

the living. Which is why I have lately become an insurgent again.

(*Back to work. The phone rings again—and this time IRIS comes shrieking out of the bedroom: one more call and she will burn the apartment down! She wears the dress MAVS bought*)

IRIS *Sid-nee*—(Noticing DAVID for the first time) David (Genuinely) My God, those reviews! It's marvelous. How do you feel?

SIDNEY (On the phone) You don't say? Right . . . right . . . right.

DAVID (To IRIS. Embarrassed by her display) Please. Well, I've got to go to work.

IRIS Work? Already? Aren't you just going to bask awhile or something?

DAVID (Sadly) Doing what? See you.  
(Exits)

SIDNEY (~~Hangs up~~) You know what, the craziest thing is happening to Wally . . . that clown is actually—(As the fact of MAVS' dress dawns on him) Well, get you!

IRIS I look pretty all right in this—huh, Sid?

SIDNEY Sure, if you like the type. I like you in other things better.

IRIS I know. I'm going out tonight, Sidney.

SIDNEY Yeah? Where? (Not thinking about that too much) You know not one, not one of the entire collection I've surrounded myself with . . .

IRIS I talked to Lucille Terry today. She's having a cocktail party.

SIDNEY Lucille Terry? Lucille Terry! Where in the name

of God did she pop up from? I didn't know that you still saw each other.

IRIS We haven't in years. But, you know, just like that people suddenly call each other up. So just like that she called me up last week about this party she was having.

SIDNEY (*His hand on the phone; he couldn't even see*) How is Lucy? Lemme see now, gotta call Mickey Dafoc, put on the old Establishment voice. "Hello, Mr. Dafoc, well, how are you, sit—" Fix me a drink, why doncha, honey?

IRIS (*Crossing to the pantry; in a muted voice*) Lucy didn't call me, Sid. I called her.

SIDNEY (*Still thinking more about the call he has to make*) Yeah? You know I really hate to give fuel to Alton's narrow view of the world, but there is turning out to be a surprising amount of validity to his notions of base and superstructure. Two banks, a restaurant and three real estate firms have already canceled ads since we've come out for Wally . . .

IRIS (*Disinterested, bringing him his drink*) Oh, really—(The phone rings) Interesting.

SIDNEY (*Picking it up*) Yes, Renee . . . She says what? . . . ~~Sure, O'Hara could be an Italian name . . . Or his mother's Italian. (Hangs up, to IRIS) Well, she could be.~~ (*Voicing her standing there, finally just looking at him quietly*) Aw, I'm sorry, honey, I really am, but I just don't feel like going to any party tonight. Especially the uptown scene. Not tonight. (*He is taking the entire situation lightly*) Tell Lucy we love her but no.

IRIS (*Starkly, staring down at him*) I wasn't asking you to come with me, Sidney.

(*He drinks, slowly absorbs this last remark and, for*

*the first time, reacts with some sense of the portentousness of the moment*)

SIDNEY Oh?

IRIS That's sort of the point. I—I am going alone.

SIDNEY Oh. (*They are both quiet; neither looking at the other; the awkwardness shouts*) Well, hell, so you're going to a party. Great. You should do things alone sometimes. Everybody should. What are we acting so funny about it for?

IRIS Because we know it isn't just a party. It's the fact that I want to go. That I called Lucy.

SIDNEY (*Very worried*) Well, don't worry about it. It's okay. Just have a nice time, that's all.

IRIS (*Sadly*) Would you—would you like me to make you some supper before I go?

SIDNEY (*Rising and crossing away not to face her*) Uh—no. No. Thanks. Wally and I are due on MacDougal Street in an hour. We'll go out with the kids after or something.

IRIS You could have them here. There's—there's a lot of stuff in the box and—plenty of beer.

SIDNEY (*Getting it fully*) Is there?

IRIS Yes. I'm sorry, Sid.

SIDNEY You're planning on being late, aren't you?

IRIS I think it'll be kind of late.

SIDNEY (*Finally*) Who's going to be at this party, Iris?

IRIS How do I know who's going to be there? Lucy's friends.

SIDNEY Lucy's friends. The "would-be" set, as I recall it. IRIS Huh?

SIDNEY The "would-be" set, would-be actresses, would-be producers. The would-bes tend to collect around Lucy a lot.

IRIS Some of her friends are pretty successful.

SIDNEY Like Ben Asch?  
(*She wheels and they exchange a violent conversation without words*)

IRIS (*Getting into her shoes*) Look, Sid; let's make an agreement based on the recognition of reality. The reality being that the big thaw has set in with us and that we don't know what that means yet. So let's make some real civilized kind of agreement that until—well—until we know just what we feel, I mean about everything—let's not ask each other a whole lot of slimy questions.

SIDNEY I'll ask all the slimy questions I want! Listen, Iris, have you been seeing this clown or something?

IRIS Only once—after the time I told you.

SIDNEY Once is all it takes.

IRIS He thinks he can help me.

SIDNEY Do what?

IRIS Break in, that's what!

SIDNEY Then why didn't he see us?

IRIS I don't know, Sidney. I guess he was under the impression that I was a big girl now.

SIDNEY I'll bet!

IRIS But none of this is the main point, Sid. The main point is that I feel I want to do something else with my life. Other than—

SIDNEY Other than what?

IRIS Other than—this. Other than conversation about the Reformation; other than conversations about Albert Camus. Other than scraping together enough pancake money to study with every has-been actor who's teaching now because he can't work any more. There has to be another way.

