

SIDNEY. (To IRIS, changing the subject.) Did you see the reviews? We don't have to put on any more. We know a celebrity.

DAVID. Will you cut it out.

SIDNEY. Just listen— (He reads aloud.) "... Mr. Ragin has found a device which transcends language itself. In his work all façade fails, all panaceas dissolve, and the ultimate questions are finally asked of existence itself . . ." (The obvious joke on himself.) See. Just like I always said. (SIDNEY gives him his drink. They toast. SIDNEY looks about the room for something. Then to IRIS, ever so sweetly, afraid of rousing the dead.) Oh, Iris, did they leave the mailing piece? We've got all those envelopes to stuff.

IRIS. (Shrieking, a veritable avenging Fury by now.) Sidney, if you don't get that trash out of here today, I'm going to burn the apartment down!

(SIDNEY finds the enclosures, stacks them on the coffee table, sits on couch and begins stuffing envelopes, whistling as he does—all but ignoring DAVID.)

DAVID. By your recent antics I take it you believe there is something to be accomplished by all this? Presumably for the good?

SIDNEY. (Not taking the bait, gaily.) C'mon, David. There is work to be done. Lend a hand. (The PHONE rings. He crosses to answer.) Yes? No, it's not a mistake . . . Fourth Street does cross Eleventh Street. (It hangs up, goes back to work.)

DAVID. (Studying him as a specimen.) Well, I don't attack you for it. I know it is something most men, even thinking men, resist long after they know better.

SIDNEY. (Between envelopes, not even raising his eyes.) You mean that Zarathustra has spoken—and God is dead?

DAVID. Yes.

SIDNEY. "Progress" is an illusion and the only reality is—nothing?

DAVID. You surprise me. Can one debate it?

SIDNEY. (Finally sitting back for this; he feels himself in fine fettle.) One can observe that it is the debate which is, for all human purposes, beside the point. The debate which is absurd. The "why" of why we are here is an intrigue for adolescents; the "how" is what must command the living. Which is why I have lately become an insurgent again.

(Back to work. The PHONE rings again—and this time IRIS comes shrieking out of the bedroom: one more call and she will burn the apartment down! She wears the dress MAVIS bought, carries high-heel pumps.)

IRIS. Sid-nee— (Noticing DAVID for the first time.) David. (Genuinely.) My God, those reviews! It's marvelous. How do you feel? (She sets shoes down, at R. of couch.)

SIDNEY. (On the phone.) You don't say? Right . . . right . . . right.

DAVID. (To IRIS. Embarrassed by her display.) Please. Well, I've got to go to work.

IRIS. Work? Already? Aren't you just going to bask awhile or something?

DAVID. (Sadly.) Doing what? See you.

(Exits up the stairs. IRIS closes the door, turns and awaits SIDNEY'S reaction.)

SIDNEY. (Hangs up.) You know what, the craziest thing is happening to Wally . . . that clown actually thinks we might win— (Is the fact of MAVIS' dress downs on him.) Well, get you!

IRIS. (Pirouettes.) I look pretty all right in this—hub, Sid?

SIDNEY. Sure, if you like the type. I like you in other things better.

IRIS. I know. I'm going out tonight, Sidney.

SIDNEY. Yeah? Where? *(Not thinking about that too much.)* You know not one, not one of the entire collection I've surrounded myself with . . .

IRIS. I talked to Lucille Terry today. She's having a cocktail party.

SIDNEY. Lucille Terry? *Lucille Terry!* Where in the name of God did she pop up from? I didn't know that you still saw each other.

IRIS. We haven't in years. But, you know, just like that people suddenly call each other up. So just like that she called me up last week about this party she was having.

SIDNEY. *(His hand on the phone; he couldn't care less.)* How is Lucy? Lemme see now, gotta put on the old Establishment voice. *(Practicing.)* "Hello, Mr. Dafoe, well, how are you, sir—" Fix me a drink, why doncha, honey?

IRIS. *(Crossing to the pantry; in a muted voice.)* Lucy didn't call me, Sid. I called her.

SIDNEY. *(Still thinking more about the call he has to make.)* Yeah? You know I really hate to give fuel to Alton's narrow view of the world, but there is turning out to be a surprising amount of validity to his notions of base and superstructure. Two banks, a restaurant and three real estate firms have already canceled ads since we've come out for Wally . . .

IRIS. *(Disinterested, bringing him his drink.)* Oh, really— *(The PHONE rings.)* Interesting.

