

Norman 4

ANDY. (*Back into phone.*) . . . Mrs. Mackinnee, I definitely don't think I can make it tonight. I have some urgent business here . . . No, I'm positive I can't . . . Mrs. Mackinnee, I think this is hardly the time to discuss a rent increase . . . Well, for that matter, I couldn't even pay a fifteen percent decrease! . . . All right, if that's how you feel about it, you can pick up your apartment in the morning. (*He hangs up. Norman comes out of his bedroom carrying a flower box with a few tiny leaves starting to sprout. He carries it down the stairs.*)

NORMAN. I'm taking the marijuana plant. (*He puts the plant on the kitchen bar. He starts for the stairs again.*)

ANDY. . . . Is this your final decision?

NORMAN. (*Crosses to tape recorder, turns it on, picks up speaker and switches on to record.*) It's my final decision. This is a recording. (*He switches it off and starts U. R.*)

Start

ANDY. Because I think you're making a mistake.

NORMAN. (*Stops at bottom of stairs.*) I've only made two mistakes in my life. One was trusting you as my friend . . . and the other was going out for the muscatel. (*He continues up the stairs.*)

ANDY. Norman, I've known you for eight years. Can you ever remember me lying to you once in all those eight years?

NORMAN. Yes. I've known you for nine years. (*He continues up stairs.*)

ANDY. All right, *nine* years. I don't care what you saw yesterday, I'm telling you the truth. I cannot abide that girl and she finds me snide, smug and repulsive.

NORMAN. (*Stops.*) I see. And I walked in just as she was sinking her fangs into your throat, and you fought off the attack with your mouth.

ANDY. (*Goes U. C.*) No, she was kissing me.

NORMAN. Kissing you? . . . You're a foot taller than she is and you can't stand her. So the way I see it, the only way she could have kissed you against your wishes is for her to have nineteen inch lips . . . and I just don't buy that.

ANDY. I don't care what you're buying, I did not make an overt act towards her.

NORMAN. (*Comes out of his room.*) In other words, she was the one who did the overting.

ANDY. Correct.

NORMAN. Why?

ANDY. Well—that's beside the point.

NORMAN. I think not. Why did she overt you right on the mouth?

ANDY. You're gonna laugh.

NORMAN. Try me.

ANDY. . . . She likes the way I smell.

NORMAN. (*Looks at his watch.*) It is now three o'clock. I will be hysterical until three-fifteen. (*Goes back into room.*)

ANDY. What's so insane about it? You like the way she smells.

NORMAN. (*Storms out.*) How can you even mention the two smells in the same breath? (*Exits to his room.*)

ANDY. Norman . . . (*Takes off raincoat and tosses it on a high stool u. l. between the table and stairs.*) You mean to tell me that after nine years of a personal, meaningful relationship, you would let that flag waving sea urchin come between us?

NORMAN. (*Comes out of his room and goes down stairs to landing.*) I can live with a slob, a sadist, a forger or a junkie. I draw the line at finks. (*Goes to the light fixture on landing and removes one bulb.*)

ANDY. (*Breaks D. to desk.*) And what about the magazine?

NORMAN. (*Comes down stairs to suitcase.*) The magazine is no longer my concern. (*Puts bulb in suitcase. Goes above kitchen bar for an eight-pack of empty coke bottles. Takes half the bottles and packs them in the suitcase.*)

ANDY. You—hypocrite! You pretend to be devoted and dedicated to an ideal that we've literally starved for, and you can blithely toss it all aside because we're suddenly embroiled in a romantic triangle.

NORMAN. (*He goes to Andy.*) Now I know why this magazine never made a cent. Now I know why we were starving. You, me, the girl and the Marine is a quadrangle, not a triangle! You can't add! (*Goes R. to suitcase.*)

ANDY. And what do you think you're going to do once you leave here?

NORMAN. In exactly thirty minutes I have an interview for a job with the A.P.

ANDY. Working at the checkout counter?

NORMAN. Not the A and P, you idiot. The A.P.! The Associated Press.

ANDY. Doing what?

