, Judy, I've always got patients who are dying, but there's nothing I can do about that.

JUDY. Oh, how can you be so callous? Even for a doctor?

DOCTOR. (*Puzzled.*) What?

JUDY. All I can say is that I've never been so disillusioned with anyone in my whole life! Well—(*Crossing to below sofa.*) you might as well know, Doctor—(*Turning to him.*) I'm taking you off the case!

DOCTOR. (*Completely bewildered.*) Off the case? Off *what* case? I must have been out in that hot sun too long. (*Shakes his head and removes his hat revealing a white line on top of head.*) I don't know what you're talking about.

JUDY. Look, Ralph, the fact that you may not have wanted to tell me is one thing—but to go off and leave George when he's dying! Oh, Ralph! (*Cries.*)

DOCTOR. (*Astounded, unslings his creel.*) Judy, did I hear you right? Did you say George was dying?

JUDY. Ralph, it's no use pretending. I know all about it. In fact, I'm flying him to the Mayo Clinic tonight! (DOCTOR MORRISSEY *absorbs this, and suddenly bursts into laughter, rising and crossing to L. C., doubling over with laughter.*) Ralph! How can you laugh?

DOCTOR. (*Crossing to chair C.*) Judy, I've encountered many a hypochondriac in my day, but never anyone like that boy of yours.

JUDY. I don't understand. Do you mean—it's not true?

DOCTOR. He had a complete physical check-up two weeks ago. I'll even show you the results. George Kimball will outlive us all—unless he worries himself to death!

JUDY. Then there's absolutely nothing wrong with him?

DOCTOR. Nothing! And I told him so, in this very room.

JUDY. Then why would he say he was dying?

DOCTOR. I don't know. I'm not a psychiatrist. Although I might get into that my next time around—

JUDY. (*Crossing R. C.*) But what possible reason could he have? (*A revelation; turns back to DOCTOR.*) Ohhh. Of course! *Of course!*

DOCTOR. Huh?

JUDY. (*Crossing to him.*) I'll tell you why! Because I suspected he was having an affair with another woman. And when I accused him of it, he thought he could cover it up with this ridiculous lie!

DOCTOR. Now, Judy! If there's anything I can do?

JUDY. No, thank you, Ralph.

DOCTOR. (*Putting his hands on her shoulders.*) Well, Judy, my advice to any wife in these circumstances is to just forget about it— (*Turns front.*) but to the best of my knowledge, nobody has ever taken that advice.

JUDY. And I don't intend to be the first. (*She crosses to hassock.*)

DOCTOR. I didn't think so. (*Sighs.*) Well, see you later, Judy. (*Starts over to pick up his fish.*)

JUDY. (*Crossing to behind L. end of sofa.*) Good-bye, Ralph.

DOCTOR. (*Picking up fish, turning to her; shrugs.*) You sure you don't want these fish? Good for you. Loaded with iron and protein.

JUDY. (*Preoccupied.*) No, thanks Ralph. (*Crosses to R. C.*)

DOCTOR. Well, then I'll just have to eat the damn things myself! (*Exits.*)

JUDY. (*She stands for a moment, looking grimly toward the den.*) Hmph! And he probably thinks he's gotten away with it. I can see him now—running up to her apartment the first chance he gets— (*Sits R. on sofa. LIGHTS fade to SPOT on her.*) Just dying to tell her how clever he is. Oh, yes! I'm sure he's planning to have a good laugh over it—

(*BLACKOUT. We hear GEORGE laughing. FANTASY LIGHTS come up. We see a young, pretty GIRL kneeling on a pillow. She is wearing a "Baby Doll" nightie. GEORGE is lying on his stomach R. of her facing the audience.*)

GEORGE. (*Laughing.*) Well, you should have seen her face when I told her. She practically fainted.

GIRL. (*Giggling.*) Oh, Georgie. You told her you were dying, and she fell for it?

GEORGE. Like a ton of bricks.

GIRL. Boy, she must be a pretty dumb dame!

GEORGE. I really hated to do it to her, but she was wise to us. I had to make up some lie to cover up.

GIRL. You're so clever, Georgie.

GEORGE. Well, you've got to keep on your toes when you're playing this game.

GIRL. I say it serves her right, for stickin' her nose in. Gosh, the nerve of some wives! Just because they're married to a man they think they own him!

GEORGE. Well, don't be too tough on her. I can't really blame the old girl for being possessive. After all, I'm all she's got.

GIRL. What's your wife look like anyway, George?

GEORGE. Like any married woman. They all look the same.

GIRL. Frankly, George, I don't see why you stay with her at all. It's all over, isn't it, I mean, really?

GEORGE. Yes, but I owe her something after fifteen years. At least a little pity. (*Rolls R. on his back.*) But, come on, let's not talk about it any more, the whole thing depresses me.

GIRL. Aww, my poor little cupcake. Come to Baby. (*She holds out her arms. GEORGE crawls toward her on all fours.*)

GEORGE. (*Eagerly.*) Okay. Now, how about a little kiss?

GIRL. All right. But how do you ask?

(*GEORGE kneels, puts hands up like paws and barks, "Arf-arf, arf-arf."* GIRL *pats his head.* FANTASY LIGHTS BLACK OUT. SPOT comes up on JUDY. JUDY is sitting stiff as a ramrod, her fists clenched at her sides.)

