

TAKE MY WIFE, PLEASE

By Terry Roueche

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Cast of Characters

Thomas Wilson: A shy computer analyst. HE leads a quiet, precise and often too predictable life. HE is very much attracted to SUSAN, STEPHEN's wife. HE has always kept this to himself.

Stephen Scott: HE and THOMAS have been best friends since junior high school. HE has become a big success in the chemical business-finally. Truly a born salesman, if ever there was one.

Susan Scott: STEPHEN's wife. SHE is an attractive woman. SUSAN has always been attracted to THOMAS.

Debbie: In her early twenties, SHE's having an affair with STEPHEN. SHE's no one's fool.

Scene

THOMAS' Small Apartment.

Time

The Present. A Friday Winter Evening.

ACT I

Scene 1

The Set: One room serves as the living area and bedroom. The apartment is arranged with an abundance of plants of all sizes and types. The room is furnished with a sofa bed, chair, table, floor lamp, and the like. The sofa is set to open with sheets and pillows. There is a closet with louver doors, a front door, and a doorway to the bathroom and kitchen.

At Rise: It is around six one Friday winter evening. STEPHEN wears a suit and is drinking a beer. THOMAS is dressed comfortably wearing slacks, shirt, and sweater. THOMAS is busy watering his plants.

STEPHEN

When you were eighteen, Thomas, would you have believed you'd spend a Friday night watering plants?

THOMAS

Some people change.

STEPHEN

(Sarcastic, referring to THOMAS' plants)

It's amazing what can become important in some people's lives.

THOMAS

I'm not going to help you.

STEPHEN

What's the big problem? It happens, like it did with you and Alice.

(STEPHEN removes his coat and tosses it on the sofa. STEPHEN loosens his tie and shirt and studies the room)

THOMAS

Susan is still married to you.

STEPHEN

Even you agree that's the problem. She's still married to me.

THOMAS

I've always felt sorry for Susan.

STEPHEN

Why can't you feel sorry for me-having to be married to her?

THOMAS

She deserves better.

STEPHEN

You're doing me the favor, not her. I'm your best friend. We grew up together. What do you care about Susan?

(THOMAS picks up STEPHEN's coat and hangs it in the closet)

THOMAS

And if you're going to leave your things here, you could at least pick up after yourself.

STEPHEN

It would work.

THOMAS

No!

STEPHEN

You and Susan get along. You two love dirt and flowers. When you were married to Alice, do you think Alice and I enjoyed spending weekends with you and Susan at garden shops?

THOMAS

You two didn't have to go.

STEPHEN

You two could spend weekends potting.

(Pause)

You can't tell me you haven't wanted to get into my wife's plants.

THOMAS

Why don't you find her a farmer or a nice florist?

STEPHEN

I need grounds for a divorce. That's the name of the game. Ask any lawyer—give them grounds—adultery, photos, names, dates, places.

(As STEPHEN speaks, HE stealthily reveals a small object. It's a video camera)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

I'm not talking about anything weird here. It's the way it's done. I don't like it any more than you do.

THOMAS

What is that?

STEPHEN

A video camera.

THOMAS

It doesn't look like a camera.

STEPHEN

That's the beauty of it. This is the kind of thing spies use. You can hide it anywhere, like a chameleon. She'll never see it. Thing'll connect to a phone app.

(STEPHEN places the camera behind plants. Steps back and observes the camera. HE's unsatisfied and moves the camera behind other plants)

THOMAS

I don't know if she even likes me.

STEPHEN

She likes you. She talks about you all the time.

(STEPHEN moves plants to hid the camera. Jerks off some leaves to open the view. HE tosses the leaves the floor)

THOMAS

She'll end up hating us both.

STEPHEN

What do you care? She looks good for her age. She's not exactly a dead fish in bed. Maybe she doesn't have big boobs, but none of the girls you dated had big boobs. I know, I looked. She keeps herself in shape. And she loves plants.

THOMAS

So what more could I want?

(From about the room STEPHEN finds more plants to hide the camera)

STEPHEN

One night, one hour, that's all I'm asking. Just try.

THOMAS

You're asking me to sleep with your wife.

STEPHEN

All I want is a simple yes or no.

THOMAS

I've been saying no all week.

STEPHEN

The plan's simple. Susan's to meet me here. She thinks the three of us are going out to dinner.

THOMAS

All your life, you've always been a real jerk. You're selfish; you're self-centered; you've never cared about other people's feelings.

STEPHEN

I'm not a bad guy. I'm trying to do the smart thing for once. For both our sakes, Susan's and mine.

THOMAS

Do you think I haven't asked myself just how legal this is?

STEPHEN

This is the type of thing lawyers want.

THOMAS

It's wrong.

STEPHEN

You do this and I swear I'll never ask you to do anything else. All I'm asking is you try. If it doesn't work-

(Pause)

I'll try something else.

THOMAS

You've been using my apartment for a year and a half to meet your women. I live here. I'm not the one who's supposed to be out looking for a motel room for the night. I told you I'm moving. You're going to have to find another place as soon as I sublet.

STEPHEN

You're my best friend. I've offered to pay a share of the rent. After tonight, I won't need your place again.

(Satisfied the camera is hidden, STEPHEN continues to change his clothes. From the closet, STEPHEN brings out a box of his "things" - jewelry, medallions, mouth spray, whatever. HE brings out several loud shirts and a coat)

THOMAS

So, you've decided you want me to seduce your wife. On video. Grounds for divorce. Then I take Susan out for dinner while you meet Debbie, or whatever her name is, in my apartment. Again.

