

BROOKE. I can't see. I think they're in here.

(Another timer goes off in the kitchen.)

Watch your step.

CAREN. I have to check the—

BROOKE. How many steps are left?

CAREN. Too many. Just a minute.

(CAREN puts down her end of the box and hurries into the kitchen. BROOKE stops on the stairs with the box.)

BROOKE. *(Checking her watch:)* One hour. This is insane. Just keep thinking, stock options, six figures, a corner office.

(CAREN returns from the kitchen.)

CAREN. *(Crossing to BROOKE and the box:)* No damage done.

(CAREN and BROOKE pick up the box and begin the trek down the stairs.)

BROOKE. If they aren't in here, I don't know where they are.

CAREN. What's in here?

BROOKE. I have no idea. We stored a bunch of boxes in the attic when we first moved in. I didn't label them because I thought I'd go through them in a few weeks. It's been four years.

CAREN. Careful of the landing.

BROOKE. Did all the silver come clean?

CAREN. Yes.

BROOKE. Careful now.

(BROOKE and CAREN get the box to the bottom of the stairs.)

CAREN. *(Crossing to the kitchen and out:)* I've got to check the—

BROOKE. I'll look for the—

(BROOKE opens the box. The phone rings. BROOKE crosses to the phone. Into the phone:)

Hello.

(Pause.)

Do you have any nice linen napkins?

(Pause.)

Six and I can only find five that match, and I haven't got time to look.

(Pause.)

Well, if you get a chance to, could you, and if you do, would you?

(Pause.)

Thanks.

(CAREN enters from the kitchen, crosses to the table and begins sorting.)

CAREN. Soup-knife-butter-butter-soup-knife-salad-fork-salad-spoon-fork-soup-fork-fork-salad-knife-fork-spoon-salad-knife-spoon-spoon-knife.

BROOKE. *(On the phone:)* No, just the napkins. *(Pause.)* What? *(Pause.)* A little crazy, but it'll be over in a few hours. *(Pause.)* Okay. Thanks. *(Hanging up the phone:)* We're saved! Julia thinks she has six.

(BROOKE drags the box away from the stairs.)

I'm going up and finish getting dressed, again. Is there anything else?

CAREN. No. Oh, the book.

BROOKE. The book?

CAREN. The book.

BROOKE. What book?

CAREN. *(Indicating the table:)* The book.

BROOKE. Oh, the book. The book.

(BROOKE looks for a book.)

MAX. Sorry!

DONNY. What's going on under there?

JULIA. They're trying to fasten the leaf to the table.

BROOKE. Wait!

MAX. I got it!

(There is another bump and thump from under the table.)

BROOKE. Ow!

MAX. Oops!

(BROOKE comes from under the table holding her nose.)

DONNY. *(Seeing BROOKE's nose and soiled dress and hair:)* What happened to you?

MAX. *(Popping up from under the table:)* It was an accident.

DONNY. Oh, I see. Hurricane Max strikes again.

JULIA. Is it bleeding?

BROOKE. I don't think so.

MAX. It broke.

DONNY. Her nose?

MAX. The latch.

BROOKE. It's fine.

MAX. The latch?

JULIA. Her nose.

MAX. Oh.

CAREN. *(Off, from the kitchen:)* Help!

BROOKE. *(Crossing toward the stairs:)* I'm going to change and clean up.

JULIA. *(Crossing into the kitchen:)* I'll go.

DONNY. I fixed your shoe.

BROOKE. I don't need it.

DONNY. Why?

BROOKE. Because I'm not wearing this dress. Max, you finish setting the table. Donny, could you glue the plate?

DONNY. Where is it?

BROOKE. Down there somewhere. And somebody prune that shrub. Stock options, six figures, a corner office, and less Will.

(She is gone.)

MAX. *(Holding up the latch:)* What about this?

DONNY. We'll fix it later.

(JULIA enters from the kitchen.)

JULIA. How's Brooke?

DONNY. Okay. Is Stephen here?

JULIA. No. He'll be here later.

DONNY. If he's smart he'll stay away.

(DONNY crosses into the kitchen with BROOKE's shoe and the latch. MAX is at the table, studying the book. JULIA crosses to the phone and dials. CAREN rushes in from the kitchen with another tray of appetizers. She crosses to the coffee table.)

CAREN. *(Putting down the tray:)* I hope I haven't gone overboard with the appetizers.

(CAREN runs back into the kitchen.)

JULIA. *(Into the phone:)* Hello. It's me. I was just checking to see if you're there. I'm here. Get here as soon as you can. Bye.

