

GEORGE. Yes. Exactly.

NICK. Aw ... that *is* touching ... that is ... downright moving ... that's what it is. (*With sudden vehemence.*) UP YOURS!

GEORGE. (*Brief pause.*) Hm?

NICK. (*Threatening.*) You heard me!

GEORGE. (*At Nick, not to him.*) You take the trouble to construct a civilization ... to ... to build a society, based on the principles of ... of principle ... you endeavor to make communicable sense out of natural order, morality out of the unnatural disorder of man's mind ... you make government and art, and realize that they are, must be, both the same ... you bring things to the saddest of all points ... to the point where there *is* something to lose ... then all at once, through all the music, through all the sensible sounds of men building, attempting, comes the *Dies Irae*. And what is it? What does the trumpet sound? Up yours. I suppose there's justice to it, after all the years ... Up yours.

NICK. (*Brief pause ... then applauding.*) Ha, ha! Bravo! Ha, ha! (*Laughs on. And Martha reenters, leading Honey, who is wan but smiling bravely.*)

HONEY. (*Grandly.*) Thank you ... thank you.

MARTHA. Here we are, a little shaky, but on our feet.

GEORGE. Goodie.

NICK. What? Oh ... OH! Hi, Honey ... you better?

HONEY. A little bit, dear ... I'd better sit down, though.

NICK. Sure ... c'mon ... you sit by me.

HONEY. Thank you, dear.

GEORGE. (*Beneath his breath.*) Touching ... touching.

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Well? Aren't you going to apologize?

GEORGE. (*Squinting.*) For what, Martha?

MARTHA. For making the little lady throw up, what else?

GEORGE. I did not make her throw up.

MARTHA. You most certainly did!

GEORGE. I did not!

HONEY. (*Papal gesture.*) No, now ... no.

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Well, who do you think did ... Sexy over there? You think he made his *own* little wife sick?

GEORGE. (*Helpfully.*) Well, you make *me* sick.

MARTHA. THAT'S DIFFERENT!

HONEY. No, now. I ... I throw up ... I mean, I get sick ... occasionally, all by myself ... without any reason.

GEORGE. Is that a fact?

NICK. You're ... you're delicate, Honey.

HONEY. (*Proudly.*) I've always done it.

GEORGE. Like Big Ben.

NICK. (*A warning.*) Watch it!

HONEY. And the doctors say there's nothing wrong with me ... organically. You know?

NICK. Of course there isn't.

HONEY. Why, just before we got married, I developed ... appendicitis ... or everybody *thought* it was appendicitis ... but it turned out to be ... it was a ... (*Laughs briefly.*) ... false alarm. (*George and Nick exchange glances.*)

MARTHA. (*To George.*) Get me a drink. (*George moves to the bar.*) George makes everybody sick ... When our son was just a little boy, he used to ...

GEORGE. Don't, Martha ...

MARTHA. ... he used to throw up all the time, because of George ...

GEORGE. I said, don't!

MARTHA. It got so bad that whenever George came into the room he'd start right in retching, and ...

GEORGE. ... the real reason (*Spits out the words.*) our son ... used to throw up all the time, wife and lover, was nothing more complicated than that he couldn't stand you fiddling at him all the time, breaking into his bedroom with your kimono flying, fiddling at him all the time, with your liquor breath on him, and your hands all over his ...

MARTHA. YEAH? And I suppose that's why he ran away from home twice in one month, too. (*Now to the guests.*) Twice in one month! Six times in one year!

GEORGE. (*Also to the guests.*) Our son ran away from home all the time because Martha here used to corner him.

MARTHA. (*Braying.*) I NEVER CORNERED THE SON OF A BITCH IN MY LIFE!

GEORGE. (*Handing Martha her drink.*) He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd say, "Mama's always coming at me." That's what he'd say.

MARTHA. Liar!

GEORGE. (*Shrugging.*) Well, that's the way it was ... you were always coming at him. I thought it was very embarrassing.

NICK. If you thought it was so embarrassing, what are you talking about it for?

HONEY. (*Admonishing.*) Dear...!
MARTHA. Yeah! (*To Nick.*) Thanks, sweetheart.
GEORGE. (*To them all.*) I didn't want to talk about him at all ... I would have been perfectly happy not to discuss the whole subject ... I never want to talk about it.
MARTHA. Yes you do.
GEORGE. When we're alone, maybe.
MARTHA. We're alone!
GEORGE. Uh ... no, Love ... we've got guests.
MARTHA. (*With a covetous look at Nick.*) We sure have.
HONEY. Could I have a little brandy? I think I'd like a little brandy.
NICK. Do you think you should?
HONEY. Oh yes ... yes, dear.
GEORGE. (*Moving to the bar again.*) Sure! Fill 'er up!
NICK. Honey, I don't think you ...
HONEY. (*Petulance creeping in.*) It will steady me, *dear*. I feel a little unsteady.
GEORGE. Hell, you can't walk steady on half a bottle ... got to do it right.
HONEY. Yes. (*To Martha.*) I love brandy ... I really do.
MARTHA. (*Somewhat abstracted.*) Good for you.
NICK. (*Giving up.*) Well, if you think it's a good idea ...
HONEY. (*Really testy.*) I know what's best for me, dear.
NICK. (*Not even pleasant.*) Yes ... I'm sure you do.
HONEY. (*George hands her a brandy.*) Oh, goodie! Thank you. (*To Nick.*) Of course I do, dear.
MARTHA. You two men have it out while we were gone? George tell you his side of things? He bring you to tears, hunh?
NICK. Well ... no ...
GEORGE. No, what we did, actually, was ... we sort of danced around.
MARTHA. Oh, yeah? Cute!
HONEY. Oh, I love dancing.
NICK. He didn't mean that, Honey.
HONEY. Well, I didn't think he did! Two grown men dancing ... heavens!
MARTHA. You mean he didn't start in on how he would have amounted to something if it hadn't been for Daddy? How his high moral sense wouldn't even let him *try* to better himself? No?
NICK. (*Qualified.*) No ...
MARTHA. And he didn't run on about how he tried to publish a