STEPHEN

If you do this, in two weeks I'll have my own place.

THOMAS

What if she finds the camera? What am I supposed to tell her?

STEPHEN

I've never known anyone who worries as much as you do.

(Pause)

I don't know, tell her your plants like watching sex on TV, it makes them grow. Tell her anything but the truth.

THOMAS

I just can't see myself jumping into bed with your wife.

STEPHEN

You're not going to get far with an attitude like that. I tried to get you to come to the success seminars. Think positive. Know you can do this. Imagine yourself doing it. Visualize it-you're slowly undressing her-my wife naked in your arms-you're breathing in her ear telling her how much you want her.

(This is having no effect on THOMAS)

Take her out to eat. She loves to eat out, and she loves wine. But you only wine and dine her to get her in the sack.

(Slight pause)

The problem with you both is that you try to be too high-class. I've never known two other people more happy sitting in a restaurant trying to use etiquette, ordering the right wine, trying to pronounce some stupid French word for chicken. Just tell the waiter you want a number three. Do you think it won't taste as good?

(Slight pause)

Oh, I can see it now.

(Mimicking SUSAN and THOMAS. Primly)

"Delightful music don't you think. Monet, isn't it? No, no, I do believe that's Beethoven."

THOMAS

Monet painted.

STEPHEN

I don't care if he painted outhouses. The only reason some men sit around being so damned polite is they don't know how to make a woman feel like she's a woman.

THOMAS

I'm sure you could tell me.

STEPHEN

I could write the book.

THOMAS

There's more to a relationship than sex. And that's my coat.

STEPHEN

Oh no, don't tell me, you want a fulfilling and meaningful relationship. That's so beautiful.

(STEPHEN drops the coat over the sofa and gets another from the closet. THOMAS hangs up his coat)

THOMAS

There's nothing wrong with that.

STEPHEN

The world is sex and greed and money, and you're flopping around wanting to hold hands in a meaningful relationship.

THOMAS

It's important to me.

STEPHEN

I tried to tell you in high school. While you were opening the car doors and pinning flowers on their dresses, being the perfect gentleman-and granted, their parents thought you were a grand fellow-their daughters were ripping my pants off on Dun's Mountain.

THOMAS

I guess some people never learn.

STEPHEN

A woman likes a little romance, so she won't feel like a tramp. But get to the point. I'm telling you, Susan's horny. I know, she's had a damn headache for the past two years. I put the camera right here. She'll never see it. Did I mention I want you to keep the camera afterwards?

THOMAS

No. You didn't.

STEPHEN

Light some candles, add a little romance. I swear. You do this, and I'll never, ever ask you to do anything for me-

STEPHEN and THOMAS

As long as I live.

THOMAS (cont'd)

I've been doing crappy favors for you since junior high. I mean it, never ask me to do anything for you again.

STEPHEN

I could have gone out and hired somebody to do this, if it was just a simple matter of finding someone to sleep with my wife.

STEPHEN (cont'd)

What kind of person do you think I am? I asked my best friend to do this, because I care about Susan.

THOMAS

And I definitely feel honored that you chose me.

STEPHEN

Things are really just opening up for me. I'm on the verge of making some big money. But what's the one thing that it takes to make big money?

THOMAS

What?

STEPHEN

Money.

THOMAS

Of course.

STEPHEN

If I left Susan right now, she'd get half of what I've got. And that would put me right out of business. A bad divorce could screw everything up for me and for her. I could lose everything I've spent the last fifteen years building. I'm just finally getting my share of the chemical cleaner market.

THOMAS

Susan's half the reason you've made any success of yourself. In case you've forgotten, it was Susan who paid the bills twelve of the last fifteen years.

STEPHEN

Yeah, but nothing I've done counts for anything?

THOMAS

I just know you, and Susan's a nice person. You can't walk all over her.

STEPHEN

I just wish you'd stop defending her. I'm your best friend, remember that.

THOMAS

I don't want to see Susan hurt.

STEPHEN

Whoa, whoa, whoa! You miss the point. You help me get through this, and when I make it big in the next year or so, I'll drop a bundle on her.

THOMAS

You're such a sweetheart.

STEPHEN

I'm not kidding. The one thing I need-

THOMAS

Money.

STEPHEN

I need this video. I've got absolutely nothing on her. You have to do this, Thomas.

THOMAS

I don't have to do anything, Stephen.

STEPHEN

Would I say that to you? You're like a brother to me.

THOMAS

I need some time to think.

STEPHEN

Time. We've got plenty of time.

(Just misses pronouncing the name)

You still got any of that Chateauneuf-du-Pape?

(STEPHEN finds the bottle)

THOMAS

I've still got Chateauneuf-du-Pape.

STEPHEN

She loves it.

THOMAS

I remember.

STEPHEN

Good. Give her some. Get her drunk.

(STEPHEN gives THOMAS the bottle)

THOMAS

Whether I agree or not, I'm already a part of it. A little compromise here, a little there, that's your routine. If I'll do this, then why won't I do that?

STEPHEN

Just relax.

(STEPHEN works with the camera)

Sit on the sofa and let me check this thing out.

THOMAS

I've got to lie, one way or the other, for you. What am I supposed to tell her when she sees you're not here?

STEPHEN

Tell her I'm at Allied, she knows how much money that could mean. Then later I bring Debbie over, very simple. Everybody's happy. Just don't let her see the camera.

THOMAS

And be out of here by nine, because I'm not going to a motel.

STEPHEN

Just listen once to me-when you get this feeling you want her, don't think, don't talk, don't fill her wine glass, just jump on her.