(JULIA hangs up the phone and crosses to the table.)

CAREN. *(Off, from the kitchen:)* Help!

BROOKE. *(Off, from upstairs:)* Can somebody help me!

JULIA. *(Crossing to the stairs:)* You take the low road, and I'll take the high road.

(MAX crosses out to the kitchen, and JULIA runs upstairs. After a moment the phone rings. It rings again and again.)

CAREN. (Off, from the kitchen:) Can somebody in there get that?
BROOKE. (Off, from upstairs:) Can somebody down there get that?

(The phone continues ringing. After two rings it stops.)

CAREN. (Off, from the kitchen:) Thanks.
BROOKE. (Off, from upstairs:) Thanks.

(A moment later DONNY enters from the kitchen with the mended plate. CAREN enters with a stack of soup bowls and saucers and crosses to the table.)

DONNY. (Entering from the kitchen:) Where should this one go?

CAREN. (Taking the plate:) We'll give it to Brooke.

(She puts the plate on the table.)

When I've finished this, I'm going to change. I've left Max watching things in the kitchen. Once I'm dressed, he can go.

DONNY. And we can all breath a collective sigh of relief.

CAREN. He reminds me of Robert.

DONNY. Robert?

CAREN. My ex-husband. Flighty but basically harmless.

DONNY. Flighty maybe, but harmless I'm not so sure about.

CAREN. Robert was. Harmless. It was his parents. Especially that mother. I saw her a few weeks ago. I was stopped at the traffic light on Oak Street. She was crossing the street a few yards ahead. And I don't know, I had this urge to hit the gas, jump the curb, and run her down!

DONNY. Wow!

CAREN. That's crazy, I know, but for a split second, I don't know, I just went nuts. Then I realized the horrors of going to jail for manslaughter outweighed the pleasures of scraping her off the grille of my car. Just thinking about her, and remembering that voice as she

uttered these innocuous comments, and the way she treated me, releases this enzyme in me that makes me want to—

(CAREN slams down a bowl.)

DONNY. Careful. We're out of super glue.

CAREN. Sorry! I know, I know. It's irrational, it's immature, it's been two years. But still. I was working sixteen hours a day to support his sloth habit while the bills and the beer cans piled up, and she told me I threatened him. I threatened him? How? HOW!! I wasn't the kind of wife he needed. I wasn't good enough for him. And he would never stand up to her or tell her to leave us alone. A twenty-five-year-old married man who still lets his mother control his life? Do you believe that!? Of course when you're still supporting Peter Pan, why should he grow up? And if your father is Will Carmichael, they can afford to keep supporting you.

DONNY. What?

CAREN. Well, the table's done. I'm going to change.

DONNY. Wait-wait-wait-wait! Your in-laws are Will and Louise Carmichael?!

CAREN. Not anymore. Oh, no!

DONNY. What?

CAREN. You don't mean...?

DONNY. What?

CAREN. You don't know them do you?

DONNY. Well...

CAREN. If they're friends of yours or something—

DONNY. I-I-I sort of know them. Kind of. I mean, you know, Carmichael and Associates, through someone that I-I sort of know. Kind of. But not really, I mean, that well. I mean, don't worry about it.

CAREN. It's just that when I think about her or hear her name or see her and remember some of the things she said and how she treated me, I just want to—

DONNY. I've been here pretty much since the beginning, and I'm not sure what's going on.

BROOKE. Here's what we'll tell Caren.

STEPHEN. Who's Caren?

DONNY. The caterer.

JULIA. And Will and Louise's daughter-in-law.

DONNY. Ex-daughter-in-law.

STEPHEN. Your Will and Louise?

BROOKE. We'll tell her that you've decided to give Max a second chance, so we're going to let him serve dinner.

STEPHEN. Max?

JULIA. Works for Donny.

DONNY. Worked for Donny.

STEPHEN. What?

BROOKE. And that Max will do the—

(CAREN enters from the kitchen with a tray of appetizers. She crosses to the coffee table and puts them down. The conversation stops when BROOKE notices her.)

JULIA. Oh, uh, Caren, this is—

CAREN. Stevie?

STEPHEN. Caren?

(CAREN hugs STEPHEN.)

CAREN. How are you?

JULIA. And obviously you've met.

CAREN. My God! It's been, how long?

STEPHEN. At least a year.

CAREN. At least.

STEPHEN. I didn't make the connection right away with the name and the job.

CAREN. Yeah, it's me.