JUDY. Well, George, so you think you've gotten away with it? Just because for fifteen years I trusted you and had faith in you, you thought you were married to a pretty dumb dame. Well, George, the game is over! You've got a little surprise coming.

(*REAL LIGHTS up. JUDY rises and goes into den, then returns wheeling a sleeping GEORGE to R. C. She crosses to L. of him, looks down at him a moment, contemptuously. Then she slaps his face. GEORGE wakes with a start.*)

GEORGE. (*Makes startled noises.*) Oh, darling—I'm so glad to see you. I just had a rather frightening dream.

JUDY. (*Oversolicitous, as she is during the entire scene.*) Oh, you poor dear. What was it about?

GEORGE. I dreamt I had died, and—oh, let's not talk about it.

JUDY. (*Crossing to R. of him.*) Well, at a time like this, it's only natural—to have morbid thoughts. (*Wheeling him L. roughly.*) How are you feeling, darling?

GEORGE. Well, I feel—oh, what's the sense in complaining?

JUDY. (*Turning him quickly to face R. He almost is thrown from chair.*) That's so like you, dear. (*Pushes him to R. C.*)

GEORGE. Well, I'm getting my strength from you, sweetheart. You've been so courageous about this—and so practical. (*He kisses her hands again.*)

JUDY. (*Turning him twice counter-clockwise.*) Well, darling, you're the one who said I should be practical. And I've been thinking. You're right. Maybe we *should* discuss the funeral arrangements. (*She faces him L.*)

GEORGE. Oh. But before, you said you couldn't bear to?

JUDY. (*Through her teeth.*) Well, I'm stronger now!

GEORGE. (*Looking at her strangely.*) I'm glad to hear it, darling.

JUDY. In fact, it's such a lovely afternoon, I thought I'd do some shopping.

GEORGE. Shopping?

JUDY. (*Crossing R. of him, turning him R.*) Yes, I thought I'd go downtown and pick out your casket. (*Pushes him violently backwards to D. L.*)

GEORGE. (*Disturbed.*) My casket? Now?

JUDY. Well, yes. No sense leaving everything for the last minute.

GEORGE. But, Judy, aren't you being a little premature? I mean, we're going to the Mayo Clinic, and maybe—

JUDY. Well, now. What do you think about that, George?

GEORGE. What do you mean?

JUDY. Well, do you think it's worth it? You said yourself, it's so expensive—

GEORGE. But, Judy, I thought you—

JUDY. Well, I've changed my mind. After all, as you said—they might do nothing but prolong your life a little—and you'll just— (*Slowly crossing to him. He cringes and rolls himself L. a bit.*) linger, and linger, and linger . . . and frankly, George, I think it would be much better if you'd just *DROP DEAD!* (*She runs to the bedroom corridor.*)

GEORGE. Judy, what's the matter?

JUDY. I'm leaving you. And now you can run to her as fast as your little feet will carry you. Arf! Arf!— (*She exits upstairs.*)

GEORGE. The poor kid! The strain's been too much for her! Judy, wait! (*He gets up from the wheelchair to go after her, takes a couple of steps, then realizes a man in his condition shouldn't walk. He collapses, and struggles back into the wheelchair.*) Oh, God, if only I had my health!

CURTAIN

ACT THREE

SCENE: *The same. One-half hour later.*

AT RISE: GEORGE *is on the phone sitting armchair C.*

GEORGE. (*On phone.*) Yes— Yes—uh-huhhhh— (*Impatiently.*) Yes, I know all that, Ralph, but—of course I'm glad I'm not dying! It's just that this was a helluva way to find it out!—No, I'm not blaming you. I know you told me there was nothing wrong, but you doctors should have some way of telling a patient there's nothing wrong so he's really sure there's nothing wrong!—Okay. But from now on, Ralph—if you have any professional calls to make, don't use my phone, for God's sake!—Yes, all right, Ralph— What's that? (*Disgustedly.*) Oh, no, I don't want any fish! (*Hangs up, crosses to fireplace.*)

BERT. (*He enters from the bedroom corridor, holds on stair landing, sees GEORGE.*) Gee! (*Takes his suitcase off to foyer. Re-enters to L. C.*) Well, Kimball, I must say—you really take the cake.

GEORGE. (*Bridling.*) Now, just what do you mean by that?

BERT. Any guy who's married to a wonderful girl like Judy, and starts playing around— (*Sits D. L. chair.*) well, frankly, I don't blame her for leaving you!

GEORGE. (*Crossing to C.*) Yeah. I imagine that suits you just fine! (*BERT nonchalantly starts twirling a key chain around his finger.*) Would you mind not doing that?

BERT. (*Calmly.*) Sorry if it annoys you. (*Puts key chain away.*)

GEORGE. Everything about you annoys me! (*Pause. BERT crosses legs.*) And while we're at it, why can't you wear shoes like everybody else! (*Crosses to R. C.*)

BERT. (*Rising, crossing to L. C.*) Look, Kimball, I can

understand your being testy, but don't blame me because you got caught! Those who dance must pay the piper.

GEORGE. Oh, you're pretty righteous for somebody who's been stepping out with another man's wife!

BERT. Now, just a minute, Kimball. I want you to know that whenever I was with Judy, my behavior was strictly aboveboard.