NORMAN. I'm a writer. They'll pay me for writing . . . Just as, I imagine, you'll make your living by *finking!* (*Goes to closet.*)

ANDY. (*Goes L. to U. of pole table.*) A writer? Without me to push you, prod you and encourage you, you couldn't hold down a job writing Rhode Island license plates.

NORMAN. (*Comes out of closet carrying two jackets on wooden hangers. Goes L. to Andy.*) No? . . . LJ Seven one nine six! . . . And there's plenty more ideas where that came from. (*Gives the jackets to Andy and takes the coat hangers to the duffle bag.*)

ANDY. All right, so we don't get along. Gilbert and Sullivan didn't speak to each other for fourteen years and they wrote twenty-three operettas together. Why can't we?

NORMAN. (*At R. sofa.*) Gilbert never walked in and caught Sullivan kissing Poor Little Buttercup.

ANDY. (*Puts jackets on U. L. table. Then goes R. to short wooden stool.*) Okay, Norman, if I have to fight for my magazine, I'll fight for it.

NORMAN. (*Looks at him in disbelief.*) You're joking, surely.

ANDY. Surely not.

NORMAN. Andy, I'm warning you. I'm not wiry, but I'm thin. I'll cut you to ribbons.

ANDY. I've already faced death with our paratrooper landlady. I'm not afraid of a skinny typist. (*Takes short stool L. of entrance stairs, to the door. He sits on it and crosses legs in Gandhi fashion.*)

NORMAN. (*Looks at him.*) What is that supposed to be?

ANDY. What does it look like? It's a *sit-in!*

NORMAN. (*He looks around to see if any sane person heard this lunatic remark. Then he moves up to the door.*) If you don't get up from that *sit-in*, you're gonna see a *punch-down!*

ANDY. Is that your answer to passive resistance?

NORMAN. No, my answer to passive resistance is active kicking . . . Get up! What do you think you're doing?

ANDY. The same as they did in Bombay in 1947 when twelve thousand Indians threw themselves across fifteen miles of railroad tracks.

NORMAN. (*Looks at his watch—goes to suitcase, closes it and picks it up. Goes to Andy.*) Well, Charley, in thirty seconds the five-fifteen is coming through.

ANDY. (*Steeling himself.*) Thou shalt not pass!

NORMAN. Thou shalt bleed from both ears!

ANDY. You would hit a man who wouldn't raise his arms in defense?

NORMAN. Actually I prefer it that way.

ANDY. Norman, if you go over to their side it's the end of free, creative thinking. They'll have you writing weather reports and shipping news.

NORMAN. In two minutes I bring in my first story about a dead man leaning against a door.

ANDY. (*Looks at him, then gets up.*) All right, Norman . . . (*Returns stool to R. of radiator.*) I had hoped to avoid bloodshed . . . (*Takes off sweater.*) But you leave me no recourse. The pain I am about to inflict is done purely on request.

NORMAN. (*Looks at him in disbelief.*) Do you mean it is your intention to actually come to blows? Hard hitting and everything?

ANDY. (*At pole table, rolling up shirt sleeves.*) My fist right on your deviated septum.

NORMAN. Knowing full well that on July sixteenth I finish a three-year course in Oriental combat?

ANDY. I intend to compensate by fighting dirty.

NORMAN. (*Puts down his suitcase, takes off his jacket and puts it on the landing.*) Okay, Andy, as long as you know the score. I've been waiting six months to try this in a real-life situation. I had hoped my first victim would be a mugger, but you'll do nicely. (*Goes to C. table, as he rolls up shirt sleeves.*) Oh, by the way. It's my legal obligation to warn you that Karate may be hazardous to one's health. **Stop**

ANDY. And let me warn you that I have never once in my life struck another human being in anger. (*Both Andy and Norman pick up the C. coffee table and carry it R.*) I don't want to kill you, but I have no idea how strong I am. (*Goes L. and takes director's chair to R. of desk.*) If you feel yourself dying, just speak up. (*Norman tries to lift the R. chair with one hand. Andy comes to his rescue. Norman then carries the chair U. R. and puts it down near the table. Bows to chair.*)

NORMAN. Anytime you're ready.

ANDY. I'm ready if you are. (*Norman assumes a sort of professional pose while Andy just tries to look menacing.*)