THOMAS

I hope you know what you're asking.

STEPHEN

I know what's best for her. Trust me.

THOMAS

I will do my best to sleep with your wife. That's all I can promise. If that's not enough, hire somebody.

STEPHEN

I've got a feeling that she'll fall for you. And you know as well as I do, divorce is war.

THOMAS

How do I turn it on?

STEPHEN

Right.

(STEPHEN searches in his pants pockets and finds
a remote control)

You just push the button. Right here.

(STEPHEN shows THOMAS)

Don't think she wouldn't put the screws to me if she knew I was
up to something like this. So don't get a sudden case of guilt
and tell her. No matter what-do it.

(Blackout)

End Of ACT I

Scene 1

ACT I

Scene 2

At Rise: Later, THOMAS is setting out two wine glasses. There is a knock at the door. HE freezes, takes a deep breath, and turns the camera on. THOMAS lets SUSAN in. SHE is wearing a coat and gloves. SHE is glad to get into THOMAS's warm apartment. The two are awkward alone with one another.

THOMAS

Come in.

SUSAN

It's so cold out.

(THOMAS kisses SUSAN on the cheek)

THOMAS

They say it might snow tonight.

(THOMAS helps her with her coat)

SUSAN

Thank you.

(THOMAS sees SUSAN looks for STEPHEN)

THOMAS

Stephen called about ten minutes ago.

SUSAN

He's not here? I knew he'd forget.

(SHE takes her coat)

THOMAS

He didn't forget.

(THOMAS takes her coat)

SUSAN

(Concerned)

Is anything wrong?

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

Why didn't he call me?

THOMAS

I don't know.

(THOMAS places the coat on the sofa)

SUSAN

I should have known.

(SHE gathers her coat)

THOMAS

He still might get here. They wanted to make a deal tonight. Something. There was nothing he could do. He said he'd lose the account if he didn't stay. He said you know how hard he's worked to get his foot in the door with Allied.

SUSAN

Allied? I thought he was at Fulton Industry today.

THOMAS

I think he said Allied. Please.

(SUSAN lets THOMAS takes her coat)

SUSAN

I'm sorry, I haven't even asked how you've been?

THOMAS

I've been fine. And you?

SUSAN

Fine too.

THOMAS

We don't get to see one another as often as we once did.

SUSAN

Not since your divorce.

(Holding up the bottle of Chateauneuf-du-Pape)

THOMAS

Do you want some wine?

SUSAN

I should go home.

THOMAS

He really does want you to wait.

SUSAN

It's just that I was so looking forward to seeing you tonight.

(Catches herself feeling for THOMAS)

I should cancel the dinner reservations.

THOMAS

Don't. We can visit.

SUSAN

If you're sure you don't mind?

THOMAS

I don't mind.

(SUSAN examines several plants, wandering close to the camera. At once, THOMAS comes between SUSAN and the camera. HE leads her to the sofa)

THOMAS (cont'd)

I'm happy for the company, especially since it's you.

SUSAN

Do you know what I'd really love?

THOMAS

No?

SUSAN

A cup of tea. It's been so damp and cold all day. It feels wonderful in here.

THOMAS

Tea?

SUSAN

I love hot tea on cold nights.

THOMAS

If I have any, I'll make you some.

SUSAN

Would you? Hot tea's such a cozy drink.

(Again SHE moves towards the camera. THOMAS takes her back to the sofa)

THOMAS

Would you mind sitting? I'll be right back.

(THOMAS exits to kitchen)

SUSAN

(Calls out)

It's a shame you don't have a fireplace. When we moved to the country, I had Stephen build one in our bedroom.

(THOMAS enters)

THOMAS

I don't think I have tea. How about hot rum? It's even cozier.

SUSAN

It doesn't matter.

THOMAS

I can go out and get you tea.

SUSAN

It's just that another evening's ruined. It's always something. Stephen's closing a deal, car trouble, he's too tired to drive back.

THOMAS

Don't you like Chateauneuf-du-Pape? I remember you always drinking it.

SUSAN

Maybe one glass.

(Pause)

I did want to go out to dinner tonight.

THOMAS

You have the reservations. We can still go. If Stephen doesn't make it back.

SUSAN

You don't have to say that on my account. And certainly not as a favor to Stephen.

THOMAS

I mean it. I'd love to take a beautiful woman to dinner. As a friend, of course.

(THOMAS hands SUSAN wine)

SUSAN

Thank you.

THOMAS

What do you say? You have to eat. You're already in town. You're dressed. You're hungry. Why not?

SUSAN

I guess we could have dinner as friends. Certainly there wouldn't be any harm in dining with a friend.

THOMAS

No, not at all.

SUSAN

The reservations are made. I'll even make Stephen pay.

THOMAS

Then let's just enjoy ourselves. It's a pleasure to be with a beautiful lady.

SUSAN

I'm an old married woman.

THOMAS

I'd call you anything but an old married woman.

SUSAN

I am.

(Slight pause. SUSAN becomes uncomfortable)

I was reading in House Plant magazine Dieffenbachias are supposed to be watered once a week. I did exactly as the article suggested, and of course it withered and died.

THOMAS

I love a woman with long hair. Why do you wear it up?

SUSAN

I'm getting it cut tomorrow.

THOMAS

Don't. You have such beautiful hair, leave it long. When you go out, you must drive men mad.

SUSAN

I'm married.