GEORGE. Oh, sure. I'm on to your type. Always the perfect gentleman, but I'll bet you never missed a chance to help her on with her coat! (*Gives an imaginary pat to a girl's derriere. Sits R. on sofa.*)

BERT. (*Crossing to U. L. end of sofa.*) Don't judge everyone by your low standards, Kimball. It so happens I have some self-control. Despite my great affection for Judy, she had no idea how I felt. Outwardly I was an iceberg. She was never aware of the submerged seven-eighths! And don't forget, you were the one who insisted I stay for the week end so I could take out your wife. (*Sits chair C.*)

GEORGE. Yeah. Thanks for reminding me.

JUDY. (*She enters from bedroom corridor to landing.*) Oh, Bert, did you call for your cab?

BERT. (*Rising, crossing to U. C.*) Yes. It'll be here any minute.

JUDY. (*Crossing to him.*) Will you make your plane in time?

BERT. Oh, yes. It doesn't leave for an hour and a half. I sure wish you'd change your mind and come with me.

JUDY. I'd like that, of course, Bert. But I'll have to spend some time in New York with my lawyer— (*Looks at GEORGE, who shrivels up.*) and then I'll fly out in a day or two.

BERT. (*Escorting her to C. chair; she sits and he stands L. of her.*) Good, that'll give me time to clean up some business in Tulsa. Then I can just fly up and meet you.

JUDY. Wonderful.

BERT. We'll have a grand time. You'll just love Reno. Especially your first time like this.

JUDY. Oh, I'm looking forward to it.

GEORGE. (*Who can't stand this any more, flaring up; rising and crossing to her.*) Damn it, Judy! Will you listen to reason? Everything I told you was the absolute truth. I swear it!

JUDY. If you don't mind, George, I don't want to hear any more of your pathetic little denials.

BERT. (*Crossing to Downstage of dinette table.*) Judy's right, old man. It's damned monotonous.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to BERT.*) Look, this doesn't concern you, so butt out!

JUDY. Don't talk to him like that! If you were only half the gentleman Bert is—

GEORGE. Oh, yes, some gentleman! Him and his submerged seven-eighths! (*BERT sits D. L. side of dinette table. To JUDY.*) I don't know why you won't believe me! I didn't make it up! I really thought I was dying! I showed you this letter. (*Reaches into his pocket.*)

JUDY. Oh, yes, the letter— When did you dash that off, George? Right after you concocted that ridiculous story about your dying?

GEORGE. No, Judy, I—

JUDY. (*Crossing to D. R. of sofa.*) To have an affair is bad enough, but for you to think you could cover it up with that lie— (*Crossing to GEORGE.*) When I think how you almost made a fool of me! I was actually taking you to the Mayo Clinic.

BERT. You were a real brick, Judy.

GEORGE. Look, I'll tell my wife when she's a brick!

JUDY. (*Crossing to fireplace.*) How could a human mind even conceive anything so low? (*Tears letter.*) To tell your wife you were dying!

GEORGE. (*Crossing to above L. end of sofa.*) I didn't conceive it. I really believed it.

JUDY. (*Laughing hollowly.*) Ha! (*Throws letter in waste basket.*)

GEORGE. (*Taking a step toward her.*) Look, Judy, I'll tell you again— (*With exaggerated patience.*) Dr. Morrissey gave me some pills to take. (*Crossing to kitchen door.*) I went into the kitchen to get some water. I got the water and came— (*Crossing to C. chair.*) out of the

kitchen. Dr. Morrissey was on the phone. I overheard him talking about a patient of his, who was dying. I thought it was me—

JUDY. Yes. Go on.

GEORGE. That's it. That's all there was to it.

BERT. (*Snorts.*) Gee! (*GEORGE turns.*)

JUDY. (*Crossing to R. end of sofa.*) George, do you expect me to believe that? That you overheard a conversation that wasn't even about you, and suddenly assumed you were dying? Do you *really* expect me to believe that?

GEORGE. (*Pause. Then hopelessly.*) No, I guess I don't. (*Sits chair C.*)

JUDY. No, I guess you don't! What puzzles me is, what you expected to gain? (*Crossing to BERT.*) Bert, you're a man. What did he expect to gain? Didn't he know he'd be found out, eventually? I mean, when he tells me he's dying, and he doesn't die, couldn't he see I'd get suspicious?

BERT. Well, Judy, you've got to realize that we're dealing here— (*Points to GEORGE.*) with a pretty slick article— (*GEORGE opens his mouth to protest, but gives up, and just follows the ensuing conversation, numbly.*)

JUDY. (*Sits R. of BERT on dinette table.*) That's obvious. But how did he think he'd get out of it?

BERT. Easily. After a while, he'd come to you with some cock-and-bull story about a mistake in the X-rays, or the discovery of a new drug—he's not going to die, after all. You believe him—you're overcome at this wonderful news. And in the meantime, he's covered up his sordid little affair.

JUDY. Of course. How simple.

BERT. But—one thing went wrong. The doctor was out fishing so George couldn't get hold of him to ask him to back up his little story about the old ticker.

JUDY. Yes. By accident I saw Dr. Morrissey first.

BERT. Exactly.

JUDY. Well! (*They BOTH turn to look at GEORGE, who hangs his head.*)

GEORGE. (*Slowly looks up, utterly defeated.*) I'll be a

sonofabitch! (*There is the sound of a CAB HORN.*)

JUDY. (*Crossing to Downstage of kitchen door and looking off.*) Oh, Bert, there's your cab.

