

GEORGE. Bessie, you delightful old thing. You are living proof that the good die young. (*Checking his watch.*) I didn't realize how late ... But Charlotte's not here.

RITA. Not yet.

GEORGE. (*To Jonathon.*) So, I suppose you're all unpacked?

JONATHON. I was just going to.

GEORGE. Bessie, why don't you help our guest?

RITA. Now it's official.

GEORGE. And if you'll excuse me, I'm choking in this suit ...

RITA. Go change. I'll be right up.

GEORGE. See you both later. (*Stopping Jonathon.*) And, Jonathon ... Welcome to the best weekend of your life.

JONATHON. Thank you. (*George goes upstairs.*)

BESSIE. (*To Rita.*) Is everything all right? George seems a little off.

RITA. Everything's fine. (*To Jonathon.*) Please let me know if you need anything brought to, or anyone removed from, your room.

(*Follows after George.*)

JONATHON. Thank you.

BESSIE. Come along, young impressionable one. Now that the floor-show of America's most perfect married couple is over, let us find you shelter in the Catskills. You do know why they're called the Catskills.

JONATHON. I have no idea.

BESSIE. Best keep it that way. (*They exit toward the car park.*) (11)

Scene 2

Lights ↑ in
MASTER (1)
of Living Room

Master bedroom. George enters and immediately strips off his clothing. Rita enters just behind George. She offers her drink, and he sips it greedily.

Please in "downway"

RITA. I take it things went well downtown. You're not in jail. (*Picks up George's clothes and hangs them.*)

GEORGE. Enemies of the state go to prison.

RITA. They didn't keep you long.

GEORGE. And the institutional decor of pea green and fumed oak did not encourage me to linger.

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f-pea green and fumed

RITA. And?

GEORGE. They asked questions. I answered questions. We all
went on with our lives.

RITA. What was it about?

GEORGE. Nothing to worry yourself over.

RITA. Don't dismiss me, George. The Post Office is a federal agency.
I wish you'd taken a lawyer.

GEORGE. They specifically said I didn't need one.

RITA. Of course they'd say that.

GEORGE. I haven't done anything.

RITA. So, what was it about?

GEORGE. Nothing really. An envelope.

RITA. An envelope.

GEORGE. That's what I said. An envelope. A large manila envelope
that came in the mail, addressed to me at the apartment.

RITA. And why didn't they just deliver it?

GEORGE. Well, that's a funny story. Do you mind if I save it for
another time? Charlotte will expect to be greeted by Valentina
when she arrives.

RITA. What was in the envelope, George?

GEORGE. I don't know. I ... didn't see.

RITA. Well, who was it from?

GEORGE. I don't know.

RITA. But sent to you.

GEORGE. Yes.

RITA. An envelope, a large manila envelope, was sent to you, from
whom you don't know, containing what you don't know ... But
somehow serious enough for the postal inspector to call you in for
questioning.

GEORGE. It wasn't questioning. It was questions. Questions.
Questions! Everyone's filled with questions! Rita, please. Charlotte
will be here any minute. (Tries to escape Rita's stare.) Did you steam
out my floral brocade?

RITA. It's hanging on the back of the door.

GEORGE. (Admiringly.) You are ...

RITA. I am.

GEORGE. (Realizes that Rita's just staring at him.) What?

RITA. Are you in trouble?

GEORGE. Me? No. (Seeing he's not getting away with that ...) No.

RITA. George, I am your wife.

GEORGE. Which makes me the luckiest man in the world. Don't worry. Please. Just let it be. Did you comb out the wig?

RITA. Freshly washed and set. And I curled the bangs.

GEORGE. Because you can read my mind.

RITA. Wouldn't that be a time-saver? Do you want me to do your prep?

GEORGE. (*Playfully.*) No. I can do it ... if you're busy.

RITA. I'll do it. (*Lovingly places a wig cap on George's head and pins it in place, while ...*)

GEORGE. I wish I could have gone as Valentina. She would have handled them so much better. And seeing her would have eliminated the question — "So, you wear dresses?" (*As George.*) "I certainly do not!" (*As Valentina.*) "I wear them one at a time."

RITA. Did they ask about our guests? You didn't name names.

GEORGE. These weren't the McCarthy hearings. My darling, they didn't phone me out of the blue. They know who I am. They know all about the resort and my femininity lessons, and writing for the magazine ... The inspector even complimented my column on bouffant hairstyles. Said his wife had read it and was most impressed. "Thank you," I said. "As a matter of fact, *my* wife helped write it."

RITA. It's not funny. They could shut us down. We could lose the resort. I could lose my wig shop, and then what?

GEORGE. I could get dressed.

RITA. At least promise you'll speak to the Judge.

GEORGE. Not while Charlotte's here. (*Rita is still glaring.*) Oh, Rita, what would I tell her? "Welcome to the Chevalier d'Eon. You may have heard that we're bankrupt, but don't let that bother you. We're also under federal investigation, so we'll be in prison long before we're evicted." (*Pulls Rita onto his lap.*) Trust me, all will be fine. We'll have a lovely dinner, Charlotte will make her big announcement, and before she can see what's coming we'll hit her up for a loan. Check in hand, we'll wave farewell and return, happily, to our connubial bliss. (*Kisses her.*) Good plan?

RITA. You can be a very silly man.

GEORGE. And if you let me dress I can be an even sillier woman.

RITA. Promise you'll at least talk to the Judge.

GEORGE. Is he here?

RITA. Has he ever arrived before dinner?

GEORGE. I'll come down and set the table.

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Vanity*

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turn to (C)

RITA. I've got it.

GEORGE. You got stuck with the cooking. The least I can do is
set the table. I know just how I want it.

RITA. After all these years, you think I can't arrange a dinner
party to your liking? (Miming.) Let's see, how does it go? Girl, girl,
girl, girl, girl, girl, and girl. Did I get that right?

GEORGE. Funny, funny, funny. But I want to put Charlotte ...

RITA. Head of the table. (George suddenly holds his hand up to
silence her.) What?

GEORGE. I thought I heard the garden gate.

RITA. I'll go down and see.

GEORGE. (Looks out the window.) What we have made here ...
There's nothing else like it, not in the entire world.

RITA. Oh, sweetheart ...

GEORGE. There was a moment when I was waiting in the hall
outside the inspector's office ... I thought, what if this is the end?
No more Valentina, no more weekends or resort ...

RITA. You'll always have me.

GEORGE. You think I need you?

RITA. Absolutely.

GEORGE. You're awful sure of yourself.

RITA. You'd wither and die without me.

GEORGE. Maybe. But right now I need Valentina. (Removes his
wedding ring and becomes lost in his mirror. Rita retreats.)

puts on his dresses.