SIDNEY From the has-beens to the would-bees. I'll admit there is a progression there!

IRIS Ben knows some extremely influential people. People who have been around—people who *do* the things they mean to do.

SIDNEY Where?

IRIS In the theatre and in politics too! Especially in politics. People who are not just talkers—but doers. Who do not take on a newspaper they cannot even afford and run it into the ground for a hopeless campaign. And for what? For Wally? If even half of what they say about Wally is true—

SIDNEY Oh? And just what do "they" say?

(*He waits, knowing as he does, there is nothing she can say*)

IRIS (*Trapped*) Well, I don't know about any of this, but Lucy thinks—

SIDNEY (*Holding up one hand; the issue is closed*) Right the first time, Iris! You *don't* know.

IRIS Sidney, this is not the Silver Dagger you're getting into. These people are sharks.

SIDNEY (*With finality; father knows best*) Look, Iris, I'll make a deal with you: You let me fight City Hall and I'll stay out of Shubert Alley.

IRIS (*Quietly; she has had it*) All right, Sidney.

SIDNEY And stop ducking the main point: What is this glorious doer Ben Asch going to do for you?

IRIS As a matter of fact he's already got me some work.

SIDNEY Oh—why haven't you mentioned it? What show?

IRIS (*Defensively*) It isn't exactly a show—but it *is* acting. Sort of. (*He stares at her*) It's a TV commercial . . .

SIDNEY (*Laughing*) Oh, Iris, Iris.

IRIS (*Hotly*) Oh, aren't we better than everybody, Sidney Brustein! Aren't we above it! Well, I have news: If he gets me that job, I am going to take it. And when I'm doing it—I'll know that it beats hell out of slinging hash while I wait for "pure art" to come along.

SIDNEY Iris, it's not just *what* you're getting into—it's *how*. You've got no business hanging out with Lucy and that crowd. How can it be that after five years of life with me you don't know better than this?

(*He has taken hold of her*)

IRIS (*Exploding, near tears*) I have learned a *lot* after five years of life with you, Sidney! When I met you I thought Kant was a stilted way of saying cannot; I thought Puccini was a kind of spaghetti; I thought the louder an actor yelled and fell out on the floor the greater he was. But you taught me to look deeper and harder. At everything: from Japanese painting to acting. Including, Sidney, my *own* acting. Thanks to you, I now know something I wouldn't have learned if it hadn't been for you. The fact . . . the *fact* that I am probably the world's

*lousiest actress . . . (He releases her)* So, there it is, the trouble with looking at ourselves honestly, Sidney, is that we come up with the truth. And, baby, the truth is a bitch.

*(Iris goes out the door)*

SIDNEY *(Going after her)* Iris, Iris, just listen—

IRIS *(Facing him. Resolutely; she will not be stopped)*

All I know is that, from now on, I just want something to happen in my life. I don't much care *what*. Just something.

SIDNEY I just want you to know that—whatever happens—you've been one of the few things in my life that made me happy.

IRIS *(An anguished voice—for both of them)* Oh, Sid, "happy." *(She reaches up, to touch his face a moment)* Whoever started that anyhow? What little bastard was it? Teaching little kids there was such a thing?

*(She exits. SIDNEY goes back inside, sits, goes to the drawing board, then leaves that and picks up his banjo and then, with resolution, steps to the door and throws it open)*

SIDNEY Hey—David . . . David! Can you come down a sec—

*(But DAVID is right there, on his way out—rather sheepish, more boyish, genuine than in his prior scenes)*

DAVID *(A grin)* Oh, you caught me. Waaaal, I decided to go out after all. Maybe I owe myself, under the circumstances, at least one night off. *(He continues, halts, comes back. SIDNEY hardly hears him; he is thinking of something intently)* I'll tell you the truth . . . It—it seemed emptier than usual up there. I swore I wouldn't, you know—*(Embarrassed at the humanity of his present*

*feelings)* sort of go out and strut around . . . But by God, it's almost like I *have* to. Do you know what I mean? I mean—*(He laughs freely and drops his hands)* I mean I *feel* pretty good.

SIDNEY *(Half steering, half pushing him inside)* Well, why not! Who wouldn't? . . . C'mon in a sec . . .

DAVID *(Suddenly, not aware that he is mainly talking to himself under the circumstances)* Don't make fun of me, Sidney! The truth is, today is not yesterday. Nothing could have made me believe this yesterday— But I am somebody else today. Inside. It's in my rooms upstairs, it's in my coat . . . it's in my skin. Christ, Sid—*(Pure unadulterated wonder)* I'm famous. *(A grin)* I have to go outside and find out what it's like to wear it in the streets. *(Sobering)* As if I can't guess. Everybody will just be more self-conscious, phonier than they would have been yesterday. Just because my picture was in the papers. It's crazy. The phone keeps on ringing. For years I made fun of people who had unlisted numbers. First thing Monday—I'll have to get one. *(Final smile)* G'night, Sid.

SIDNEY No, wait a minute. Please. I'd like to talk to you. You want a drink?

DAVID What do you want, Sidney? I'm in a hurry!

SIDNEY *(Not looking at him)* Hey—David . . . it's as good as on, isn't it?

DAVID *(Turning)* What—?

SIDNEY *(A little madly)* Your next play. It's as good as on—isn't it? Every producer in town will be looking for it, won't they?

DAVID *(Annoyed to talk about this; a modest person in the true sense)* Well . . . my agent said there've been some