(Awkwardly, THOMAS moves towards SUSAN. SHE backs away. THOMAS follows her. SUSAN becomes more and more uncomfortable and nervous)

SUSAN (cont'd)

Have you read you're only supposed to water Schefflera half as much as normal in the winter? How am I supposed to know what's half as much? I don't know what normal is. Have you noticed that, how TV and magazines only give half information, half the facts, just enough so that I get confused? There's this decaffeinated coffee commercial that asks very profoundly,

(Mimicking deep important voice)

"Is your coffee naturally decaffeinated?" And of course they say theirs is. Only, how could you artificially decaffeinate coffee?

THOMAS

I don't know.

SUSAN

That's the sort of thing that drives me crazy

THOMAS

I don't like decaffeinated coffee.

SUSAN

Caffeinated, decaffeinated, who cares?

(Holding out her glass between them)

THOMAS

Another?

(THOMAS takes her wine glass)

SUSAN

A small one.

(Susan gathers herself)

So, are you seeing anyone now?

THOMAS

No. No one.

SUSAN

I'd hate to have to be single again. I wouldn't know how to act. I wouldn't know how to meet people.

THOMAS

I don't think it would be that hard. You're a lovely woman. Men must always be flirting with you.

SUSAN

I'm not the type men notice. When I was single, I was never comfortable meeting people. I was so shy.

THOMAS

Maybe you've changed. Maybe you're not shy now.

SUSAN

I'm probably worse now. With Stephen gone all the time, I've gotten used to being lonely-alone.

THOMAS

I would never leave a woman like you alone.

SUSAN

Stephen would be here if he could. I know how busy he is. I try to understand. I keep saying that. How I understand. I wonder.

THOMAS

What?

SUSAN

I know how much he's working. He's gone all the time. I want him to take some time off. I want him home. But that's so selfish of me. I just can't place more demands on him, not when he's trying so hard to make the business work.

(Pause)

He confides in you, doesn't he? He's your friend. Stephen would tell you things he wouldn't tell me. I've wondered if there's someone else.

THOMAS

(To the camera)

If he were seeing someone else, he's a fool.

SUSAN

I can't believe I said that. I don't know why I did.

THOMAS

Maybe that's the point. You did say it.

SUSAN

I hate myself for thinking it when I know it must be something I've done, or I'm doing. I'm sorry. I better go.

(Stopping her)

THOMAS

I don't want you to go. I want you to stay. I don't like seeing you unhappy.

SUSAN

Unhappy? I'm happy. Why would you say I'm not? Of course I'm happy. I'm very happy. I'm married to a wonderful man, aren't I?

THOMAS

Why don't you leave your hair long?

(THOMAS touches her hair)

SUSAN

Please don't.

THOMAS

You're a beautiful woman.

SUSAN

Please stop, you're making me uncomfortable.

THOMAS

Am I?

SUSAN

Yes.

THOMAS

I've always resented how he treats you.

SUSAN

He's a wonderful husband.

THOMAS

I know you don't believe that?

SUSAN

Think anything you want.

THOMAS

I know him, too. Maybe better than you think. I don't like how he treats you.

SUSAN

I don't think the relationship between my husband and me is any of your business.

THOMAS

I care about you.

SUSAN

I don't want to hear this. I'm here waiting for my husband. If you've gotten the wrong idea, I'm sorry.

THOMAS

I've always cared about you.

SUSAN

I'm sure, as a friend to both Stephen and me. As we care about you, too, as a friend.

THOMAS

You're a beautiful woman.

SUSAN

You told me.

THOMAS

You've known for a long time how I feel about you?

SUSAN

I said I care about you as a friend; nothing more could ever be between us. Nothing.

THOMAS

Then we do care about one another.

SUSAN

No, we don't.

THOMAS

You just said we do.

SUSAN

I mean we must care about one another in the proper way, which doesn't mean I want you caring about me in other ways.

(THOMAS pulls SUSAN towards HIM. Their faces are close, about to kiss. SHE backs away)

SUSAN (cont'd)

I don't want you caring about me anymore.

THOMAS

We both know he won't be back tonight.

SUSAN

That doesn't give you permission to act this way, to say these things.

THOMAS

Susan, if you could only understand.

SUSAN

If you continue, I'm going to say something to Stephen.

THOMAS

I don't care. Go ahead and tell him whatever you like.

SUSAN

I-I'm not sure what I think.

THOMAS

You're here now, with me.

SUSAN

I am, but.

(Suddenly, SHE grabs her pocketbook and exits)

I have to go to the bathroom.

(HE drinks her wine. HE drinks his wine. HE pulls out the sofa bed, pillows, sheets)

THOMAS

What the hell, I feel something. Don't think. So jump on her. Right. Rip off her clothes. All right. I can do it. I want her!

(HE stops)

I can't do this.

(Enter SUSAN. THOMAS freezes)

SUSAN

What are you doing?

THOMAS

I'm-I'm-nothing.

SUSAN

Don't think I'm an idiot.

THOMAS

No. No. I don't think you're an idiot. I can explain this.

SUSAN

I can see exactly what you've got on your mind. I'm disappointed in you, Thomas. Stephen is my husband, your best friend.

THOMAS

Your husband and my best friend is a jerk. You don't understand. I don't care, I want him to know how I feel.

(To camera)

If you don't tell him, I will.

SUSAN

No, you won't.

THOMAS

I am. I'm going to tell him he's a jerk. I don't like how he treats you.

(Pause)

I love you.

SUSAN

What did you say?

THOMAS

I love you.

SUSAN

I had no idea.

(Pause)

You really are in love with me?

THOMAS

Leave Stephen.

SUSAN

Thomas. I'm flattered. I like you, but-

THOMAS

You know as well as I do your marriage is over.

