

'em up, or anything ... and I snuck up behind George, just kidding, and I yelled, "Hey George!" and at the same time I let go sort of a roundhouse right ... just kidding, you know?

NICK. Unh-hunh.

MARTHA. ... and George wheeled around real quick, and he caught it right in the jaw ... Pow! (*Nick laughs.*) I hadn't meant it ... honestly. Anyway ... POW! Right in the jaw ... and he was off balance ... he must have been ... and he stumbled back a few steps, and then, CRASH, he landed ... flat ... in a huckleberry bush! (*Nick laughs. Honey goes tsk, tsk, tsk, tsk, and shakes her head.*) It was awful, really. It was funny, but it was awful. (*She thinks, gives a muffled laugh in rueful contemplation of the incident.*) I think it's colored our whole life. Really I do! It's an excuse, anyway. (*George enters now, his hands behind his back. No one sees him.*) It's what he uses for being bogged down, anyway ... why he hasn't gone anywhere. (*George advances, Honey sees him.*) And it was an accident ... a real, goddamn accident! (*George takes from behind his back a short-barreled shotgun, and calmly aims it at the back of Martha's head. Honey screams ... rises. Nick rises, and, simultaneously, Martha turns her head to face George. George pulls the trigger.*)

GEORGE. POW!!! (*Pop! From the barrel of the gun blossoms a large red and yellow Chinese parasol. Honey screams again, this time less, and mostly from relief and confusion.*) You're dead! Pow! You're dead!

NICK. (*Laughing.*) Good Lord. (*Honey is beside herself. Martha laughs too ... almost breaks down, her great laugh booming. George joins in the general laughter and confusion. It dies, eventually.*)

HONEY. Oh! My goodness!

MARTHA. Where'd you get that, you bastard?

NICK. (*His hand out for the gun.*) Let me see that, will you? (*George hands him the gun.*)

HONEY. I've never been so frightened in my life! Never!

GEORGE. (*A trifle abstracted.*) Oh, I've had it awhile. Did you like that?

MARTHA. (*Giggling.*) You bastard.

HONEY. (*Wanting attention.*) I've never been so frightened ... never.

NICK. This is quite a gadget.

GEORGE. (*Leaning over Martha.*) You liked that, did you?

MARTHA. Yeah ... that was pretty good. (*Softer.*) C'mon ... give me a kiss.

GEORGE. (*Indicating Nick and Honey.*) Later, sweetie. (*But Martha will not be dissuaded. They kiss, George standing, leaning over*

*Martha's chair. She takes his hand, places it on her stage-side breast. He breaks away.)* Oh-ho! That's what you're after, is it? What are we going to have ... blue games for the guests? Hunh? Hunh?

MARTHA. *(Angry-hurt.)* You ... prick!

GEORGE. *(A Pyrrhic victory.)* Everything in its place, Martha ... everything in its own good time.

MARTHA. *(An unspoken epithet.)* You ...

GEORGE. *(Over to Nick, who still has the gun.)* Here, let me show you ... it goes back in, like this. *(Closes the parasol, reinserts it in the gun.)*

NICK. That's damn clever.

GEORGE. *(Puts the gun down.)* Drinks now! Drinks for all! *(Takes Nick's glass without question ... goes to Martha.)*

MARTHA. *(Still angry-hurt.)* I'm not finished.

HONEY. *(As George puts out his hand for her glass.)* Oh, I think I need something. *(He takes her glass, moves back to the portable bar.)*

NICK. Is that Japanese?

GEORGE. Probably.

HONEY. *(To Martha.)* I was never so frightened in my life. Weren't you frightened? Just for a second?

MARTHA. *(Smothering her rage at George.)* I don't remember.

HONEY. Ohhhh, now ... I bet you were.

GEORGE. Did you really think I was going to kill you, Martha?

MARTHA. *(Dripping contempt.)* You? ... Kill me? ... That's a laugh.

GEORGE. Well now, I might ... some day.

MARTHA. Fat chance.

NICK. *(As George hands him his drink.)* Where's the john?

GEORGE. Through the hall there ... and down to your left.

HONEY. Don't you come back with any guns, or anything, now.

NICK. *(Laughs.)* Oh, no.

MARTHA. You don't need any props, do you, baby?

NICK. Unh-unh.

MARTHA. *(Suggestive.)* I'll bet not. No fake Jap gun for you, eh?

NICK. *(Smiles at Martha. Then, to George, indicating a side table near the hall.)* May I leave my drink here?

GEORGE. *(As Nick exits without waiting for a reply.)* Yeah ... sure ... why not? We've got half-filled glasses everywhere in the house, wherever Martha forgets she's left them ... in the linen closet, on the edge of the bathtub ... I even found one in the freezer, once.

MARTHA. *(Amused in spite of herself.)* You did not!

GEORGE. Yes I did.

MARTHA. (*Ibid.*) You did *not*!

GEORGE. (*Giving Honey her brandy.*) Yes I *did*. (*To Honey.*) Brandy doesn't give you a hangover?

HONEY. I never mix. And then, I don't drink very much, either.

GEORGE. (*Grimaces behind her back.*) Oh ... that's good. Your ... your husband was telling me all about the ... chromosomes.

MARTHA. (*Ugly.*) The what?

GEORGE. The chromosomes, Martha ... the genes, or whatever they are. (*To Honey.*) You've got quite a ... terrifying husband.

HONEY. (*As if she's being joshed.*) Ohhhhhhhhhh ...

GEORGE. No, really. He's quite terrifying, with his chromosomes, and all.

MARTHA. He's in the Math Department.

GEORGE. No, Martha ... he's a biologist.