BERT. (*Rising.*) Thank you, Judy. I still wish you were going with me.

JUDY. So do I, Bert.

BERT. Well, soon we'll have a lot of time together. (*Sound of the CAB HORN again.*)

JUDY. Thanks for everything, Bert.

BERT. (*Crossing to the foyer.*) Good-bye, Judy. (*Starts off, then comes back.*) Oh. So long, Kimball. Always nice seeing one of the old class— Gee! (*He exits.*)

JUDY. (*Coldly.*) I'm going to finish packing. (*Exits upstairs.*)

GEORGE. (*Rises, starts after her, crossing up steps.*) Judy—Judy! (*But she's gone. GEORGE stands on landing. The LIGHT fades to a SPOT on him.*) Oh, my God! She's really leaving. What'll I do without her? For fifteen years I've depended on her for everything. Without her I'll be absolutely helpless. What'll become of me? I'll sink lower, and lower—who knows—? (*Almost crying.*) I may even be reduced to begging on the streets. (*REAL LIGHTING has faded down to BLACKOUT. MUSIC in. As FANTASY LIGHTING comes up, we see the same cut-out of Carnegie Hall that we saw in ACT I. A MAN passes by from L. to R. then GEORGE enters from R. He wears a ragged, torn, patched old coat and a cap with a broken visor. He is singing "Deck the Halls." A WOMAN passes by from R. to L. and drops a coin in his tin cup.*) God bless you, Madam. Merry Christmas.

(*He shivers from the cold, and then surreptitiously reaches inside his coat and without withdrawing the bottle pours from it into his tin cup and takes a swig of wine. BERT and JUDY appear. BERT is in a top hat, white scarf, coat with a velvet collar and carries a gold-topped walking stick. JUDY is dripping in a full-length ermine wrap. They enter from R. laughing gaily, full of Christmas spirit.*)

JUDY. Oh, Bert, look at this poor soul. Give him some money, darling.

BERT. (*Crossing to L. of GEORGE.*) Certainly, sweetheart. (*Takes out a bill.*) Here you are, Grandpa.

GEORGE. (*Taking the money.*) Oh, God bless you, sir. (*GEORGE looks up and sees it is BERT and JUDY. He gives a start. JUDY, seeing that it's GEORGE, likewise starts with a sharp intake of breath.*)

JUDY. (*Taking a step toward him.*) Bert! Look! (*Steps back.*) It's George!

BERT. (*Peering at his face. Startled.*) Good grief!

(*GEORGE turns to him and breathes in his face. BERT jumps back. GEORGE struggles to maintain his dignity, even though disreputable-looking and drunk. He graciously tips his cap and bows slightly.*)

GEORGE. Evening, folks. (*Hands back the money.*) Here. I have no need of your charity, thank you. It so happens I'm doing very well.

JUDY. But, George—how can you be doing well—here? Begging in front of Carnegie Hall?

GEORGE. Very simple— Every dollar I take in, the first twenty-seven-and-a-half cents goes right in my pocket! (*Pulls pocket inside out.*) Care for a little song? On me? (*He starts singing "Good King Wenceslaus."*)

JUDY. Oh, this is too dreadful!

BERT. (*Tugging at her arm.*) Come, Judy. You're upset.

(*As JUDY looks back, BERT pulls her out of the scene to C. As GEORGE continues singing. There is a slight pause. Then JUDY returns, carrying her ermine coat. She impulsively drapes it around GEORGE's shoulders. She sobs. GEORGE hiccups. She exits. GEORGE wipes a tear with the ermine wrap, and drifts away sadly R. FANTASY LIGHTS fade to BLACKOUT. SPOT comes up on GEORGE standing disconsolately on stairs. REAL LIGHTING comes back on and ARNOLD enters.*)

ARNOLD. (*Entering through patio doors to C.*)
George—

GEORGE. Huh?

ARNOLD. Got a minute?

GEORGE. (*Crossing to L. end of sofa.*) Yes, I guess so,
Arnold. (*Puts his head between his hands again.*)

ARNOLD. What's the matter? Not feeling well?

GEORGE. (*Wry smile.*) No. Not too well. (*Sits L. on sofa.*)

ARNOLD. Maybe you ought to rest. Want me to lift you into your wheelchair?

GEORGE. Oh, hell no!

ARNOLD. (*Sympathetically.*) I know, George. By now, you must hate the sight of the thing.

GEORGE. Yes, I do.

ARNOLD. (*Takes papers out of his pocket.*) Well, buddy, I've got something here that might cheer you up.

GEORGE. Yes? What is it?

ARNOLD. I just finished your eulogy. Want to hear it?

GEORGE. (*Muttering.*) Forget it.

ARNOLD. (*Reading.*) "They needed a good sport in heaven, so they sent for George Kimball. Yes. George Palmerton Kimball—"

GEORGE. (*Almost shouting.*) I said, forget it!

ARNOLD. (*Startled.*) Huh? What's the matter, George?

GEORGE. (*Rising, crossing D. R.*) You can forget the eulogy.

ARNOLD. What?

GEORGE. Signals off! I'm not going to die.

ARNOLD. (*Somberly.*) That's the way to talk, George. That's the old fight!

GEORGE. You don't understand, Arnold. I found out from Dr. Morrissey that I am perfectly all right. There is not a single thing wrong with me. (*Crosses to R. of table.*)

ARNOLD. You mean you're not really dying, George? Why, that's wonderful!

