

MAVIS: Sidney Brustein! Who'd of ever thought it! Fred's so excited he called me from the office: "Mav, that brother-in-law of yours is some kind of political genius!" Why he said that everybody is talking about you and the paper and Wally O'Hara. It even went out on the national news. *(She has hugged and kissed him throughout most of this)* Let's have a drink together, Sidney. I don't know how to tell you how proud I am. I just thought it was another one of those things you're always doing--like with the nightclub-- *(correcting herself)* I know, it wasn't a nightclub--and all. Where is everyone? I thought this place would be--you know--
SIDNEY: *(fixes her a drink)* --"jumping"? I wasn't the candidate, Mav. Iris is exhausted. She had to turn in.

MAVIS: Turn in!? Aren't you kids going out and celebrate? Honest to God, you're so strange--you don't even look happy.

SIDNEY: Oh, I'm happy....Happy.

MAVIS: *(takes a check out of her bag and puts it in SIDNEY'S shirt pocket)*

Here's a little present, for the paper. From *Fred* let's say. No. Don't say a word.

SIDNEY: This is a lot of money, honey.

MAVIS: Not a word! When I--that is when *Fred*--decided we agreed that we didn't want any chance whatsoever to feel good and gooey and Real Big about it. So--put it away.

(She takes out cigarettes and lighter and settles back.)

SIDNEY: Well, thank you--Oh, I mean, *Fred*--for it.

MAVIS: Shut up. I'm glad to have a chance to talk with you, Sidney. Alone. We've never really talked. I know that you don't like me--

SIDNEY: Mavis--

MAVIS: No, it's all right. I know it. You know it. When you come down to it, what is there to like? Isn't it funny how different sisters can be?

SIDNEY: Yes, different. All of us. Everything.

MAVIS: Yeeesss, don't I know it. I was trying to explain that to Fred the other day. *(a little laugh)* I don't mean "explain" it, that sounds so funny: Fred isn't a stupid man, as we all know--but sometimes. Sometimes I get to thinking that certain kind of way. The way, you know, that *you* do--*(with her hands, a circle, and aptly, the universe)* of a whole--?

SIDNEY: In abstractions.

MAVIS: That's right. You won't believe it--but--I enjoy it when a person can say something so that it embraces a lot, so that it's in--in---

SIDNEY: Concepts.

MAVIS: Yes. I enjoy it. I've enjoyed the conversations I've heard down here. And, Sidney, I've *understood* some of them.

SIDNEY: Good for you, Mavis. Good for you.

MAVIS: *(odd)* But we get stuck, you know.

SIDNEY: I know.

MAVIS: Some of us, we get stuck in--*(stiltedly)* the original stimuli. Some of us never have a chance, you know--

SIDNEY: (*nodding wearily*) I know--

MAVIS: Like Papa--he was such a dreamer. You know, sort of backwoods poet, kind of a cross between Willy Loman and Daniel Boone. He loved just sitting and thinking--

SIDNEY: (*looking at her, stunned*) Mavis, didn't you and Iris have the same father?

MAVIS: Of course we had the same father! What do you think I'm talking about?

SIDNEY: (*throwing up his hands*) *Roshomon*--what else?!

MAVIS: He was a very wonderful man, very wonderful. And that's the joke on me—I thought I was marrying someone like Papa when I married Fred. Can you imagine--*Fred!*

SIDNEY: You mean you *wanted* him to be like your father?

MAVIS: Yes...and that's the way I thought Fred was, in those days when we were courting. He *seemed* poetic. Like Papa. Papa used to read the classics to us, you know, Greek tragedy. Sometimes in Greek.

SIDNEY: (*wide-eyed*) You're pulling my leg.

MAVIS: Why? Oh, he didn't really know *classical* Greek, Sidney. Just everyday Greek from his folks. We used to do little productions in our living room. He would always let me be Medea, because he said I was strong -- (*She rises and bellows forth in robust, dramatic and effective Greek*) Uh puh-nuhss meh peh-ree-keek-luh nee ah-puh hul ess tees meh-ree-ess keh pee-uhss buh-ree nah tuh ahm-fee-vee-tee see. Allah dehn kah theekahn ah-kuhm ah huh lah. Nuh-mee zuh uh kee. (*Then in English*) "On all sides sorrow pens me in. But all is not yet lost! Think *not* so! Still there are troubles in store for the new bride and for her bridegroom--" (*catching herself*) Well, *he* thought I was good.

SIDNEY: Mavis, I don't know you.