SIDNEY. *(Picking it up.)* Yes, Renee . . . She says what? . . . Sure, O'Hara could be an Italian name . . . Or his mother's Italian. *(Hangs up, to Iris.)* Well, she could be. *(Noticing her standing there, finally not looking at him quietly.)* Aw, I'm sorry, honey, I really am, but I just don't feel like going to any party tonight.

Especially the uptown scene. Not tonight. *(He is taking the entire situation lightly.)* Tell Lucy we love her but no. *(He crosses to couch and sits back to work.)*

IRIS. *(Starkly, staring down at him.)* I wasn't asking you to come with me, Sidney. *(He drinks, slowly absorbs*

*this last remark and, for the first time, reacts with some sense of the portentousness of the moment.)*

SIDNEY. Oh?

IRIS. That's sort of the point. I—I am going alone.

SIDNEY. Oh. *(They are BOTH quiet; neither looking at the other; the awkwardness shouts.)* Well, hell, so you're going to a party. Great. You should do things alone sometimes. Everybody should. What are we acting so funny about it for?

IRIS. Because we know it isn't just a party. It's the fact that I want to go. That I called Lucy.

SIDNEY. *(Very worried.)* Well, don't worry about it. It's okay. Just have a nice time, that's all.

IRIS. *(She crosses D. R. to get her shoes, hesitates, turns to him. Sadly.)* Would you—would you like me to make you some supper before I go?

SIDNEY. *(Rising and crossing U. L. to window not to face her.)* Uh—no. No. Thanks. Wally and I are due on MacDougal Street in an hour. We'll go out with the kids after or something.

IRIS. *(Tentatively.)* You could have them here. There's—there's a lot of stuff in the box and—plenty of beer.

SIDNEY. *(Getting it fully.)* Is there?

IRIS. Yes. I'm sorry, Sid.

SIDNEY. You're planning on being late, aren't you?

IRIS. I think it'll be kind of late.

SIDNEY. *(Turns to face her finally.)* Who's going to be at this party, Iris?

IRIS. How do I know who's going to be there? Lucy's friends.

SIDNEY. Lucy's friends. The "would-be" set, as I recall it.

IRIS. *(Bending to put on a shoe.)* Some of her friends are pretty successful.

SIDNEY. Like Ben Asch? *(She straightens and wheels and they exchange a violent conversation without words.)*

IRIS. *(Departly getting into the other shoe.)* Look, Sid; let's make an agreement based on the recognition of.

reality. The reality being that the big thaw has set in with us and that we don't know what that means yet. So let's make some real civilized kind of agreement that until—well—until we know just what we feel, I mean about everything—let's not ask each other a whole lot of silly questions.

SIDNEY. I'll ask all the silly questions I want! (*A step forward.*) Listen, Iris, have you been seeing this clown or something?

IRIS. Only once—after the time I told you.

SIDNEY. Once is all it takes.

IRIS. He thinks he can help me.

SIDNEY. Do what?

IRIS. Break in, that's what!

SIDNEY. Then why didn't he see us?

IRIS. I don't know, Sidney. I guess he was under the impression that I was a big girl now. (*Crossing U. R., picks up long kid gloves and clutch bag from console table near apartment door.*)

SIDNEY. I'll bet!

IRIS. But none of this is the main point, Sid. (*Coming forward, she sets bag on coffee table and proceeds to pull on glove, slowly and meticulously—making her points with each finger through what follows.*) The main point is that I feel I want to do something else with my life. Other than—

SIDNEY. Other than what?

IRIS. Other than—this. Other than conversation about the Reformation; other than conversations about Albert Camus. Other than scraping together enough pancake money to study with every has-been actor who's teaching now because he can't work any more. There has to be another way.

SIDNEY. From the has-beens to the would-be's. I'll admit there is a progression there!

IRIS. (*Flustered.*) Ben knows some extremely influential people. People who have been around—people who do the things they mean to do.

SIDNEY. Where?

IRIS. In the theatre and in politics too! (*Angrily starting on other glove.*) Especially in politics. People who do not take on a newspaper they cannot even afford and run it into the ground for a hopeless campaign. And for what? For Wally? If even half of what they say about Wally is true—

SIDNEY. Oh? And just what do "they" say? (*He waits, knowing as he does, there is nothing she can say.*)

IRIS. (*Trapped.*) Well, I don't know about any of this, but Lucy thinks—

SIDNEY. (*Holding up one hand; the issue is closed.*) Right the first time Iris! You don't know.