STEPHEN. Well, how's it going? The catering?

CAREN. Okay. Still small.

STEPHEN. Oh, Julia, this is Caren. Caren this is—

JULIA. Yeah, I know. We've—

STEPHEN. Oh, You've already—

CAREN. —met, yes. Well, I guess I'd better—

STEPHEN. Oh, sure.

CAREN. Good to see you. Again.

STEPHEN. You too. I'm looking forward to dinner.

CAREN. Oh, well. I hope it turns out okay.

STEPHEN. Well, if it's anything like that dinner you fixed for me, it's going to be great.

CAREN. Well, I'd better check—

STEPHEN. Sure.

(CAREN crosses out to the kitchen.)

JULIA. Stevie?

BROOKE. Okay, now, I'll tell her you want to give Max a second chance, so we're letting him do the leg work, running back and forth between here and there. And she should stay in there.

JULIA. So, how do you know...?

STEPHEN. Oh, we dated a couple of times.

BROOKE. Does that sound believable?

DONNY. Nothing I've heard since I got home sounds believable. Why should that?

JULIA. Oh.

(MAX enters from upstairs. He is wearing a jacket and tie. The tie is crooked.)

MAX. This was the best I could do. It's a little ... I don't know.

STEPHEN. Now who's that?

JULIA. Max.

BROOKE. (Crossing to MAX:) It'll have to do. Let me fix your tie.

(She begins to adjust the tie.)

MAX. Did somebody call my father?

STEPHEN. Is he coming to dinner too?

JULIA. (To STEPHEN:) When did you date her?

BROOKE. Donny explained everything.

STEPHEN. (To JULIA:) Oh. A long time ago.

MAX. What did he say?

DONNY. I'm not sure he completely understood.

JULIA. (To STEPHEN:) How long?

MAX. You didn't tell him you fired me, did you?

STEPHEN. (To JULIA:) What?

JULIA. How long ago is along time ago?

STEPHEN. Oh, let me see.

DONNY. No. I think it's best if he hears that from you.

STEPHEN. (To JULIA:) About two years ago. It was during that month we decided not to see each other. Remember?

(CAREN enters from the kitchen with a tray of appetizers.)

CAREN. These should be cool enough. (Seeing MAX:) I thought he had left.

BROOKE. Yeah, well. I wanted to talk to you about that. Max here has agreed to stay and help serve.

CAREN. Oh?

BROOKE. Yes.

(BROOKE takes the tray from CAREN and gives it to MAX.)

Just to save you from having to run back and forth and back and forth between here and there.

DONNY. Especially here.

BROOKE. I just thought it would, you know, make it easier on you.

DONNY. And us.

CAREN. I don't mind.

BROOKE. Oh, I know you don't, but Max volunteered to help.

MAX. Didn't you say you'd pay me?

(BROOKE adjusts the tie a little too tight, and MAX screams.)

OW!

BROOKE. And of course this in no way affects the price we talked about this afternoon. Donny just wanted to give Max a second chance after what happened this afternoon.

MAX. (To DONNY:) Really!

STEPHEN. What happened this afternoon?

BROOKE. (Crossing to CAREN and ushering her into the kitchen:) So, you just stay in the kitchen. Let Max handle things out here.

DONNY.
Don't ask.

MAX. (To DONNY:)
Are you really giving me a second chance?

(CAREN exits.)

JULIA. (To STEPHEN:) You dated during that month?

BROOKE. Max?

MAX. Yeah?

BROOKE. Come here.

(MAX crosses to BROOKE at the table, still carrying the tray.)

LOUISE. Oh, we'll be in Phoenix. Aunt Gina's funeral. Well, the funeral isn't next Friday. The funeral is tomorrow. That's why we have to fly out so early. When is it again Will? Six forty-five? Is that it? Or is that the flight number? Anyway it's on the tickets here in my purse. Don't let me go off without it. But we're going to spend the week there since all my relatives will be there. *(Taking another appetizer:)* Am I the only one eating? What is this?

WILL. Well, with the economy in the changing state of flux it's been in recently, I really sympathize with the little businessman.

DONNY. And with so many big businessmen having heart attacks and being diagnosed with hypertension, I sympathize with them.

BROOKE. Crabmeat!

LOUISE. What?

BROOKE. It's crabmeat. Those are cheese and crabmeat.

LOUISE. Oh.

(MAX crosses down to BROOKE with a glass. STEPHEN crosses down to JULIA with their drinks.)

WILL. Well, this is one businessman you don't have to worry about.