MAVIS: The ham part. (*a little laugh*) I know all the parts and all the strophes. Sure, Papa was something! He was a man of great, great imagination. That's why he changed our name. It was plain old every day Parapopadopoulos, you know--

SIDNEY: No, I didn't know.

MAVIS: But Papa wanted something, you know, *symbolic*. So he changed it to Parodus. You know what the parodus is in Greek tragedy...

SIDNEY: (*nods "yes," then abruptly*)...No.

MAVIS: Sidney! Shame on you! The parodus is the chorus! And you know--no matter what is happening in the main action of the play--the chorus is always there, commenting, watching. Papa said that *we* were like that, the family, at the edge of life--not changing anything. Just watching and being.

SIDNEY: I see.

MAVIS: That was Papa, dramatic as hell. I loved him very much. (*a beat*) And Fred's no Papa.

SIDNEY: It's been one big disappointment, your marriage?

MAVIS: Not for a minute. By the time we got married I knew that Fred was no poet. Solid as a rock! Hah! We haven't touched each other more than twice since little Harry was born and that's...Harry will be six next month.

SIDNEY: Six years...Ah--by whose--

MAVIS: --design? Who knows? It just happens. He doesn't suffer. He's got a girl.

SIDNEY: *Fred?*

MAVIS: *Fred*. You know, sometimes I think you kids down here believe your own notions of what the rest of the human race is like. There are no squares, Sidney. Believe me when I tell you, everybody is his own hipster. Sure, for years now. Same girl, I'll say that for old Fred. I've met her.

SIDNEY: You have--?

MAVIS: Oh sure. He has her all set up. Nothing fancy; Fred's strictly a family man, he puts the main money in the main place, our Fred. But decent, you know, respectable building, family people--a nice place for a single girl--with a kid. He's just a year younger than Harry. *(She fumbles at lighting her cigarette which SIDNEY finally does for her.)* Oh, you do find out. And so, one day, I did what a woman has to do: I went to see. Not the spooky thing. I didn't want to come in on them together or any of that junk. I know what a man and a woman do. I just wanted to see her. So I got in a cab, got out, rang a bell and there she was. Not a chorine or some cheap mess as you always think, but no, there's this sandy-haired kid in pedal pushers, pregnant as all get-out. So I said I rang the wrong bell. And I went back, once--to see the baby. In the park. I had to see the baby. And then, after that, the usual waltz...Divorce talk, all of it, you know.

SIDNEY: And you decided against it.

MAVIS: Of course I decided against it. A divorce? For what? Because a husband is unfaithful? Ha! We've got three boys and their father is devoted to them--I guess he's devoted to all four of his boys. And what would I do? There was no rush years ago to marry Mavis Parodus; there was *just* Fred then. In this world there are two kinds of loneliness: with a man and without one. I picked. And, let's face it, *I cannot type*.

SIDNEY: But you want only simple people and simple problems in literature...

MAVIS: Sure, isn't life enough? *(Long beat; setting glass down she gathers her things)* Well, one thing is sure. I do not need another drop to drink. *(fixing herself at mirror)* So how is my cream-colored brother-in-law-to-be?

SIDNEY: He's not going to be.

MAVIS: Well, thank God for something. She broke it off, huh?

SIDNEY: Yes...I guess so.

MAVIS: It had to be. Look, the world's not ready. It just isn't. I mean he seemed like a nice boy and all that, but it's just not possible. You have to think about children, you know. I mean he's very light, but--I'm not fooling you, am I?

SIDNEY: No.

MAVIS: I can't help it, Sid! It's the way I feel. You can't expect people to change that fast.

SIDNEY: *(with more sadness than assertion)* Mavis, the world is about to crack right down the middle. We've gotta change--or fall in the crack.

MAVIS: *(not angrily)* Well, I think we are back to ourselves and you are probably starting to insult me again. I knew I was going to tell you though, Sid, one of these days. Since I first saw you I knew those eyes could find a place for anybody's tale. Don't tell Iris though, huh? She's a kid, Sidney. She'll get herself together one of these days. And so will you. Gee, we're proud of you, Sid. I told Fred, "Say what you will, but the Jews have get-up!"

SIDNEY: Say what you will.

MAVIS: Now, there was nothing wrong with that, was there?

SIDNEY: Well, let's say there isn't. Today. *(a beat)* Mavis, what do you do...I mean...?

MAVIS: To make up for Fred, you mean? I take care of my boys. I shop. And I worry about my sisters. It's a life.

SIDNEY: *(a beat; gently, looking to the gods above; for their ears only)* "Witness you ever-burning lights above..." You're tough, Mavis Parodus.

(He kisses her. MAVIS exits.)