GEORGE. No, it isn't. I'd be better off dead! (*Sits R. of table.*)

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to GEORGE.*) George, how can you

talk like that? What was it? A mistake in the X-rays? They discover a new drug?

GEORGE. The whole thing was a misunderstanding. It was all my fault.

ARNOLD. (*Annoyed.*) It was? But you told me—

GEORGE. I know. But I was wrong. I'm sorry, Arnold.

ARNOLD. (*Crossing D. L. Antagonistic.*) Well you should be! Dammit, I've been drinking for three days on account of you! I've just now sobered up. (*Crossing to L. of table.*) On top of that, I spent two days and nights writing a eulogy. And now you tell me you're not dying!

GEORGE. I'm sorry!

ARNOLD. (*Crossing U. C. looking out patio.*) I feel like a damn fool! Crying, and drinking and writing—and mowing! (*Tears up the eulogy.*)

GEORGE. I said I'm sorry.

ARNOLD. (*Quickly turning to him.*) I mean it's a helluva thing to put a fellow through. Your best friend! And what about Judy? (*Points up stairs.*) Does she know you're not dying?

GEORGE. Yes.

ARNOLD. And how did she take it?

GEORGE. Rather poorly.

ARNOLD. Well, I don't blame her. You've committed the ultimate in hypochondria! (*Crossing to steps.*) She must be sore as hell!

GEORGE. Yes. But that's not exactly all she's sore about.

ARNOLD. There's more?

GEORGE. She thinks I'm having an affair with another woman, and I concocted this whole situation in order to cover up.

ARNOLD. No kidding? (*Laughs. GEORGE nods. Crossing to chair C.*) Jeez, they get some weird ideas sometimes, (*Sitting chair C.*) don't they?

GEORGE. Weird ideas or not, she's leaving me.

ARNOLD. Leaving you? You mean—really *leaving* you?

GEORGE. (*His voice breaking.*) Yes. She's going to Reno for a divorce!

ARNOLD. (*Softening.*) Do you think she'll actually go through with it?

GEORGE. She's upstairs now—packing.

ARNOLD. Well, have you tried to talk her out of it?

GEORGE. Sure. But she won't listen. (*Pause. Crossing to ARNOLD.*) Arnold, you're a lawyer. You've seen these things. Once a man's wife thinks he's having an affair, how can he convince her that he's not?

ARNOLD. He can't.

GEORGE. But I'm not having one.

ARNOLD. Makes no difference.

GEORGE. But isn't a man innocent until he's proven guilty?

ARNOLD. Look, boy, you can forget the Constitution—you're dealing with your wife!

GEORGE. You mean there's nothing I can do?

ARNOLD. (*Pause, thinking.*) She's really serious about this thing?

GEORGE. Yeah.

ARNOLD. M-hm. Well, in that case there's only one thing you can do.

GEORGE. (*Eagerly.*) What's that?

ARNOLD. Confess, and ask her to forgive you.

GEORGE. Forgive me for what?

ARNOLD. For having an affair.

GEORGE. When I'm not having one?

ARNOLD. That's right.

GEORGE. My God, I've heard of guys lying out of it, I'd be the first one to ever lie into it!

ARNOLD. It's your only chance. Plead nolo. Throw yourself on the mercy of the court.

GEORGE (*Crossing to hassock.*) Arnold, I can't do it! I can't confess to something I'm not guilty of! (*Turns to ARNOLD.*) It's—it's un-American!

ARNOLD. George, face the facts, boy. *You* know you didn't have an affair, but your *wife* is sure you did. So admit it, why be stubborn?

GEORGE. You really think that would make everything all right?

ARNOLD. Well—it won't exactly be like a honeymoon around here for a while. But in time you'll find she won't be throwing it up to you so often.

GEORGE. (*Shaking his head.*) Arnold, I don't know.

(*Sits on hassock.*) Maybe I should just kill myself.

ARNOLD. No, I think you've got a pretty good chance with this. Judy loves you and she's used to you. And she's a woman. What woman doesn't love to see her husband crawl a little! Believe me, George, sub-consciously, she'll get a big boot out of the whole thing!

GEORGE. (*Dubiously.*) You really think so?

ARNOLD. (*Rising, crossing to below end table R. of sofa.*) Absolutely. Listen, a woman spends half her life trying to get something on her husband. And here you're laying it right in her lap. She'll eat it up!

GEORGE. (*Pause.*) All right, Arnold. I'll take your advice. I'll confess that I had an affair, beg her forgiveness, and that'll be that.

ARNOLD. (*Crossing Upstage and around sofa.*) Oh, wait a minute, buddy, not so fast. It's not quite that easy.

GEORGE. (*Flaring up.*) Look, I'm confessing! What more does she want from me!

ARNOLD. (*Continues crossing below sofa to below R. end of sofa.*) Plenty. They always want to know who the girl is— (*Ticking off the points on his fingers.*) What she looks like, how old she is, do you love her, where did you take her— (*Crossing to U. L. of GEORGE.*) did any of Judy's friends ever see you together—

GEORGE. They ask all that?

ARNOLD. Yes. And also how the other woman was in bed.

GEORGE. (*Weakly.*) Well—how was she?

ARNOLD. Not so good. No matter how good it was, you always have to say it was not so good!

GEORGE. Arnold, I couldn't answer all those questions.

