

ave to fret paying the bill.
urse that messy activity he
Albert's so quickly pleased.
She doesn't much like me.
first. And why wouldn't I?
asy to get along with. And
s him unclog the drain or
r whatever gifts he bestows
e could read my mind. The
erything she's given and is
e tries to please her. Lucky
perfect spouse. And we are
is jealous, but she has every

re'd be lost without me.
more like it. (*Realizing she's*
in old and foolish and drunk
my mouth occupied between
lepers. (Rita exits. The music
ming outside and escapes, but
Charlotte's face.) And there's my
vs. Amy steps out of the barn,
the seizes the opportunity ...)

with a judicial background to
nable.
eing unreasonable until *after*

entina promised and more. I
rability." I couldn't agree with
nodities. (*Changing subjects.*)
ty is a good idea?
ort belonging to my church
n I was a member of a law firm.
ut as close to a church as you
gle vision. Powerful stuff. On
one rock on the shore easily
l of rocks and ...
iously you and I have differing

CHARLOTTE. Valentina said, "Win over the Judge and you've won the group." She didn't tell me it would be a fight to the death. I salute a worthy opponent. At the same time I'll remind you that Valentina is counting on you to bring the others around. She wants this.

AMY. So she said.

CHARLOTTE. And you can gift your friend her security. Isn't that reason enough? Security. The feeling of knowing that someone has your back. Now that's a church pew I'd proudly perch upon. So much more comfortable than those benches the government supplies in federal buildings. I'm sure Valentina would attest to that. She must have told you she was called in to the postal inspector's office today. (*Amy bridles just a bit.*) Yes, I'm sure she must have. So, you're contemplating your retirement. Lucky you. It must be nice to have everything you've worked for all these years almost at hand. Free as a star in the sky to relax, travel, visit friends. I believe I heard you have friends in Caledonia County, Vermont. Yes? No? (*Amy remains stoic.*) Did I mention that I flew here directly from Washington, D.C.? I've always traveled promoting the Sorority but, since my most unfortunate conviction, my community service requires consulting with the authorities when questions about our sisters arise. For instance, in Valentina's case, a folio of homosexual pornography was sent to her address. "Why would someone," they wondered, "send contraband to someone like Valentina?" Well, the truth, as you know, is that they wouldn't. Those photographs would only be of interest to someone of a homosexual nature, and that's not our Valentina. Did she tell you to whom they were sent? (*No reaction.*) But, of course, she doesn't know. There's no denying the fact that they were meant for someone

very close to Valentina. Very close. It's almost impossible to imagine; a queer at the core of this paradise. A fox in the hen house. A fox in fine feathers. Well, I think it's a blessing that Valentina hasn't been burdened with the identity. What a responsibility, the weight of knowing such a thing about a person — a friend. The temptation to tell others. And that isn't the sort of story one wants broadcast. Many of us have wheedled our ways out of trouble when we were caught dressing, saying it was for an office gag or a Halloween party. Much better to be labeled class clown than queer. No. That label, queer, is not as easily cast off. That little word has the power to destroy reputations, careers, marriages ... Which is why it's so important to be surrounded by those you can trust. Again I offer as example Valentina. What a benediction that, while being questioned in New York City, I was listening in via telephone wire at the Postal Offices in D.C., watching out for her interests. No harm was coming to my friend Val. That's for sure. Only, that's not actually a good example since they already knew she was an innocent in the matter. Seems a few days earlier, an investigator was dispatched to Caledonia County where he questioned the person responsible for mailing the offending material. He surrendered the name to whom the package was intended without struggle. And, along with the name, oh what a sad tale was shared. This Belinda person, this self-avowed homosexual, said that while visiting the resort, she had made fast acquaintance with this lovely older person of like mind and want. The sad fact however was that, although this older person had lifelong dark desires, he had, up until that moment, never acted upon them. Even that night, the contact, I am told, was minimal, a kiss. A single kiss in the dark beneath a moonlit sky. Touching, that, don't you think? An entire life of wanting, yearning but never having. And then, just giving voice to that dark desire was enough to rain destruction down on a lifetime of denial. Brings a tear to my eye. (*The music ends.*) But, wait. You're not...? Are those tears on your cheek? I guess I'm not the only one with a soft spot for a pitiful tale. (*Charlotte closes in, hissing dangerously into Amy's ear.*) They know who you are. They have your name and address. Let me be your friend. Believe me, you're going to need one. (*With that, Amy reaches out with one arm and catches Charlotte by the throat, violently pulling her closer.*)