

MOTHER All right. I'll stay for just one drink.

PAUL Good. I'll get the Scotch.
(He starts for the door)

MOTHER Button up, dear. It's cold.

PAUL I've noticed that.

CORIE And get some cheese.
(PAUL is gone)

MOTHER Paul! (PAUL reappears at the door, and MOTHER extends her arms) I just want to give my fella a kiss. And wish him luck. (PAUL comes back in and crosses all the way over to MOTHER. She kisses him) Your new home is absolutely beautiful. It's a perfect little apartment.

PAUL Oh . . . thanks, Mom.

MOTHER Then you do like it?

PAUL Like it? (He looks at CORIE and starts to exit)
Where else can you find anything like this . . . for seventy-five sixty-three a month?

(He exits, leaving CORIE and MOTHER alone. CORIE climbs down the ladder, and looks for some sign of approval from MOTHER)

CORIE Well?

MOTHER Oh, Corie, I'm so excited for you.
(They embrace)

CORIE It's not exactly what you pictured, is it, Mother?

MOTHER Well, it is unusual—like you. (She crosses right) I remember when you were a little girl you said you wanted to live on the moon. (She turns back to CORIE) I thought you were joking . . . What about Paul? Is he happy with all this?

CORIE He's happy with me. I think it's the same thing.
Why?

MOTHER I worry about you two. You're so impulsive. You jump into life. Paul is like me. He looks first.
(She sits down on the suitcase)

CORIE He doesn't look. He stares. That's the trouble with both of you . . . (She places a paint can next to MOTHER and sits on it) Oh, Mother, you don't know how I dreaded your coming up here. I was sure you'd think I was completely out of my mind.

MOTHER Why should you think that, dear?

CORIE Well, it's the first thing I've ever done on my own. Without your help . . .

MOTHER If you wanted it, I'm sure you would have asked for it . . . but you didn't. And I understand.

CORIE I hope you do, Mother. It's something I just had to do all by myself.

MOTHER Corie, you mustn't think I'm hurt. I'm not hurt.

CORIE I'm so glad.

MOTHER You mustn't think I'm hurt. I don't get hurt over things like that.

CORIE I didn't think you would.

MOTHER Other things hurt me, but not that . . .

CORIE Good . . . Hey, let's open my presents and see what I've got. And you try to act surprised.
(She gets the presents and brings them to the paint can)

MOTHER You won't let me buy you anything . . . Oh, they're just a few little things.

CORIE (Sitting down and shaking the smallest box vigorously) What's in here? It sounds expensive.

MOTHER Well, now I think it's a broken clock.

CORIE /
MOTHER

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BAREFOOT IN
THE PARK

ted Plays
il Simon

START

CORIE (*Opens the box, and throws wrappings and tissue paper on the floor*) I'll bet you cleaned out Saks' gift department. I think I'm a regular stop on the delivery route now.

(*She looks at the clock, replaces it in the box and puts it aside, and begins to open the largest box*)

MOTHER Aunt Harriet was with me when I picked it out. (*She laughs*) She thinks I'm over here every day now.

CORIE You know you're welcome, Mother.

MOTHER I said, "Why, Harriet? Just because I'm alone now," I said. "I'm not afraid to live alone. In some ways it's better to live alone," I said. (*CORIE examines the blanket she finds in the package; then she closes the box, puts it aside, and begins to open the final package. MOTHER picks up a piece of tissue paper and smooths it out on her lap*) But, you can't tell her that. She thinks a woman living alone, way out in New Jersey, is the worst thing in the world . . . "It's not," I told her. "It's not the worst thing" . . .

CORIE (*She has opened the package and now takes out the dismantled parts of a coffee pot*) Hey, does this come with directions?

MOTHER If I knew about this kitchen, it would have come with hot coffee.
(*She laughs*)

CORIE (*Picks up the box with the clock and takes it with the parts of the coffee pot up into the kitchen*) Mother, you're an absolute angel. But you've got to stop buying things for me. It's getting embarrassing. (*She puts the clock on the refrigerator and the coffee pot on the sink*) If you keep it up I'm going to open a discount house . . .
(*She takes the blanket and places it with the suitcase near the windows*)

MOTHER It's my pleasure, Corie. (*She begins to gather up wrappings and tissue paper and place them in the*

box which contained the coffee pot) It's a mother's greatest joy to be able to buy gifts for her daughter when she gets married. You'll see someday. I just hope your child doesn't deprive you of that pleasure.