(Taking SUSAN in his arms. SHE backs away)

SUSAN

I think you'd be a very attractive man if I weren't a married woman. I'm sure I would have always found you attractive if I wasn't married.

THOMAS

I don't care if you're married.

SUSAN

I'm saying if I weren't, you'd be desirable.

(Pause)

I would think.

(Quickly)

But I'm married, so I wouldn't know. I'm only guessing.

THOMAS

I know you feel the same way. I've seen how you look at me.

SUSAN

I don't look at you.

(THEY kiss. SUSAN struggles to reject HIM, but SHE gives in passionately just as THOMAS pulls away disgusted with HIMSELF)

THOMAS

I can't do this.

SUSAN

You're right. We mustn't.

THOMAS

It's all wrong.

SUSAN

It's not like we've planned this. It happened.

THOMAS

Nothing happened.

SUSAN

We almost did.

(SHE advances, HE backs from HER)

THOMAS

I need to explain. This just didn't happen.

SUSAN

It didn't?

THOMAS

You don't understand why you're here.

SUSAN

I'm here to meet my husband, but, Thomas, now-

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

Then for dinner but-

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

For you?

THOMAS

What if I told you I'm supposed to seduce you tonight?

SUSAN

What?

THOMAS

That's right. I'm supposed to. This was all planned.

SUSAN

You planned for us to be here alone tonight?

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

You just said you did.

THOMAS

I did, but-

SUSAN

You did or you didn't.

THOMAS

Would you let me explain?

SUSAN

Please.

THOMAS

It's true, you came here tonight so I could seduce you, but you're not supposed to know I'm supposed to seduce you.

SUSAN

How could I not know?

THOMAS

I wouldn't have told you.

SUSAN

That you would have seduced me? I would have known if you seduced me, wouldn't I?

THOMAS

That I'm supposed to seduce you, but you wouldn't have known if I hadn't told you.

(SUSAN advances towards THOMAS)

SUSAN

It's true. I've always desired you. Alice never cared for you. I could see that. The four of us—I wanted you all to myself.

THOMAS

You don't understand.

SUSAN

In those garden shops, I never cared about plants.

THOMAS

I want to seduce you, but I won't because I'm supposed to, so I'm not. I can't. I'm not that type of man.

SUSAN

What type of man?

THOMAS

I would only want to because I want to. So I'm not.

SUSAN

What has all this been about tonight? My beautiful hair—how lovely I am. How you hate to see my husband, your best friend, treat me so callously. Leading me on.

THOMAS

I wasn't leading you on.

SUSAN

Don't feel like you have to try and seduce me. You better hope I don't tell Stephen.

THOMAS

Tell him what?

SUSAN

Oh, I see that's probably what you want. I'm beginning to understand.

THOMAS

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

Do you really think you could convince me you want me that way? And how could you possibly think I'd have any interest in you?

THOMAS

We both know where he is, and we can do what we want.

SUSAN

What do you think we should do?

THOMAS

What we both want.

SUSAN

Are we waiting for the mood? Is that what we're doing?

THOMAS

For whatever happens.

SUSAN

I've known for quite some time.

THOMAS

Known what?

SUSAN

I understand, you're-

(Pause)

sensitive. I've wanted to tell you I've known. And you're right, I do care about you, but I'm not judging you. Don't you see how getting this out can do nothing but make it so much better.

THOMAS

Get what out? What are you saying? You don't want me to seduce you? You want me to seduce you? You want me to try? What?

SUSAN

I've always suspected. And I'm saying, it's okay. I would never betray your confidence. If you're not going to face this, then tell me when was the last time you had a woman?

THOMAS

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

Even Stephen's noticed.

(SHE pours herself a glass of wine)

SUSAN (cont'd)

He made a comment the other week that you haven't really dated anyone since Alice left. Well, why not?

THOMAS

Just tell me, are you going to sleep with me or not?

SUSAN

You're beginning to look foolish.

THOMAS

Just give me a yes or no. Are you going to sleep with me or not?

SUSAN

I would never do anything to hurt Stephen. Which really makes all this charade of yours quite safe, doesn't it?

THOMAS

Safe?

SUSAN

Do you think you could force yourself on me and prove something?

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

Then, you do see.

THOMAS

I don't see anything. Just forget anything I said.

SUSAN

You said I was very beautiful and you thought my hair was-

THOMAS

Do you want to go eat? Do you want to go home? I can go out, you stay here and get a pizza delivered. Do whatever makes you happy.

SUSAN

I would love to have your company. I have friends who say male friends like you make wonderful companions.

THOMAS

Do you want to eat?

SUSAN

Are you the type who wants to bare his soul? I don't know if I'm up to that tonight. Is it sordid?

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

Oh.

(Pause)

I haven't upset you?

THOMAS

Can we just go and eat?

SUSAN

Let me comb my hair.

(SHE exits to bathroom. THOMAS rushes to the camera. HE doesn't know what to do. HE takes it, thinks to break it apart, anything. SUSAN enters)

SUSAN

Well, lets go.

(SHE takes the camera out of his hands)

SUSAN (cont'd)

What are you doing?

THOMAS

Nothing.

(SHE tosses the camera)

SUSAN

Would you please hurry.

(SHE pulls HIM out. THOMAS is reaching
desperately for the camera as the lights fade)

SUSAN (cont'd)

I'm hungry.

(Blackout)

End of ACT I

Scene 2

ACT I

Scene 3

At Rise: Later. We hear fumbling at the front door and laughter. There's a knock and STEPHEN peeks in to make sure THOMAS is gone. The door opens. STEPHEN and DEBBIE enter.