ARNOLD. (*Crossing behind GEORGE to D. R.*) Oh, you'd have to. If you start to hem and haw, not sure of yourself, you know what she'll think?

GEORGE. What?

ARNOLD. That instead of one affair, you've had dozens and you can't keep them straight. No, sir, when she starts asking questions, you've got to be able to snap out those answers.

GEORGE. Oh, my God!

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to below chair C.*) I'm just telling you some of the pitfalls—things that can happen when you cop a plea!

GEORGE. (*Rising, crossing to him.*) Well, I'm not copping a plea, and I'm not pleading any nolo! By God, I'm an innocent man, and if she doesn't believe me, she can walk right out that door!

ARNOLD. (*Crossing to C. Sighs.*) Okay, George. Suit yourself— (*Starts to exit.*) but as a lawyer, I don't think you've got much of a case. (*Crosses to patio doors.*)

GEORGE. (*Crossing to above chair C.*) Maybe not. But I'll have the satisfaction of knowing I told the truth.

ARNOLD. George, let me tell you something—truth is fine, but it'll never take the place of common sense! (*He exits.*)

GEORGE. Confess! Here I am, fifteen years a faithful husband—maybe the only one in Westchester— (*LIGHTS dim to SPOT on GEORGE.*) and where does it get me? My God, when I think of the stuff I turned down at those conventions—and everything was on the house! Like that gorgeous blond Ed Heller sent up to my hotel room last year— (*BLACKOUT. SPOT on GEORGE. Sound of DOOR BUZZER.*) I'm coming! (*FANTASY SPOT up on GEORGE. GEORGE walks toward L. The LIGHT follows him.*) I'm coming! (*BUZZER.*) I said I'm coming!

(*A ravishing GIRL appears L. in FANTASY SPOT. There is a hotel room bench R. of her. GEORGE opens imaginary door. D. L. FANTASY LIGHTS come up.*)

GIRL. Mr. Kimball?

GEORGE. (*Surprised.*) Yes?

GIRL. Hello. I'm Miss Mason. Ed Heller of Consolidated wire sent me up to visit with you for a while.

GEORGE. Oh. Do you work for Ed Heller?

GIRL. Well, not full time—but I'm on call.

GEORGE. On call? (*Finally gets it.*)

GIRL. (*Crossing R. and sitting on bench.*) Ed Heller

says you're a customer of his and he wanted me to make sure you weren't lonely—if you know what I mean.

GEORGE. (*Shyly.*) Yes. Yes, I know what you mean.

GIRL. He also said I should make sure you weren't lonely every night this week. You must buy an awful lot of wire.

GEORGE. Yes, I do buy an awful lot of wire. I'm with Connell Electronics and we make a little transistor, only about this big— (*Shows with thumb and forefinger.*) but without it, a whole city like Pittsburgh would be blacked out.

GIRL. (*Fearfully.*) Oh. I have an aunt in Pittsburgh.

GEORGE. Well, tell her not to worry.

GIRL. (*Blankly.*) All right.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to R. of her.*) Would you, er—like a drink?

GIRL. No, I don't drink.

GEORGE. (*Searching his pocket.*) Have a cigarette? (*Offers her a pack.*)

GIRL. Thanks, but I don't smoke, either.

GEORGE. Don't meet many girls like you these days. (*Pause.*) I'm not keeping you from anything, am I?

GIRL. (*Removing a glove.*) Oh, no, take your time. A lot of them are like you. They want to talk first. (*Lays glove across her knee.*)

GEORGE. (*Sitting R. of her.*) Oh. Well, good. Because, frankly, I'd be just as happy to sit here and chat.

GIRL. Mr. Kimball, if I don't appeal to you, I could have them send up one of the other girls.

GEORGE. Oh, no! You do appeal to me. It's just that it's not necessary. You see, I'll be home in a week.

GIRL. Oh. Gee, you're really a faithful husband. I don't believe I ever met one before.

GEORGE. Well, I can see where you wouldn't get much opportunity, (*Rising and crossing to imaginary door.*) Well, anyway, I don't want to detain you—

GIRL. Well—I don't know what to do—I mean, I don't want Mr. Heller to think this was my fault.

GEORGE. Oh, I'd hate to get you into any trouble. (*Crossing back to her.*) Could I—sign for something?

GIRL. (*Rising and crossing to L. of GEORGE.*) No, I

guess it'll be all right. As long as you don't tell the boys that nothing happened. It'd be bad for my reputation.

GEORGE. Oh, I won't tell. It would be bad for my reputation, too. (*She exits. He closes the imaginary door—LIGHTS BLACK OUT as he slumps against it. A SPOT picks him up standing above chair C.*) Believe me, the wire I bought from Ed Heller alone, I could've had a harem. But does Judy know that? No. They never give you credit for the times you turned it down. But let them think you stepped out of line just once—well, if that's the system, I'll always figure she owes me one! (*REAL LIGHT returns. JUDY enters. To her, sternly.*) Oh, Judy. Judy, I want to talk to you! And if you don't believe what I say you can walk right out that door!

JUDY. Just a minute, George. (*JUDY goes to the phone and starts dialing.*) I have to call the taxi.

GEORGE. The taxi! Judy, wait! (*Takes phone and hangs it up.*) Don't call the taxi.

JUDY. (*Puzzled.*) Why not?

GEORGE. Because— (*Crosses to L. C.*) I'm going to confess.