IRIS. (*Starting toward him. Pleading.*) Sidney, this is not the Silver Dagger you're getting into. These people are sharks.

SIDNEY. (*With finality; father knows best.*) Look, Iris, I'll make a deal with you: You let me fight City Hall and I'll stay out of Shubert Alley.

IRIS. (*Quietly; she has had it.*) All right, Sidney.

(*She reaches for her bag and starts to quickly for the door. He strides swiftly to behind couch and blocks her exit.*)

SIDNEY. And stop ducking the main point: What is this glorious deer Ben Asch going to do for you?

IRIS. As a matter of fact he's already got me some work.

SIDNEY. Oh—why haven't you mentioned it? What show?

IRIS. (*Defensively.*) It isn't exactly a show—but it is acting. Sort of. (*He stares at her.*) It's a TV commercial . . .

SIDNEY. (*Laughing.*) Oh, Iris, Iris.

IRIS. (*Turning and flinging bag down on couch. Hotly.*) Oh, aren't we better than everybody! Aren't we above it! Well, I have news: If he gets me that job, I am going to

take it. And when I'm doing it—I'll know that it beats hell out of slinging hash while I wait for "pure art" to come along.

SIDNEY. (Following.) Iris, it's not just what you're getting into—it's how. You've got no business hanging out with Lucy and that crowd. How can it be that after five years of life with me you don't know better than this? (He has taken hold of her.)

IRIS. (Exploding and whirling to face him, near tears.) I have learned a lot after five years of life with you, Sidney! When I met you I thought Kant was a stilted way of saying cannot; I thought Puccini was a kind of spaghetti; I thought the louder an actor yelled and fell out on the floor the greater he was. But you taught me to look deeper and harder. At everything: from Japanese painting to acting. Including, Sidney, my own acting. Thanks to you, I now know something I wouldn't have learned if it hadn't been for you. The fact . . . the fact that I am probably the world's laziest actress . . . (He releases her.) So, there it is, the trouble with looking at ourselves honestly, Sidney, is that we come up with the truth. And, baby, the truth is a bitch. (Iris goes past him and out the door.)

SIDNEY. (Going after her.) Iris, Iris, just listen—

IRIS. (Facing him at the foot of the stairs. Resolutely; she will not be stopped.) All I know is that, from now on, I just want something to happen in my life. I don't much care what. Just something.

SIDNEY. I just want you to know that—whatever happens—you've been one of the few things in my life that made me happy.

IRIS. (An anguished voice—for both of them.) Oh, Sid, "happy." (She reaches up, to touch his face a moment.) Whoever started that anyhow? What little bastard was it? Teaching little kids there was such a thing?

(She exits D. R. SIDNEY stands looking after her, then goes back inside, sits, goes to the drawing board, then

leaves that and picks up his banjo. DAVID, in trench coat, appears on landing and starts down. SIDNEY, as an idea strikes him, steps to the door with resolution and throws it open.)

SIDNEY. Hey—David . . . David! Can you come down a sec—

(But DAVID is right there, on his way out—rather sheepish, more boyish, genuine than in his prior scenes.)

DAVID. (A grin.) Oh, you caught me. Wanaal, I decided to go out after all. Maybe I owe myself, under the circumstances, at least one night off. (He continues, halts, comes back. SIDNEY hardly hears him; he is thinking of something intently.) I'll tell you the truth . . . it—it seemed emptier than usual up there. I swore I wouldn't, you know— (Embarrassed at the humanity of his present feelings.) sort of go out and strut around . . . But by God, it's almost like I have to. Do you know what I mean? I mean— (He laughs freely and drops his hands.) I mean I feel pretty good.

SIDNEY. (Half steering, half pushing him inside.) Well, why not! Who wouldn't? . . . C'mon in a sec . . .

(They are BOTH just inside the door.)

DAVID. (Suddenly, not aware that he is mainly talking to himself under the circumstances.) Don't make fun of me, Sidney! The truth is, today is not yesterday. Nothing could have made me believe this yesterday— But I am somebody else today. Inside. It's in my rooms upstairs, it's in my coat . . . it's in my skin. Christ, Sid— (Pure unaltered wonder.) I'm famous. (A grin.) I have to go outside and find out what it's like to wear it in the streets. (Sobering, he steps forward into the room.) As if I can't guess. Everybody will just be more self-con-