

NORMA. Possibly. These days even the basic insinuation of deviance can be enough to remove you. And Bob in a position of such authority... God. I just don't know. You know we could just have her over, a chat between the three of us, without the boys. She's a forward-thinking gal. We can appeal to her as women.

MILLIE. Bob wouldn't take well to us handling this without him.

NORMA. I think she'll feel less confronted this way.

MILLIE. As long as there's a complaint against her, she's going to use whatever she's got for leverage.

NORMA. Well. Sometimes powerwork is misplaced. It's not unheard of.

MILLIE. We're really going to do this? Without consulting the boys.

NORMA. The boys don't always know best. Make the call to Barbara. I've gotta go find a hardware store open on Sunday morning.

MILLIE. How come?

NORMA. Because I told that bitch we were painting your kitchen. Always another plate to keep spinning.

MILLIE. I'm so sorry, Norma.

NORMA. The show must go on.

(She starts for the bedroom.)

Althea: If'd be nice if you wrote me poetry sometime.

(Lights fade.)

Scene Three

(An afternoon three days later. JIM enters through the closet.)

JIM. Millie?

BOB. *(Offstage.)* No, it's me! I'm in the kitchen!

(JIM goes to the kitchen door.)

JIM. It's a pretty color. Will ya paint ours next?

BOB. *(Entering.)* I still don't quite know why I'm painting this one. Some misdirection for Kitty Sunderson.

JIM. You're home early.

(BOB kisses him. A good one.)

JIM. And I like it.

BOB. I took the afternoon off. Mildred's out. Norma's at the office. Let's have a drink.

JIM. Are we medicating or celebrating?

BOB. It was a very good day.

JIM. Well, hot dog! That is cause to celebrate! How come?

BOB. There's a drunken lout in the Swiss embassy.

JIM. There are probably several.

BOB. An excellent point. But *this* drunken lout is the subject of a concern and they're calling him home. Tomorrow he'll face the security board, where he will be relieved of his duties. So guess who's moving to Geneva?

JIM. You. Us! No, that makes no sense. Who?

BOB. Barbara Goddamn Grant!

JIM. Oh, Bob! But how? Isn't she still under investigation?

BOB. I'm glad you asked. The concern on Barbara was filed by Dale Ramsey. A real rat fink bastard, this guy. Even Barbara Grant deserves a better class of accuser.

JIM. You're so charitable.

BOB. And then there's this *other* fellow, Truett Sharpe –

JIM. Limp handshakes and ascots!

BOB. He got rid of the ascots, still has the limp handshake. Truett just became engaged. To his Colombian housekeeper.

JIM. What a conveniently-timed and utterly implausible romance.

BOB. Isn't it, though? I called Truett in, congratulated him on his impending nuptials, and reminded him of the heightened scrutiny over at Immigration and Naturalization. Told him I could make a few calls to smooth that over for his blushing bride. Well, this wave of relief washes over him. And then I said, "Truett, do you recall last year's Christmas party, when Dale Ramsey made that pass at Barbara Grant, and she slapped him right in the face?" And he says, "No, Bob, I must have missed that." And I said, "Think hard about it, Truett. Are you *certain* you don't remember that? It would be so helpful if you did." And lo and behold, he *remembered*.

JIM. You are very attractive right now.

BOB. So. A sworn affidavit from Truett will be on my desk tomorrow, proving Dale's complaint was nothing more than the rantings of a jilted suitor, I will close out that investigation, and Barbara Grant will be off the hook and on her way to Geneva, may that bitch fall off an Alp.

JIM. Holy cow, the girls are gonna love this.

BOB. I said I'd take care of it. I took care of it.

JIM. Yes you did. You're so handy. Look at you in your overalls. Wanna go next door and play handyman?

BOB. I should finish up in the kitchen.

JIM. Oh, come on, babe. What's the use in hiding the fact that we're deviants if we never...deviate?

*(JIM pushes BOB onto the sofa. Romance ensues.
The door buzzer. JIM goes to look.)*

JIM. Sunderson.

BOB. Kitty?

JIM. Ted.

BOB. Closet.

JIM. Going.

(JIM exits to the closet. BOB opens the door revealing THEODORE.)

BOB. Mr. Sunderson! This is a surprise.

THEODORE. Hello, Martindale. I was hoping I'd catch you at home.

BOB. Please, come in.

THEODORE. I'd meant to speak with you before you left for the day.

BOB. Sorry, sir. Forgive my appearance. Willie caught a lark and decided we needed to paint our kitchen.

THEODORE. Oh. Kitty's already heard about it. She'd like to see your color choices, wants to freshen up our lake house.

BOB. Well, we'll have everything done when it's all done. Can I get you anything? A highball? Bound to be five o'clock somewhere.

THEODORE. No, thank you, son.

BOB. Right.

THEODORE. I suppose it's best to speak with you out of the office. Too many people ears, you understand?

BOB. At the State Department? You'd think that'd be the safest place in the world.

THEODORE. Nonsense. We might as well speak directly into the potted plants around here. I need to consult with you on a matter that has put me a trifle - discombobulated.

BOB. What is it, sir?

THEODORE. A fellow pulled me aside this afternoon, in the sauna. Said he had filed a concern with personnel over a week ago, but had not been approached for an interview. I was under the impression your office was handling these cases in a timely manner.