JUDY. (*Stepping to U. L. end of sofa.*) Confess?

GEORGE. That's right. I've been lying to you. But now I've decided to tell you the truth.

JUDY. (*Crossing to below sofa.*) I see.

GEORGE. I want to bring it out in the open. Confess everything. And beg your forgiveness.

JUDY. So I was right, after all. You are having an affair.

GEORGE. (*Crossing to L. of C. chair.*) Yes, I've been a beast. But—what's done is done. It's much better to discuss it, clear the air, like civilized people. Don't you agree?

JUDY. All right, George. Do you want to tell me all about it?

GEORGE. (*Sitting C. chair.*) No, I think it'd be better if you asked questions—and I'll just snap out the answers.

JUDY. (*Crossing Upstage of him to C. Pause.*) Who is she, George?

GEORGE. (*Forthright throughout interrogation.*) Her name is Dolores.

JUDY. Dolores?

GEORGE. (*Clasps his hands together and notices his watch.*) Dolores Longines.

JUDY. (*Pause.*) Where did you meet her?

GEORGE. In Grand Central Station, at the Oyster Bar. She was eating some bluepoints and asked me to pass the horseradish.

JUDY. (*Pause. Then, wistfully:*) I always wondered how those romances started.

GEORGE. Well, that's the way they start.

JUDY. Is she young, George?

GEORGE. Yes.

JUDY. (*Turning to him.*) Is she very, very young?

GEORGE. (*Upset by this innuendo.*) Well, hell, she's not jailbait!

JUDY. What is she, a Call Girl?

GEORGE. Certainly not! She's a—a guide at the United Nations!

JUDY. Did any of my friends ever see you together?

GEORGE. Oh, no. And by the way, she's lousy in bed!

JUDY. (*Offended.*) Well, who asked you that?

GEORGE. I just threw it in—sort of a bonus.

JUDY. (*Crossing a bit R.*) When are you seeing her again, George?

GEORGE. Never.

JUDY. Never?

GEORGE. It's all over. Finished. We've broken up.

JUDY. (*Crossing Upstage of him to below sofa. Skeptically.*) Oh, really. After all you've told me, do you think I believe that?

GEORGE. But it's true! I swear!

JUDY. George, don't you know I can always tell when you're lying?

GEORGE. (*Vehemently.*) But I'm telling you the truth! I'm never going to see her again! I've learned my lesson! I repent! I've turned against her! I hate her! I loathe her!

JUDY. I don't believe you've broken up with her. Not for a minute! (*She turns her back on him.*)

GEORGE. (*Frustrated.*) Oh, Goddammit!

JUDY. And don't use that language in front of me. I am not Dolores.

GEORGE. (*Rising, crossing to her.*) Judy, Dolores has left town. I sent her to California—to start a new life.

JUDY. What do you mean, *you* sent her?

GEORGE. She didn't want to go. Because—because she was broke. But I insisted. Yes, I did! I gave her the money— (*Crossing to R. C.*) and put her on the plane.

JUDY. (*Dubiously.*) Oh, really? How much did you give her?

GEORGE. It was quite a lot of money—I don't remember exactly— (*Hits his pocket. Gets a sudden thought, snaps his fingers.*) Wait a minute. I do remember! And I can prove it. (*Gets checkbook from his pocket, crosses and shows it to her.*) There it is. One thousand dollars, made out to cash. And that's the end of Dolores.

JUDY. (*Takes book, looks at it.*) A thousand dollars! (*Pause.*) And you were nagging me about the price of Virginia ham! (*Throws checkbook down on sofa.*)

GEORGE. Well, it was worth it to save our marriage.

JUDY. I just don't understand it. I *just don't understand it.* (*Sits R. end of sofa.*) Why? Why, after fifteen years of a happy marriage? A marriage that always had understanding, and love, and companionship. And, yes—what I assumed to be sexual compatibility. Why did you do it, George?

GEORGE. (*Slight pause. Beaten down.*) Oh, hell, I don't know, I just lost my head. But I've confessed. (*Crossing to U. L. of sofa.*) So if you'll just forget it, and forgive me, that will be that!

JUDY. Well, George, I'm afraid that won't work—not now.

GEORGE. (*Dumfounded.*) What do you mean, not now?

JUDY. Well, George, I had my bags packed. I was all set to leave you. Then I started to think—am I doing the right thing? George denies he has another woman, and I've never known him to lie to me. Maybe I should give him the benefit of the doubt, and believe him. I was

calling the taxi to tell them not to come. (GEORGE *drops down onto L. arm of sofa.*) But now, George, since you've confessed—well, it's all over. I forgive you—but I can't live with you. There's just no love left. I feel nothing for you but pity.

GEORGE. (*A short miserable laugh.*) Yes, I certainly am to be pitied. (*Pause.*) It wouldn't do any good now, I suppose, if I denied the whole thing all over again?

JUDY. What?

GEORGE. If I told you that I never had another woman? That I made up the whole confession hoping you'd forgive me?

JUDY. Please, George, don't. You'd only show your contempt for my intelligence. (GEORGE *nods. Pause.*) Well, I guess that's all, unless there's something else you'd like to add?

GEORGE. I'd just like to say that I certainly seem to have screwed myself up!

JUDY. George, there's just one favor you can do for me, if you will. Would you please close my bags?

