

crosses to kitchen, throws it away David, I am trying to tidy up. It is difficult with you pretending you're Mount St. Helens, spewing ash everywhere. (MARTHA crosses to sofa; fluffs pillows.)

DAVE. (crosses stage left) Sis, want to know what he was in Viet Nam? Jackknife. That's what he called himself. It's a truckdriving term, sis. It's when you take a big, beautiful 18 wheeler and you crash it, turn it to shit. Jackknife cause he crashed trucks. He was crazy. And Viet Nam made him crazier. He's spent more time in the can on assault charges than you can believe.

MARTHA. (crosses to trophy case; straightens) He's been very nice.

DAVE. Nothing's happened to get him started. Push the right button and he's off. Berserk, Martha.

MARTHA. I'm sorry you don't like him, I do.

DAVE. You want to go out with someone? O.k., I'll set you up. Plenty a guys owe me favors, it'll be no problem.

MARTHA. No, thank you.

DAVE. Martha—

MARTHA. (exiting to the kitchen) I have to pull potatoes in the oven.

DAVE. (following) He's nothing but a mechanic, Martha. He owns a garage for christ sake.

MARTHA. And you drive a truck, David. I try not to hold it against you. (pause)

DAVE. (crosses to fridge for beer) Steak. We were gonna have trout for dinner. What a laugh. I froze my ass off.

MARTHA. I should have thought you were too drunk to feel anything.

DAVE. Martha, listen, I have his number someplace. Call him and tell him something came up, the P.T.A.

ACT TWO

SCENE I

(MARTHA enters down the stairs into the living room.

SHE is wearing a beautiful dress in a light pastel color, her hair is carefully brushed back, SHE wears a bit of make-up. DAVE enters right behind HER. HE is unchanged, unshaven; is smoking a cigarette.)

DAVE. What a ya mean you invited him over for dinner?

MARTHA. I thought I spoke English. Invite, a verb, to request the participation of. Dinner. That's a meal if memory serves me. (MARTHA crosses to stove.)

DAVE. I don't want to eat dinner with him. (DAVE crosses to kitchen doorway.)

MARTHA. Your participation has not been requested. If you'd like to, you may. Go out if you don't. (MARTHA crosses to couch.)

DAVE. I don't even want the guy in my house.

MARTHA. It's my house too. What shall we do? Call Mother in Florida and ask for a tie-breaking vote?

DAVE. What is this, Martha? Be kind to stranger week? You don't even know Megs.

MARTHA. (crosses to magazine rack) That's why I invited him over. To get to know him.

DAVE. (crosses centerstage) What you're going to find out, you don't need.

MARTHA. (crosses stage right to DAVE; takes cigarette,

MARTHA. Are you joining us?

DAVE. The fucking board of education wants to see you!

MARTHA. Do you want a potato!? (MARTHA wraps potatoes in foil.)

DAVE. Yes! (pause) If Dad was alive, he wouldn't let a guy like this on the front porch.

MARTHA. Go out, David. Call up your friends, go to a bar and get drunk and hoarse screaming at the television.

DAVE. No way.

MARTHA. Then not another word if you're staying! Be what you usually are, a presence in the house that eats whatever's put in front of it and grunts when spoken to. I'd be better off living with a Saint Bernard!

DAVE. What is with you today?

MARTHA. What do you care, David? Really, why this sudden concern about who I see?

DAVE. Hey, you're my sister.

MARTHA. I thought I was your housekeeper, your cook. I don't know how long it's been since I heard you say, Martha, how are you? I've been invited to a party, come along. Let's get together and do something. How's the old lovelife, kid?

DAVE. What lovelife? You never go out.

MARTHA. Exactly. (MARTHA gets lettuce from fridge; prepares salad.)

DAVE. O.k., I'm sorry. I'll take more interest from now on, I really will. Hey, we'll go to a movie. How's that sound? But Martha, forget Megs. The guy is not up to your standards.

MARTHA. Has anyone ever been? My so-called standards, David, are merely something I've hidden behind

so I could salvage a little pride. (pause) Do you remember that cruise I went on last Easter break?

DAVE. Yeah. You got a nice tan.

MARTHA. It was a swinging singles cruise, a man for every maid. It was a ship filled with depressed, lonely people and I went hoping I might meet... what... a kindred soul, someone I liked, who liked me, anyone. And I might have. If I could have left my standards at dockside. But I was frightened and so when I went on board my standards walked right up the gangplank behind me. I got a nice tan.

DAVE. Martha, what, you're pissed off you didn't get layed?

MARTHA. Wouldn't you have been?

DAVE. Yeah, but you?

MARTHA. Oh, I'm sorry. Shy, plain women don't desire. When they're in bed at night they keep their hands off themselves and don't fantasize. God

(pause) David, how many times have you made love?

DAVE. Hey, come on, huh?

MARTHA. Really. Fifteen times? Fifty times? One hundred?

DAVE. Gimme a break.

MARTHA. Good god, David, look at me! I'm almost the perfect image of the virgin school marm. Tending other people's children is supposed to make me feel chaste and noble and fulfilled. Bullshit. I feel helpless and very stupid. I'm not a nun. I wrote boy's names in my notebooks when I was young. I prayed that they'd pull my hair so I'd pay attention to them.

DAVE. Kids don't know shit.

MARTHA. Oh, David, they know. I watch them. Girls are always glancing about. Is anyone looking? Is a boy,

looking? They are. You call them to the blackboard and they struggle up, bent at the waist, pulling their sweaters down.