DEBBIE

What did he leave us to eat tonight?

(DEBBIE tosses her coat over the sofa)

DEBBIE (cont'd)

I'm starved.

(STEPHEN sees the sofa bed is out and smiles)

STEPHEN

For me?

DEBBIE

A steak.

STEPHEN

How can you eat so much and not get fat?

DEBBIE

I have my way of keeping in shape.

(STEPHEN takes DEBBIE into his arms)

STEPHEN

Yeah. So show me.

DEBBIE

Aren't you going to be a sweetie tonight and at least make me a drink?

STEPHEN

Okay, one drink.

(DEBBIE goes towards the kitchen. STEPHEN stops her)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Where are you going? Debbie, dear, it's late and Thomas is going to be back sometime. So can we hurry up?

DEBBIE

I told you I was hungry.

(STEPHEN begins making her a drink)

STEPHEN

Will you come on. We don't have all night, so why aren't you getting your clothes off? Capiche?

(DEBBIE knows the routine, where the cushions go, that pillows are in the closet, etc.)

DEBBIE

It's always rush, rush, rush. You should go ahead and get your own place.

STEPHEN

Maybe I am already.

(DEBBIE's attention turns towards an imaginary curtain down stage. STEPHEN pours bourbon and adds a drop of ginger ale into her glass)

DEBBIE

I'll believe it when I see it, just like when you keep saying you're leaving her.

STEPHEN

Maybe you don't know everything. And you're not getting your clothes off. Concentrate on one thing at a time.

DEBBIE

Then I want my drink. Bourbon and ginger.

STEPHEN

Okay. Coming.

(Handing DEBBIE the drink)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Here, happy now, so come on.

(HE unbuttons his shirt)

DEBBIE

I saw some cute curtains yesterday that would just go right in here.

(SHE imagines)

You know, with ruffles and bows, it'd make it more homey.

STEPHEN

Curtains?

DEBBIE

They were blue.

STEPHEN

Come on.

(DEBBIE begins to undress)

DEBBIE

I've always thought the curtains were wrong in here. I ought to get my girlfriend to come by, boy she'd have some ideas. She's sort of single now. She thinks this guy she's been seeing left her.

STEPHEN

She thinks that.

DEBBIE

He hadn't been around for a couple of months. I told her I wouldn't be looking for him to come back.

(SHE sips her drink)

DEBBIE (cont'd)

It's too strong.

STEPHEN

Give it here.

(Taking the drink and going back to the bar,
STEPHEN adds more bourbon)

DEBBIE

As much as we're here, maybe I ought to mention it to your friend. You know, about those blue curtains. And a couple of small tables with doilies. I saw some good buys yesterday.

STEPHEN

We'll leave him a note.

DEBBIE

(Dreamily)

So?

STEPHEN

So what?

(SHE sees a place on a wall)

DEBBIE

So maybe a blue picture here. Like with those flowers where they really plaster on the paint. You know, one of those van Gogh's.

STEPHEN

Who?

DEBBIE

And blue curtains.

STEPHEN

The place is already great, it's got a bed, it's got a bathroom. And it's free.

DEBBIE

I was just thinking.

STEPHEN

I've warned you, don't.

DEBBIE

A girl's got to think for herself. I keep asking are you leaving her. And you say yeah, sure, and here we are again. Yeah sure, yeah sure.

(Hands DEBBIE her drink)

STEPHEN

I'm going to leave when things are right. I understand, you don't, so the thing to do here is you trust me.

DEBBIE

I told you when we met I don't go out with married men, that's my rule.

STEPHEN

I'm a married man and you go out with me.

DEBBIE

That's what I mean, you're supposed to get a divorce. Besides, I would have never gone out with you, but you said you weren't married.

STEPHEN

I told you up front I was married.

DEBBIE

You said you were separated. You even took your wedding ring off. I'm wise to that trick now.

STEPHEN

What do you mean, you're wise to that trick now?

DEBBIE

I told my girlfriend married men take off their rings. She doesn't go out with married men either.

(SHE sips the drink)

STEPHEN

So will you get your clothes off?

DEBBIE

It's still too strong. You know I don't like strong drinks.

STEPHEN

You're going to ruin the mood.

(STEPHEN takes her drink and adds bourbon)

DEBBIE

I think we should talk first.

STEPHEN

Talk. What do you want to talk about? You don't know anything to talk about.

DEBBIE

Not like your fancy wife. Maybe we should talk about her.

(Handing DEBBIE the drink)

STEPHEN

Why don't we talk later.

(DEBBIE downs her drink)

DEBBIE

Now that's better.

STEPHEN

Let me do something.

(STEPHEN finds his camera. HE finds his phone to connect with the camera)

DEBBIE

What?

(SHE squirms under the covers)

STEPHEN

I want to watch something.

DEBBIE

I thought you were in such a big hurry.

STEPHEN

This will just take a minute.

(SHE dangles her bra over the bed and slings it to STEPHEN)

DEBBIE

I don't want to wait any more.

(Deciding whether or not to look at the recording. HE decides not to. HIS pants are

loosened and fall to his ankles as HE waddles towards the bed)

STEPHEN

Okay, okay, here I come.

DEBBIE

(Giggles)

I see our little friend poking his head out the window.

STEPHEN

You sound like an idiot.

DEBBIE

I was only encouraging it along. The other day it never would come out to play.

STEPHEN

Talking like that, what would you expect?

(STEPHEN gets into the bed)

DEBBIE

Maybe you'd better take me home.

STEPHEN

Move over here. I feel hot tonight. What a life.