MARTHA. (*Her voice rising.*) He's in the *Math* Department!

HONEY. (*Timidly.*) Uh ... biology.

MARTHA. (*Unconvinced.*) Are you *sure*?

HONEY. (*With a little giggle.*) Well, I ought to. (*Then, as an after-thought.*) *Be*.

MARTHA. (*Grumpy.*) I suppose *so*. I don't know who said he was in the Math Department.

GEORGE. You did, Martha.

MARTHA. (*By way of irritable explanation.*) Well, I can't be expected to remember *everything*. I meet fifteen new teachers and their goddamn wives ... present company outlawed, of course ... (*Honey nods, smiles sillily.*) ... and I'm supposed to remember *everything*. (*Pause.*) So? He's a biologist. Good for him. Biology's even better. It's less ... abstruse.

GEORGE. Abstract.

MARTHA. ABSTRUSE! In the sense of *recondite*. (*Sticks her tongue out at George.*) Don't you tell me words. Biology's even better. It's ... right at the *meat* of things. (*Nick reenters.*) You're right at the meat of things, baby.

NICK. (*Taking his drink from the side table.*) Oh?

HONEY. (*With that giggle.*) They thought you were in the Math Department.

NICK. Well, maybe I ought to be.

MARTHA. You stay right where you are ... you stay right at the ... *meat* of things.

GEORGE. You're obsessed with that phrase, Martha ... It's ugly.

MARTHA. (*Ignoring George ... to Nick.*) You stay right there.

(Laughs.) Hell, you can take over the History Department just as easy from there as anywhere else. God knows, *somebody's* going to take over the History Department, *some* day, and it ain't going to be Georgie-boy, there ... that's for sure. Are ya, swampy ... are ya, hunh?

GEORGE. In my mind, Martha, you are buried in cement, right up to your neck. (Martha giggles.) No ... right up to your nose ... that's much quieter.

MARTHA. (To Nick.) Georgie-boy, here, says you're terrifying. Why are you terrifying?

NICK. (With a small smile.) I didn't know I was.

HONEY. (A little thickly.) It's because of your chromosomes, dear.

NICK. Oh, the chromosome business ...

MARTHA. (To Nick.) What's all this about chromosomes?

NICK. Well, chromosomes are ...

MARTHA. I know what chromosomes are, sweetie, I love 'em.

NICK. Oh ... Well, then.

GEORGE. Martha eats them ... for breakfast ... she sprinkles them on her cereal. (To Martha, now.) It's very simple, Martha, this young man is working on a system whereby chromosomes can be altered ... well not all by himself — he probably has one or two co-conspirators — the genetic makeup of a sperm cell changed, reordered ... *to* order, actually ... for hair and eye color, stature, potency ... I imagine ... hairiness, features, health ... and *mind*. Most important ... Mind. All imbalances will be corrected, sifted out ... propensity for various diseases will be gone, longevity assured. We will have a race of men ... test-tube-bred ... incubator-born ... superb and sublime.

MARTHA. (Impressed.) Hunh!

HONEY. How exciting!

GEORGE. *But!* Everyone will tend to be rather the same ... Alike. Everyone ... and I'm sure I'm not wrong here ... will tend to look like this young man *here*.

MARTHA. *That's* not a bad idea.

NICK. (Impatient.) All right, now ...

GEORGE. It will, on the surface of it, be all rather pretty ... quite jolly. But of course there will be a dank side to it, too. A certain amount of regulation will be necessary ... uh ... for the experiment to succeed. A certain number of sperm tubes will have to be cut.

MARTHA. Hunh!...

GEORGE. Millions upon millions of them ... millions of tiny lit-

tle slicing operations that will leave just the smallest scar, on the underside of the scrotum (*Martha laughs.*) but which will assure the sterility of the imperfect ... the ugly, the stupid ... the ... unfit.

NICK. (*Grimly.*) Now look...!

GEORGE. ... with this, we will have, in time, a race of glorious men.

MARTHA. Huhh!

GEORGE. I suspect we will not have much music, much painting, but we will have a civilization of men, smooth, blond, and right at the light heavyweight limit.

MARTHA. Awww ...

GEORGE. ... a race of scientists and mathematicians, each dedicated to and working for the greater glory of the super-civilization.

MARTHA. Goody.

GEORGE. There will be a certain ... loss of liberty, I imagine, as a result of this experiment ... but diversity will no longer be the goal. Cultures and races will eventually vanish ... the ants will take over the world.

NICK. Are you finished?

GEORGE. (*Ignoring him.*) And I, naturally, am rather opposed to all this. History, which is my field ... history, of which I am one of the most famous bogs ...

MARTHA. Ha, ha, HA!

GEORGE. ... will lose its glorious variety and unpredictability. I, and with me the ... the surprise, the multiplexity, the sea-changing rhythm of ... history, will be eliminated. There will be order and constancy ... and I am unalterably opposed to it. I will not give up Berlin!

MARTHA. You'll give up Berlin, sweetheart. You going to defend it with your paunch?

HONEY. I don't see what Berlin has to *do* with anything.

GEORGE. There is a saloon in West Berlin where the barstools are five feet high. And the earth ... the floor ... is ... so ... far ... below you. I will not give up things like that. No ... I won't. I will fight you, young man ... one hand on my scrotum, to be sure ... but with my free hand I will battle you to the death.

MARTHA. (*Mocking, laughing.*) Bravo!

NICK. (*To George.*) That's right. And I am going to be the wave of the future.

MARTHA. You bet you are, baby.

HONEY. (*Quite drunk — to Nick.*) I don't see why you want to