CORIE I'm not depriving you, Mother.

MOTHER I didn't say you were.

CORIE (*Moves down to MOTHER*) Yes, you did.

MOTHER Then why are you?

CORIE Because I think you should spend the money on yourself, that's why.

MOTHER Myself? What does a woman like me need? Living all alone . . . Way out in New Jersey.
(*She picks up the box with wrappings in it and places it outside the front door*)

CORIE (*Follows MOTHER*) It's only been six days. And you're five minutes from the city.

MOTHER Who can get through that traffic in five minutes?

CORIE Then why don't you move into New York?

MOTHER Where . . . ? Where would I live?

CORIE Mother, I don't care where you live. The point is, you've got to start living for yourself now . . . (*MOTHER moves back into the room*) Mother, the whole world has just opened up to you. Why don't you travel? You've got the time, the luggage. All you need are the shots.

MOTHER (*Sits on the suitcase*) Travel! . . . You think it's so easy for a woman of my age to travel alone?

CORIE You'll meet people.

MOTHER I read a story in the *Times*. A middle-aged woman traveling alone fell off the deck of a ship. They never discovered it until they got to France.

CORIE (*Moves left and turns back to MOTHER*) I promise you, Mother, if you fell off a ship, *someone* would know about it.

MOTHER I thought I might get myself a job.

CORIE (*Straws in the wind*) Hey, that's a great idea. (*She sits on the paint can*)

MOTHER (*Shrugs, defeated*) What would I do?

CORIE I don't know what you would do. What would you like to do?

MOTHER (*Considers*) I'd like to be a grandmother. I think that would be nice.

CORIE A grandmother??? . . . What's your rush? You know, underneath that Army uniform, you're still a young, vital woman . . . Do you know what I think you really need?

MOTHER Yes, and I don't want to hear it. (*She gets up and moves away*)

CORIE (*Goes to her*) Because you're afraid to hear the truth.

MOTHER It's not the truth I'm afraid to hear. It's the *word* you're going to use.

CORIE You're darn right I'm going to use that word . . . It's love!

MOTHER Oh . . . Thank you.

CORIE A week ago I didn't know what it meant. And then I checked into the Plaza Hotel. For six wonderful days . . . And do you know what happened to me there?

MOTHER I promised myself I wouldn't ask.

CORIE I found *love* . . . spiritual, emotional, and physical love. And I don't think anyone on earth should be without it.

MOTHER I'm not. I have you.

CORIE I don't mean *that* kind of love. (*She moves to the ladder and leans against it*) I'm talking about late at night in . . .

MOTHER (*Quickly*) I know what you're talking about.

CORIE Don't you even want to discuss it?

MOTHER Not with *you* in the room.

CORIE Well, what are you going to do about it?

MOTHER I'm going back to New Jersey and give myself a Toni Home Permanent. Corie, sweetheart, I appreciate your concern, but I'm very happy the way I am.

CORIE I'll be the judge of who's happy. (*They embrace. The door flies open and PAUL staggers in with the bottle of Scotch. He closes the door behind him and wearily leans his head against it, utterly exhausted*)

MOTHER Oh, Paul, you shouldn't have run . . . Just for me. (*The doorbell buzzes, AUNT HARRIET's special buzz*) . . . Ooh, and there's Harriet. I've got to go. (*She picks up her purse from next to the suitcase*)

CORIE Some visit.

MOTHER Just a sneak preview. I'll see you on Friday for the World Premiere . . . (*To PAUL*) Good-bye, Paul . . . I'm so sorry . . . (*To CORIE*) Good-bye, love . . . I'll see you on Friday . . . (*PAUL opens the door for her*) Thank you . . . (*She glances out at the stairs*) Geronimo . . . !

(*She exits. PAUL shuts the door and, breathing hard, puts the bottle down at the foot of the ladder. He moves left, turns, and glares at CORIE*)

CORIE What is it? . . . The stairs? (*PAUL shakes his head "No"*) The hole? (*PAUL shakes his head "No"*) The bathtub? (*PAUL shakes his head "No"*) Something new? (*PAUL nods his head "Yes"*) Well, what? . . .

END