

CLAUDE. *(To MARIETTE.)* Well, aren't *you* popular... The only woman at the party and already you've met your ex-husband, your ex-lover *and* your next boyfriend.... Enjoying yourself Mariette?

MARIETTE. Sorry, but Andre never got to *be* an ex-lover and Albert will *never* be my next boyfriend.... But I'm delighted to have you as an ex-hubby.... As for me, I intend to be an ex-guest. *(Grabbing her shawl and purse, MARIETTE heads for the door.)* I hope you and your friends have an *exquisite* dinner. *(She opens the door.)* Excuse me, won't you.

*(She goes closing the door behind her.)*

CLAUDE. *(Angrily.)* Extraordinary.

*(The side door opens and ALBERT comes out quickly.)*

ALBERT. I heard you two shouting. Mariette seemed very upset.

CLAUDE. She asked you to leave and you listened at the door?

ALBERT. Well, I had nothing else to listen to.... Is she coming back?

CLAUDE. Did you hear her say NO?... WHY ARE YOU ALWAYS A BEAT BEHIND?

ALBERT. *(Points to watch.)* I told you. I can't see the numbers on my watch.

*(The door opens quickly and MARIETTE comes in.)*

MARIETTE. No. I've changed my mind. I'm staying.

ALBERT. *(Smiles.)* I'm so glad you did. I KNEW we —

MARIETTE. Would you please leave us alone, Albert?

ALBERT. Of course. I have a smudge on my face.

*(He goes back through small door.)*

MARIETTE. *(Paces before she talks, then —)* Claude ... I know this is awkward, but do you know what I never said at our divorce?

CLAUDE. That you'll take less money.

## THE DINNER PARTY

MARIETTE. God! Is that all you divorced men talk about?

CLAUDE. You think there's a club we all go to on Thursday nights and say, "Remember when we had more furniture in this club?"

MARIETTE. If there's anything in my apartment that you really want, come over and get it.

CLAUDE. Fine. What time do you open?

MARIETTE. You were never this materialistic while we were married.

CLAUDE. Of course not. I still had my material.

MARIETTE. Then come and take it all. I mean it. Except the jewelry you gave me... They mean something to me.

CLAUDE. No, I gave you the jewelry, it's yours.... By the way, how's my half of the dog?

MARIETTE. Babette is fine, thank you.

CLAUDE. Does she ever bark for me? ... Or is that not the half I got?

MARIETTE. You can have her any weekend you want.... Look.... What I never had a chance to say to you in our divorce was thank you for sharing your knowledge of literature with me.... It helped me become a better writer.

CLAUDE. Thank you.... I must say, you've had a tremendous success, Mariette.

MARIETTE. Not that you approved of my writing. You thought it was trash, didn't you?

CLAUDE. You mustn't hold me accountable when I talk in my sleep.

MARIETTE. No. I understand. I know how much you wanted that success for yourself.

CLAUDE. I had my chance.... It just wasn't in the cards.

MARIETTE. I'm sorry.

CLAUDE. Maybe if you hadn't taken the cards *with* you ....

MARIETTE. You're impossible. I'm leaving.

*(She turns to go.)*

CLAUDE. No. *I'll* go.

THE DINNER PARTY

29

*(He crosses, opens door.)*

MARIETTE. *(Points to his hand.)* Why are you still wearing your wedding ring?

CLAUDE. It was the only safe place I knew to keep *you* from getting it.

*(He goes to the door. ALBERT rushes in.)*

ALBERT. I heard the door slam. I'm glad you're still here. Where's Claude?

MARIETTE. I've always wondered myself.

*(The large door opens. ANDRE steps in.)*

ANDRE. Paul's line is busy. I heard the door. Has anyone else arrived?

MARIETTE. Yes. I went through that door and came back. Claude went out *that* door but *didn't come back*. Albert came in that door. He's been here until *you* came in the door to tell us Paul's line is busy.

ANDRE. *Very* good. Would you consider working for me.

MARIETTE. Andre, you know I write novels.

ANDRE. Yes, I read one. The offer still stands.

*(He leaves.)*

ALBERT. This room is so busy. Do you know that Napoleon came in through that door?

MARIETTE. Really? I must have missed him.

CLAUDE. *(Comes back in.)* One last thing ....

ALBERT. Claude, I think Mariette is very upset now.

MARIETTE. Albert, would you leave us alone, please?

ALBERT. Of course. *(Heads for the men's room.)* It's just that I don't know what to *do* in there any more.

*(He goes.)*