(Quizzical look, and idea, SHE suddenly pulls away from STEPHEN)

DEBBIE

You know, that would do it. Blue curtains and maybe a little blue rug over there.

STEPHEN

Who cares?

DEBBIE

I was just thinking it wouldn't be so bad here. It seems like we're here every night. Make it a little nicer. I always wanted an apartment like this. With a window.

STEPHEN

What apartment have you been in that didn't come with a window?

DEBBIE

That's such a beautiful window. And I bet you anything that's beveled glass. You just can't go out and get that anymore.

STEPHEN

Thomas is leaving, maybe you can sublet this place.

DEBBIE

Yeah? He's leaving?

STEPHEN

Sure, sometime.

DEBBIE

I want you to talk to him for me, maybe he'd let me go ahead and sublet if he finds another place.

STEPHEN

I'll do that for you. And for me.

(He puckers and makes a kissing sound)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Come on.

(Looking under sheets, SHE looks up and makes a sound of dissatisfaction)

DEBBIE

Hunh.

STEPHEN

What's wrong with you now?

DEBBIE

Nothing with me.

STEPHEN

Then what?

DEBBIE

It's playing dead again. Do you want me to talk dirty to my teddy bear?

(SHE whispers in his ear)

STEPHEN

Talk. Talk. Talk.

(Looking under the covers. HE looks up, smiles)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

It's getting there.

DEBBIE

I got an idea.

STEPHEN

I've got an idea.

(STEPHEN begins to get out of bed. SHE pulls Stephen back)

DEBBIE

What? Will you come on? One minute you can't wait and the next you're running off.

(Pause)

It's exasperating.

STEPHEN

I was going to tape us. Have you ever been video taped?

DEBBIE

Sure, lots of times. I studied modeling. I could have been a model.

(Pause)

I could still be a model if I wanted.

STEPHEN

You told me you were a model when we met.

DEBBIE

Well sure, I've modeled plenty.

STEPHEN

Will you talk dirty? Just talk.

(SHE whispers in his ear, looks under the covers)

DEBBIE

You like that. A girl can tell.

STEPHEN

Yeah, but there's something else I like.

(SHE giggles and dives under the covers)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Tell me I'm the best.

(DEBBIE sits up)

DEBBIE

You might be. When you're working.

STEPHEN

I'm doing my part.

(Getting out of the bed with the bedspread or sheet wrapped around her)

DEBBIE

I'm going to the bathroom.

STEPHEN

Didn't you just go?

DEBBIE

The problem with you is yourself.

STEPHEN

What's that supposed to mean?

DEBBIE

I might have to do some thinking on my own. And I'm hungry. You know any decent guy would have taken me out to eat.

STEPHEN

Debbie, sweetheart. Come on back in here.

(As SHE crosses the room and steps through the doorway and exits, STEPHEN catches the bedspread or sheet and pulls it off. HE's on the floor and crawls into the kitchen. We hear playful sounds of pots and pans, etc. from the kitchen)

DEBBIE

(Off stage)

Not the whipped cream.

STEPHEN

(Off stage)

Look out.

(DEBBIE, wearing the sheet, runs back into the room. STEPHEN enters with a can of whipped cream chasing DEBBIE. THOMAS enters. STEPHEN runs into THOMAS)

STEPHEN (cont'd)

Thomas!

THOMAS

What are you doing here?

STEPHEN

You're supposed to call before you come charging in here.

THOMAS

Susan's here.

(STEPHEN looks out the door. THOMAS closes the door and locks it)

STEPHEN

Now!

THOMAS

She down the hallway talking to Mrs. Wilson in 3B. You've got to go. And you're not dressed. Neither is she. What's going on here?

STEPHEN

What does it look like?

THOMAS

You've got to leave. Right now.

STEPHEN

She'll see us.

THOMAS

Then hide and I'll get her out of here first.

(DEBBIE goes for cover, under a chair, a table,
anywhere to hid)

STEPHEN

Okay.

(To DEBBIE)

Get your clothes. And don't say a word. It's my wife. She's
coming here.

(STEPHEN hands THOMAS the can of whipped cream.
THOMAS and STEPHEN begin putting up the sofa
bed. The cushions go in the wrong places.
DEBBIE gathers her clothing, but only finds one
shoe. The other shoe ends up under a sofa
cushion. STEPHEN gathers his clothing, all but
his pants. The room is crazy, frantic)

DEBBIE

I'd like to give her a word or two.

STEPHEN

How'd you do with Susan?

THOMAS

You didn't see the video?

STEPHEN

No.

THOMAS

It wasn't even close.

(DEBBIE can't find the other shoe)

STEPHEN

I was counting on you. I'm not leaving. You try again. And I'm
going to stay to make sure you do it right.

THOMAS

I can't.

STEPHEN

We've been through this. Think positive. Stop fooling around and start fooling around and do it.

THOMAS

Are you crazy?

STEPHEN

Do it.

THOMAS

It's going to be rather difficult to do it with your wife while you're standing in the middle of the room watching. Hurry up, you've got to hide somewhere.

DEBBIE

The bathroom.

(DEBBIE and STEPHEN charge off to the bathroom,
THOMAS pulls the two back)

STEPHEN

Don't let her use it.

THOMAS

Not the bathroom.

(THOMAS pushing DEBBIE towards the kitchen)

THOMAS (cont'd)

The kitchen.

(STEPHEN pulls DEBBIE back)

STEPHEN

Not the kitchen, don't ask me why, but after sex Susan likes to stand and look in the refrigerator.