(BROOKE takes the glass from MAX.)

BROOKE. Thanks.

LOUISE. I've had these before. Will, where have I had these before?

WILL. That's why I hire people like Brooke here. She does all the work, and I get all the credit. Brooke, Jack Stillwell was very impressed with your work for his company. Very impressed. He came into the office this afternoon and went on and on about you.

BROOKE. Oh, really?

WILL. He was imitating that he would steal my gal away from me, but I told him he was sniffing up the wrong tree.

LOUISE. These cheese and crabmeat ones, Will?

WILL. What about them?

LOUISE. Where have I had these before?

WILL. How would I know? I'm just questioning your decision to move into a larger store, if your profit margins haven't been increasing steadily.

BROOKE. Eat as many as you want. There are more in the kitchen.

WILL. I'm similar with the problems of trying to make a small store into a larger one. And it's been my experience that you discover many hidden agendas that you never suspected.

BROOKE. Well, Donny has thought it through very carefully. He's been planning the move for almost a year.

WILL. They taste like those things that what's her name used to make?

BROOKE. *(Taking one of the trays:)* I'll get some more.

LOUISE. Who?

WILL. Oh, you know.

BROOKE. *(Crossing behind the sofa toward the kitchen:)* I'll be right back.

LOUISE. Who?

WILL. Caren.

(BROOKE's heel gives out right after WILL says "Caren." She stumbles and falls behind the sofa.)

BROOKE. Oooh!

LOUISE. Oh.

JULIA. *(Rising and crossing with STEPHEN to BROOKE:)* Are you all right?

DONNY. *(Overlapping:)* What happened?

LOUISE. *(Overlapping:)* Goodness.

BROOKE. *(Getting up:)* Yes, I'm fine. I just tripped. My heel.

LOUISE. Just fell right over.

BROOKE. It came loose again. (*BROOKE is up with the tray and the shoe:*) I'll be back.

(*She starts to cross to the kitchen.*)

I need to get some more appetizers and see how the dinner is coming-going-doing. I'll be right back.

JULIA. Do you want some help?

BROOKE. No. You just stay out here, and, uh, sit.

(*BROOKE exits into the kitchen.*)

LOUISE. That happens to me all the time.

(*JULIA and STEPHEN sit.*)

JULIA. What?

LOUISE. I'll get a new pair of shoes, a pair that I really like, that are comfortable, and that I can wear with a lot of my clothes, and I'll just wear them and wear them and wear them. Wear the heel right off. (*Taking another appetizer:*) Have I had one of these yet?

WILL. But getting back to your decision to move the store.

LOUISE. Do we have to? It's this way all the time with this one. Business, business, business.

WILL. I don't always talk business.

LOUISE. Oh, you do to. You just don't know you're doing it. Oh, my drink seems to be all gone.

STEPHEN. (*Rising:*) Let me fix you another.

LOUISE. I probably shouldn't. (*Handing STEPHEN her glass:*) Well, maybe just a small one. Thanks, Stanley.

(*STEPHEN crosses back to the bar.*)

WILL. His name is Stephen.

LOUISE. Stephen? What did I say?

DONNY. While you're back there, would you fix one for me?

STEPHEN. What do you want?

DONNY. Anything with alcohol.

LOUISE. Oh, not too much gin. (*Taking another appetizer:*) And these are nothing like what she used to make.

WILL. Who?

LOUISE. Caren. Hers were always hard or chewy or too spicy. These are wonderful.

STEPHEN. Can I get anyone else a drink while I'm up?

JULIA. No, thanks.

WILL. I'm fine.

LOUISE. She was married to our son Robert. Caren was. Did you ever meet her? Big mistake. Not the kind of wife Robert needed. She was always out working. She would never stay home with him. Awful woman. Oh, Will, Robert said he would stop by here on his way to the house, so we won't have to take a taxi.

DONNY. What?

LOUISE. What what?

DONNY. What did you say about Robert?

LOUISE. When?

DONNY. Just now?

LOUISE. Oh. He's picking us up tonight.

DONNY. Here?!

JULIA. Here?!

STEPHEN. Here?!

(*CAREN enters from the kitchen with a tray of appetizers.*)

DONNY. (*Seeing CAREN:*) Stanley-Stephen-Stephen-Stanley!

(*STEPHEN looks and sees CAREN as JULIA crosses to her. BROOKE runs in from the kitchen and grabs CAREN by the apron strings. JULIA takes the tray from CAREN just as BROOKE slings CAREN back into the kitchen and follows her in. A loud crash is*