goddamn book, and Daddy wouldn't let him.

NICK. A book? No.

GEORGE. Please, Martha ...

NICK. (*Egging her on.*) A book? What book?

GEORGE. (*Pleading.*) Please. Just a book.

MARTHA. (*Mock incredulity.*) Just a book!

GEORGE. *Please, Martha!*

MARTHA. (*Almost disappointed.*) Well, I guess you didn't get the whole sad story. What's the matter with you, George? You given up?

GEORGE. (*Calm ... serious.*) No ... no. It's just I've got to figure out some new way to fight you, Martha. Guerrilla tactics, maybe ... internal subversion ... I don't know. Something.

MARTHA. Well, you figure it out, and you let me know when you do.

GEORGE. (*Cheery.*) All right, Love.

HONEY. Why don't we dance? I'd love some dancing.

NICK. Honey ...

HONEY. I would! I'd love some dancing.

NICK. Honey ...

HONEY. I *want* some! I want some dancing!

GEORGE. All right...! For heaven's sake ... we'll have some dancing.

HONEY. (*All sweetness again. To Martha:*) Oh, I'm so glad ... I just love dancing. Don't you?

MARTHA. (*With a glance at Nick.*) Yeah ... yeah, that's not a bad idea.

NICK. (*Genuinely nervous.*) Gee.

GEORGE. Gee.

HONEY. I dance like the wind.

MARTHA. (*Without comment.*) Yeah?

GEORGE. (*Picking a record.*) Martha had her daguerreotype in the paper once ... oh 'bout twenty-five years ago ... Seems she took second prize in one o' them seven-day dancin' contest things ... biceps all bulging, holding up her partner.

MARTHA. Will you put a record on and shut up?

GEORGE. Certainly, Love. (*To all.*) How are we going to work this? Mixed doubles?

MARTHA. Well, you certainly don't think I'm going to dance with *you*, do you?

GEORGE. (*Considers it.*) Noooooo ... not with him around ... that's for sure. And not with twinkle-toes here, either.

HONEY. I'll dance with anyone ... I'll dance by myself.

NICK. Honey ...

HONEY. I dance like the wind.

GEORGE. All right, kiddies ... choose up and hit the sack. (*Music starts ... Second movement, Beethoven's Seventh Symphony.*)

HONEY. (*Up, dancing by herself.*) De, de de da da, da-da de, da da-da de da ... wonderful...!

NICK. Honey ...

MARTHA. All right, George ... cut that out!

HONEY. Dum, de de da da, da-da de, dum, de da da da ... Wheeeee...!

MARTHA. Cut it out, George!

GEORGE. (*Pretending not to hear.*) What, Martha? What?

NICK. Honey ...

MARTHA. (*As George turns up the volume.*) CUT IT OUT, GEORGE!

GEORGE. WHAT?

MARTHA. (*Gets up, moves quickly, threateningly, to George.*) All right, you son of a bitch ...

GEORGE. (*Record off, at once. Quietly.*) What did you say, Love?

MARTHA. You son of a ...

HONEY. (*In an arrested posture.*) You stopped! Why did you stop?

NICK. Honey ...

HONEY. (*To Nick, snapping.*) Stop that!

GEORGE. I thought it was fitting, Martha.

MARTHA. Oh you did, hunh?

HONEY. You're always *at* me when I'm having a good time.

NICK. (*Trying to remain civil.*) I'm sorry, Honey.

HONEY. Just ... leave me alone!

GEORGE. Well, why don't *you* choose, Martha? (*Moves away from the phonograph ... leaves it to Martha.*) Martha's going to run things ... the little lady's going to lead the band.

HONEY. I like to dance and you don't want me to.

NICK. *I* like you to dance.

HONEY. Just ... leave me alone. (*She sits ... takes a drink.*)

GEORGE. Martha's going to put on some rhythm she understands ... *Sacre du Printemps*, maybe. (*Moves ... sits by Honey.*) Hi, sexy.

HONEY. (*A little giggle-scream.*) Oooooohhhhhh!

GEORGE. (*Laughs mockingly.*) Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Choose it, Martha ... do your stuff!

MARTHA. (*Concentrating on the machine.*) You're damn right!