GEORGE. Certainly. (*Rises.*) Close the bags. That's the first rational thing anybody's said to me today. (*Exits upstairs.*)

(JUDY *puts hand to mouth to choke back emotion, then the front DOORBELL rings. It rings again. Then MR. AKINS, the man from Eternal Gardens, enters from the patio. JUDY rises.*)

MR. AKINS. (*In patio doorway.*) You folks never seem to answer the doorbell. Is Mr. Kimball at home?

JUDY. Yes, he is. Would you like to come in? He'll be free in a minute.

MR. AKINS. (*Crossing to D. L. of chair C.*) Thank you. Are you Mrs. Kimball?

JUDY. Yes, I am.

MR. AKINS. (*Puts hat on chair, case on floor; takes out deed and receipt out of his pocket.*) Oh. Well, in that case, there's no need to disturb your husband. I'll just leave these with you. This is the deed— (*Hands deed to her.*) and since he gave us his check for one thousand

dollars made out to cash I thought he should have this receipt. (*Gives her receipt.*)

JUDY. He gave *you* a check for one thousand dollars?

MR. AKINS. Yes, he did.

JUDY. For what?

MR. AKINS. Why, for your plot in Eternal Gardens. (*Crossing in a step.*) Say, you must get hubby to run you up there on Sunday. It's lovely now, everything's in bloom!

JUDY. (*Crossing to D. L.*) Just a minute— My husband bought a cemetery plot?

MR. AKINS. (*Crossing to JUDY.*) Yes. Didn't he tell you? (*Pause, then distressed.*) Oh, doggone it! I could tear my tongue out. He wanted this to be a surprise. I hope this doesn't take all the joy out of it for you.

JUDY. (*Sitting in D. L. chair. Still a bit puzzled.*) No, no. Not at all. (*Looking at the receipt.*) So he *did* make up that confession! There is no other woman!

MR. AKINS. No, but we did make arrangements for another man.

JUDY. Another man?

MR. AKINS. Yes, Mr. Kimball was very thoughtful. He made provisions for a second husband.

JUDY. (*Comprehending.*) Oh, I understand that now!

MR. AKINS. It's a very unique idea. In fact, we're using it in our next advertising campaign. I just hope Mr. Kimball won't be angry because I let all this slip out.

JUDY. (*Rising.*) Well, Mr.—er—

MR. AKINS. (*Whips out calling card and shows it to her.*) Akins.

JUDY. Well, Mr. Akins, suppose we don't tell him? Then you could just take these and mail them. (*Hands him the papers.*) That way he'll never know that I found out.

MR. AKINS. Good, then he can still surprise you!

JUDY. Yes, that's the idea.

MR. AKINS. (*Shaking her hand.*) Oh, you are a good egg! Well, I'll be going. And thank you, Mrs. Kimball.

JUDY. Thank you, Mr. Akins.

MR. AKINS. (*He drops her hand and crosses for hat*

and briefcase; continues U. S. to patio door, stops and turns.) Don't be a stranger.

(Blinks at her, waves hat and exits. JUDY takes off her jacket, throws it on sofa, starts for stairs, then hearing GEORGE coming, crosses and sits at R. side of breakfast table. GEORGE enters, carrying JUDY's suitcase. He puts them down, at Downstage side of foyer arch.)

GEORGE. Well, there they are. (Crosses to below L. end of sofa.)

JUDY. Thank you, George.

GEORGE. (Turns slightly away. Nobly.) Well—Judy, since you're going through with this, I want you to know that if you should ever need me for anything—any time at all—just call my office they'll tell you what Y.M.C.A. I'm staying at.

JUDY. (Pause.) George?

GEORGE. Yes?

JUDY. Suppose I told you that I've changed my mind about leaving you?

GEORGE. (Pause.) Look, Judy, I've been taunted, humiliated, degraded and reviled. All I ask now is that you just please lay off!

JUDY. No, George, I'm serious.

GEORGE. But what about my affair—with, er—Dolores?

JUDY. (Suppressing a smile, then magnanimously.) I've decided to forgive you.

GEORGE. Y-y-you have?

JUDY. (Rising and crossing Downstage to below kitchen door.) After all, every man is entitled to a mistake. And since it's all over—I mean, you did give her that thousand dollars, didn't you?

GEORGE. (Eagerly.) Yes! Yes, I did!

JUDY. Well, then I'm perfectly willing to forget the whole thing.

GEORGE. Oh. (Pause.) Well, now I—I don't know, Judy. Maybe it wouldn't work out. I mean, how can I

be sure you wouldn't keep throwing it up to me for the rest of our lives?

JUDY. Because I'm going to make a little bargain with you, George.

GEORGE. (*Warily.*) What kind of bargain?

JUDY. I'll promise never to mention your affair again, if you'll promise to stop complaining about all your little aches and pains.

GEORGE. Oh, believe me, darling, I promise. Because when a man has had a close brush with death, as I have, then he really feels like living.

(He runs to her. They embrace, with mutual murmurs of love and assurance.)

JUDY. (*Sweetly.*) Well, dear, since I'm staying, I'd better unpack my bags.

GEORGE. I'll help you, dear.

JUDY. Oh, thank you, George. (*Starts off for the bedroom. GEORGE follows her to C. then stops and hesitates. JUDY turns and notices him.*) Darling, you forgot the bags. (*Exits.*)

GEORGE. I know. I'll get them later. (*He runs off after her, as:*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS