

IRIS: You just keep your mouth shut about Gloria, you hear!

SIDNEY: Did I say anything?

IRIS: No, but you sat there looking like death. Let them work it out, see!

SIDNEY: *(almost screaming as the point has been made)* Did I say anything, did I say anything, *shrew?*

IRIS: No, but I know you! The world's biggest busybody.

(SIDNEY hands her the new masthead and unveils it with the same proud flourish of the coversheet as MAX. IRIS turns it sideways and upside down. Undeterred, he rights it and guides her eye in repetition of MAX's earlier demonstration. A beat, then squinting close:)

IRIS: You keeping it a secret? Looks arty.

SIDNEY: *(furious)* All right--so it looks "arty." What does that mean, do you know?

IRIS: Do I know what?

SIDNEY; Do you know what "arty" means? Or is it just some little capsule phrase you zing out to try to diminish me, since you have nothing genuinely analytical or even observant to say?

IRIS: I wasn't trying to be analytical. I was saying what I thought--which is that it looks arty.

SIDNEY: You mean it looks different from other publications.

IRIS: No, I mean it looks -- *(dictionary definition, teacher to very slow pupil)* different from other publications in a *self-conscious* sort of way. *Art-tee.*

SIDNEY; Iris, where did you get the idea you know enough about these things to pass judgement on them?

IRIS: From the same place you got the idea that you were an editor.

SIDNEY: Which happens to be more reasonable than the idea that *you* are anybody's ACTRESS!

IRIS: Why don't you just hit me with your fist sometimes, Sid? ***(She exits into the bathroom; sobs are heard)***

SIDNEY: I didn't mean that, baby. Come on. Do *South Pacific*.

IRIS: No. *(more sobs)*

SIDNEY: Iris, honey, come on...I'll hold the book for you. ***(He opens the door-- she pulls it shut. He tries again and she, clutching the knob, is tugged into the room)***

IRIS: Why should I go through all of that to read for something that I know I won't get in the first place? They don't want actresses, they just want--EASY LAYS, that's all!! That Harry Maxton, *please!* He's the biggest lech of them all! *(Pause; then, as the idea strikes her)* You want to know something? You really want to hear something I hope will burn your little ears off? *That's* why I didn't get the part before. *I said "NO!"!!*

SIDNEY: *(gently)* Iris...everybody knows that Harry Maxton is one of the most famous *fags* in America.

IRIS: (*a beat; cornered*) All right then. So everything goes with him! He just--he just puts on the fag bit to cover up what he *really* is! (*He turns away, embarrassed for her. She pushes on desperately.*) Well, that's how twisted up they are in show business!

SIDNEY: Iris, honey, even in show business--*that* twisted they're not.

IRIS: Leave me alone, Sidney. I don't want the part. (*She has curled into a tight sulking ball in the rocker.*)

SIDNEY; Oh, Iris, Iris, Iris...I want to help...so much...I'm on your side.

IRIS: I just don't have it. They say if you really have it--you stick with it no matter what-- and that--that you'll do anything--

SIDNEY: That is one of the greatest, cruelest romantic myths in America. A lot of people "have it" and they just get trampled to death by the mob trying to get up the same mountain.

IRIS: Oh please, Sidney, don't start blaming everything on society. Sooner or later a person learns to hold *himself* accountable--that's what maturity is. If I haven't learned anything else in analysis--

SIDNEY: Thank you, Dr. Steiner! Look, Iris, the worlds' finest swimmer cannot swim the Atlantic Ocean--even if analysis *does* prove it was his mother's fault!

IRIS: That's not an analogy. *Nobody* can swim the Atlantic Ocean--but some people *do* make it in the theatre. You don't know what it's like though. God, to walk through those agency doors! There's always some gal sitting at a desk, you know, with a stack of pictures practically up to the ceiling. And she's always bored, you know. I mean even the nice ones, they've seen five million and two like you and by the time you come through the door they are *bored*. And when you get past them, into the waiting room, there they are--the five million and two sitting there waiting--and they look just as scared and mean and competitive as you do. And so you all sit there, and you don't know anything: how you look, how you feel, anything. And least of all--how they want you to *read*. And when you get inside, you know less. There are just those faces. Christ, you almost wish someone *would* make a pass or something; you could deal with that--that's from *life*. But that almost never happens, at least not to me. All I ever see are those blank directorproducer-writer faces just staring, waiting for you to *show* them something, *excite* them. And you just stand there knowing that you *can't* no matter what, you can't *do* it the way you did it at home in front of the mirror -- the brilliant imaginative way you did it the night before. And all you can think is: what the hell am I doing here in front of these strangers, reading these silly words and jumping around for that fairy like some kind of NUT...! Oh, Sidney, this is all a waste of time. You know and I know I will never show up for that audition. I just don't want to see those faces again--oh Jesus, do I ever feel *twenty-nine*!

SIDNEY: Sure you will, honey. (*She shakes her head.*) I'll help you. (***She takes hold of him and they kiss.***) Take down your hair for me, Iris...

IRIS: Christ, you're still so hooked on my hair...(*laughter through tears*) It's spooky to be loved for your hair, don't you know that?

SIDNEY: Take down your hair...

(He reaches up and pulls the pins and it falls. He gets up and puts on a record and turns and waits: a stinging mountain banjo hoedown cuts into the silence. It swells and races, filling room and theatre.)

SIDNEY: Dance for me, Iris Parodus. Come down out of the hills and dance for me, Mountain Girl!

IRIS: I just don't feel Appalachian tonight, Sid! It just won't work tonight--

SIDNEY: Why not, Mountain Girl?

IRIS: *(Turning off phonograph)* Sidney...I am not your mountain girl anymore.

(Then quickly:) I'm sorry. I really am. I've changed on you, haven't I? The things you don't know about me! Like, for example, my hair--SIDNEY: *(clowning)* It's--a WIG??!

IRIS: Idiot! I mean the only reason I wear it like this is because of you--*(He smiles delighted.)* I hate my hair this way?

SIDNEY: You do?

IRIS: I didn't always. When I first came here, you know, I was working, dancing in this little nothing of a sawed-off club. And one of the girls, after listening to me run on, said: "Well, honey, if *that's* the kind of man you want, you've gotta go down to the Black Knight Tavern and sit. Let your hair grow long and go to the Black Knight Tavern." Sounds like a folksong. So that's what I did, and -- there you were! You, Alton and Max--"holding forth." And I said to myself, "There's the one!" And the next day I started eating vitamins, like this same girl said, to make my hair grow faster. So help me God, *vitamins!* I dunno, Sid. Everything seemed so simple then...*(deep in thought)* I just wanted to go, do, be whatever you wanted, to...to...

SIDNEY: To what, Iris?

IRIS: I guess just to *please* you, Sid.

SIDNEY: And that's a bad thing?

IRIS: I don't know, Sid. I mean, like it just doesn't seem to work anymore--no matter how I try...and I want...

SIDNEY:...What? What is it you want, Iris Parodus?

IRIS: God, I wish I knew. *(a beat)* I suppose a part of me wants it to be the way it used to be. Sidney, I couldn't believe it--that *you* should love *me!* I felt I was the luckiest girl in the world--

SIDNEY: What do you mean, "was"? *(Playfully reaching for her; she responds.)*

IRIS: Sidney. Please. I'm trying to tell you something.

SIDNEY: I'm trying to listen.

IRIS: Try harder. I love you, Sidney Brustein. I love you, silly--sweet--stinker Sidney Brustein. But it's not enough.

SIDNEY: For me it's plenty.

IRIS: Yes, I know. That's sort of the problem...*(a beat)*

SIDNEY: (*mugging to disguise his unease*) “Problem”? What problem?! (*turns record on*) Tomorrow we’ll just start spiking your paella with *vitamins!* Now, c’mon, Mountain Girl, dance!

IRIS: Sidney, you’re hopeless!

SIDNEY: (*clapping and stomping his feet to the music*) You betcha sweet ass I am!