DAVE. God, Martha, you checkin out their boners?

MARTHA. You're horrible. I'm just telling you that they know! When you see a boy walking a girl to class, his arm around her, his mouth close to her ear, you know they know. Why should it be too late for me? (Pause. DAVE suddenly giggles. MARTHA looks at HIM. HE laughs.)

MARTHA. (annoyed) What?

DAVE. (HE stands upstage of center chair.) Uh . . . Before. About being a virgin school marm? You said almost. I mean, I never thought that you . . . uh, it never occurred to me that . . . (HE laughs.) Who'd you get it on with? Anybody I know?

MARTHA. (puts salad in fridge; gets flour out) You just . . . that's none of your business.

DAVE. Yeah, it is. Come on. Please?

MARTHA. (gets flower vase from top of fridge) Go away.

DAVE. Martha, I'm curious. Martha? Mar - tha? (HE is laughing openly now.)

MARTHA. Leave me alone. (crosses to right chair)

DAVE. Loosen the strings, sis. Come on, gossip a little. (pause)

MARTHA. William Green.

DAVE. Ichabod Crane? I don't believe it. (HE laughs harder than ever.)

MARTHA. That's why it's so hard for people like me. People like you make fun of someone's rear end or waist line. You turn love into a beauty pageant. Stop laughing! (SHE arranges flowers.)

DAVE. (trying to stop but not succeeding) No! No! It's not cause a the way you look. (HE sits.)

MARTHA. Oh!

DAVE. It's just that . . . I mean, you're not what you'd call experienced. Are you? (HE laughs.) No! And him . . . he was a shy guy and well . . . (HE laughs.) Laurel and Hardy! This is another fine mess you've got me into! (HE laughs.)

MARTHA. Oh David, I could have died. Neither of us knew what we were doing. We were like two cars that had hooked bumpers . . . both of pushing and pulling, at the wrong times. And he kept apologizing the whole time. I'm terribly sorry. I think he hoped I'd change my mind. (THEY laugh.) I don't know why I'm laughing . . . It was horrible. No passion. Guilt for him. Frustrated tears for me.

DAVE. (tenderly) I'm sorry, kiddo.

MARTHA. He asked me to marry him. He'd been in bed with me so he thought he should.

DAVE. (considering this a moment) Y'know, he wasn't such a bad guy.

MARTHA. (bristling) Meaning I won't get many chances? Meaning I'm not in any position to pick and choose?

DAVE. Here you go again. (rises; crosses to sink)

MARTHA. I didn't sleep with him so he'd marry me. We'd have made each other miserable. (pause) Are you having dinner with us?

DAVE. Sis, you make dinner for Megs, he'll latch onto you. He'll be calling, coming by, telling me all sorts of crazy stuff. We won't be able to get rid of him. You're making a mistake. Martha.

MARTHA. It's my mistake then.

DAVE. Jesus, Martha, why won't you listen to me?! Do you know anything about men? No! You'd have a hard time handling the most perfect son of a bitch in the world let alone this guy! *(pause)* All right. All right. You'll see. You'll be beggin him to leave. *(MARTHA rises; crosses to sink; puts water in vase)*

MARTHA. Go get cleaned up. You'll feel better. *(pause)*

DAVE. *(softly)* Is it really so bad here, Martha?

MARTHA. It's not so bad. *(SHE gets tablecloth from drawer.)*

DAVE. I love this place. Every good memory I have is here. *(pause)* I like having you around here, Martha. *(pause)* Listen, I'm gonna be more appreciative, you'll see.

MARTHA. The things I want, you can't give me, David.

DAVE. You're gonna leave?

MARTHA. Some day. *(puts tablecloth on table; long pause)* Go get cleaned up.

DAVE. Yeah. I got any clean clothes anywhere?

MARTHA. In the dryer.

DAVE. *(preoccupied)* Get'm for me, huh? *(HE exits upstairs. MARTHA puts the finishing touches on her table. MEGS comes to the front door. HE has flowers which HE hides behind his back. HE is carrying a large bag.)*

MEGS. *(knocking)* Hello, it's me! Front door! *(SHE scurries around, checking everything to make sure it's perfect. SHE checks her reflection in one of the windows. SHE hurries to the door, pauses, takes a deep breath, lets HIM in.)*

MARTHA. Well now.

MEGS. Just a pack horse, that's me. *(HE displays the flowers, surprising HER.)*

MARTHA. Oh, my.

MEGS. Like'm? I told the guy I was a white knight going to meet a fair damsel. Give me your best!

MARTHA. They're beautiful.

MEGS. Wait. Here.

MARTHA. No!

MEGS. Yes! Candy.

MARTHA. Ohh . . .

MEGS. Just a mad seducer, that's me. I got wine too. No idea what goes with what so I got one of every color; white, pink and blood red. And . . . this!

MARTHA. Brandy?

MEGS. If beer for breakfast is sunrise, brandy is sun-down. *(And doing a quick "hump and grind"; HE takes off his overcoat. HE is wearing a very well-made, dark three-piece suit, a white shirt, a tie.)*

MARTHA. Look at you.

MEGS. It looked real good in the store window. I hardly ever get to wear it. I figured what the hell, prom night, y'know? *(pause)* I'm real glad to be here, Martha. *(SHE hesitates, then leans up and kisses HIM on the cheek.)*

LIGHTS GO TO BLACK.

ACT TWO

SCENE 2

(MEGS and MARTHA are in the kitchen. Dinner has