(Knock at the door. ALL freeze)

THOMAS

In here.

(THOMAS opens the closet)

DEBBIE

The closet.

STEPHEN

I'm counting on you, Thomas.

THOMAS

(To DEBBIE)

Not a sound.

(THOMAS closes the closet door. THOMAS lets SUSAN in. HE is still holding the can of whipped cream. First chance, HE tosses the can into the closet)

SUSAN

Everything all right?

THOMAS

Fine.

SUSAN

I know you're mad at me. I'm sorry.

THOMAS

Let's not talk about it. At all.

SUSAN

It's out now, one way or the other so what difference could it make between us? We could let this ruin what's been a reasonable dinner, one I enjoyed at least. The coq au vin was wonderful.

(SUSAN is removing her coat. THOMAS attempts to put it back on HER)

THOMAS

Dinner was fine, what little I had.

SUSAN

You let things upset you.

THOMAS

Maybe you're right.

SUSAN

Are we staying or leaving?

THOMAS

Well, it's so late.

SUSAN

And when you think about it, I'm the one who should be angry. Stephen never came, he didn't call. I should go.

(THOMAS sees STEPHEN's pants, and kicks the pants as much as HE can under the sofa)

THOMAS

Probably so.

SUSAN

Let me run to the bathroom and I'll go.

(THOMAS opens the closet door)

THOMAS

She's leaving.

(DEBBIE looks out. STEPHEN pulls HER back in)

STEPHEN

Don't let her out of here until you two do it. Don't forget the camera. Think of this like a space launch, a window of opportunity closing fast, fire the main boosters, lift off!

THOMAS

Neither of you make a sound until we go. Gag her with something if you have to.

SUSAN

(Off stage)

Thomas.

(THOMAS closes the doors. SUSAN returns)

SUSAN

You're out of paper.

THOMAS

Below the sink.

(SUSAN turns to exit and the closet doors opens.)

DEBBIE giggles and THOMAS closes the doors)

THOMAS (cont'd)

Be quiet in there.

(SUSAN steps back into the room)

SUSAN

Did you say something, Thomas?

THOMAS

Susan, Do you know what? I feel like coffee and a doughnut.

(HE gathers her coat)

THOMAS (cont'd)

What do you say we run out for a quick bite?

SUSAN

We just ate.

THOMAS

You're right. So why don't we go again?

SUSAN

I might as well do something, rather than sit at home alone all night. Again.

THOMAS

Coffee and doughnuts.

(Near the front door SUSAN stops and turns back into the room)

SUSAN

That or sex. Why shouldn't I? Statistically under my profile and age, I'm supposed to have already had an affair. Two in fact, according to just about any magazine you read. Do you think there's something wrong with me, Thomas?

THOMAS

No.

SUSAN

Then why haven't I?

THOMAS

Opportunity?

SUSAN

I've got the opportunity now, and, no offense, but with the wrong person.

THOMAS

We could have done it. I would have liked to actually—you know, but—

SUSAN

Looking back I'm sure there have been many opportunities. I find a lot of men attractive. Is it me? I try to put out the signs, not that I would actually do anything. Or plan to do anything, but you think, well, one thing can always innocently lead to another thing not so innocent. You don't suppose the men I've thought about doing it with are—do you think it's some sort of subconscious fidelity holding me back?

THOMAS

Susan, I find you a very attractive woman.

SUSAN

We've been through it all, a lot of good admiration does me.

THOMAS

You don't understand. Sit down. I'm going to tell you something. I want you to listen. And in a few minutes you may hate me. But after a little time, when you've calmed down, I hope you will understand. I want you to know, I have always liked you. I'd look at Alice and I'd wonder why she couldn't be more like you.

(THOMAS stands at the closet door, about to open it. STEPHEN opens the door and pushes THOMAS out into the room)

SUSAN

Really?

THOMAS

Yes.

SUSAN

I was jealous of Alice's having you.

THOMAS

Really.

SUSAN

Yes. Before tonight, I mean.

(It occurs to THOMAS to show SUSAN the tape. HE crawls about the room looking for it)

THOMAS

If you never speak to me again, I've got to tell you the truth.

SUSAN

I think I understand Thomas, but why not do it? You may find you'd like it.

THOMAS

We'll do whatever you want, right after I explain what's happened here tonight.

SUSAN

Thomas, what are you looking for?

THOMAS

A camera.

SUSAN

You're acting very strange. I'm going to the bathroom.

(SUSAN exits to bathroom. THOMAS watches SUSAN exit, then rushes to the closet, pulling STEPHEN out)

THOMAS

I'm telling her the truth.

(Pushing STEPHEN back in; THOMAS closes doors. STEPHEN opens the doors)

STEPHEN

Are you crazy?

THOMAS

I've always loved her. Really loved her.

(DEBBIE comes out holding up one shoe up and looking for the other)

STEPHEN

Think about what you're saying, Thomas. That's Susan you're talking about.

THOMAS

I have. I don't care. She's a wonderful woman I love.

STEPHEN

I don't care about any of that. So do it.

THOMAS

Where is she?

STEPHEN

Get in here.

SUSAN

Thomas.

(STEPHEN steps back into the closet. DEBBIE crawls over the back of the sofa looking for her shoes. SUSAN enters. DEBBIE is still wearing only the sheet or the bedspread)

SUSAN

Well.

DEBBIE

Hello. I'm Debbie.

SUSAN

Hello. I'm Susan.

THOMAS

A neighbor. She wandered in. Out of sugar.

DEBBIE

That's right. There's no sugar.

THOMAS

Let me get it for you. I don't want to keep you.