

ANNE & PAUL START
(B)

ANNE. Even when I met my husband it was straight out of Fitzgerald. He was on the beach at Sag Harbor reading "Atlas Shrugged" and I asked him if he'd read "The Fountainhead" and he asked me if I'd read "Raise High The Roofbeam, Carpenters" and I said I had and he said he had so we went to bed together.

PAUL. Janet and I met at a party. We were on the same charades team. I guessed all hers and she guessed all mine . . .

ANNE. So you went to bed together.

PAUL. We finished the game first.

ANNE. Funny how in those days if you went to bed together you got married. Boy, that feels like a million years ago. Thanks, Paul, for making me feel like Zelda Fitzgerald again.

PAUL. You shouldn't lose her. She's a terrific girl.

ANNE. Tell you what I'll do. Tonight, when Richard calls in, I'll hit him with a few non sequiturs, just to keep in practice. (Pause.)

PAUL. (With apparent difficulty.) Listen, you're not doing anything special tonight and Janet's tied up with her mob, so why don't we have dinner tonight?

ANNE. What?

PAUL. Dinner. Together.

ANNE. Oh, I can't.

PAUL. Why not?

ANNE. I just can't.

PAUL. Sure you can.

ANNE. I'd feel funny. I even feel funny now that you asked me.

PAUL. So do I. Believe it or not, I've never asked another woman out before, since Janet.

ANNE. I believe it. You're not the type.

PAUL. Then have dinner with me.

ANNE. Paul . . .

PAUL. Come on. We make each other feel good. Come on, it'll help you get through tomorrow's linoleum. What's the harm?

ANNE. Paul, you know we're not the kind of people who do things like that.

PAUL. Like what? Eat? All I'm asking you for is dinner.

ANNE. I don't even know you!

PAUL. Of course you know me. I'm the guy who went out with all your girlfriends at Barnard and uses your hairdresser and goes to your analyst's analyst. Even my mother doesn't know me that well.

ANNE. Then have dinner with your mother and let her find out.

PAUL. My mother doesn't make me feel good.

ANNE. It's not that I wouldn't like to . . . I've seen tonight's nine o'clock movie . . . I know there's no harm in it, it's just dinner . . . but I couldn't. I would feel so . . . illicit.

PAUL. We'll go Dutch Treat. What's illicit about paying for yourself?

ANNE. I couldn't, really.

PAUL. Then I'll treat.

ANNE. No . . . where would we go?

PAUL. The Great Shanghai.

ANNE. I couldn't. All our friends go there.

PAUL. Oh. Ours, too.

ANNE. Not that there's anything wrong with them seeing us, it's just how would I explain it?

PAUL. You're right. What about Stark's? No, Janet's mother hangs out there.

ANNE. Tibb's Wharf?

PAUL. If Janet's mother isn't at Stark's, she'll be at Tibb's Wharf. (*The front door opens and EDDIE enters.*)

EDDIE. Mrs. Weiss said you were stuck in here.

PAUL. In a minute. How about . . .

ANNE. Paul!

PAUL. (*Realizing it.*) Hey! 4A sent help.

EDDIE. Not her. (*Pointing at window.*) Across the court. Sorry, I didn't know you were in here when I took off the doorknob. I do that to keep people out. I'll leave

it on and you and the missus can leave whenever you're ready. (He waits for a tip, jingling change in his pocket as a prompting, then leaves when PAUL fails to pick up on it.)

ANNE. Well, once again . . .

PAUL. I know! Let's have a picnic!

ANNE. (Gathers her belongings.) It's supposed to rain tonight.

PAUL. We'll have it here!

ANNE. Here?

PAUL. Sure! The apartment's empty. Why not?

ANNE. Oh, listen, let's just stop this before we're both sorry.

PAUL. I don't want to stop it. I want to have dinner with you. A perfectly straight-forward, above-board, respectable dinner between two friends.

ANNE. In an empty apartment?

PAUL. Don't be so middle class.

ANNE. That's middle class? Not to have dinner with a strange man in an empty apartment? No, no, no.

PAUL. Now you're being silly.

ANNE. I suppose I am, but it's the only way I can be.

PAUL. I wish you'd change your mind.

ANNE. (Extends her hand.) It was really terrific meeting you, Paul. Goodbye.

PAUL. (Takes her hand.) Damn it, I'm not taking no for an answer. I'll be here at seven-thirty with a full picnic basket.

ANNE. I'm not coming, Paul.

PAUL. I'll be here anyway.

ANNE. (Taking her hand from his and going to door.) You'll be wasting an evening.

PAUL. I'd have to lock myself in the bedroom at home anyway. Look, I'll bring some Wonder Woman comic books with me. How can you resist that?

ANNE. (Turning at the door.) Ciao.

PAUL. Seven-thirty. (ANNE smiles and exits. PAUL stands looking after her for a moment, then starts to turn

to get his coat. ANNE comes back, just inside the doorway.)

ANNE. I can't make it before eight. (ANNE exits. PAUL smiles, puts on his coat, begins to wonder what he's gotten himself into, then starts out.)

ANNE & PAUL END

(CB)

CURTAIN

ACT ONE

SCENE 2

The apartment is dark. Thunder is heard. The front door opens and in the hall light we can see ANNE standing there, dressed in a raincoat. She checks the door-knob. She calls inside.

ANNE. Paul? Are you in there? (She checks her watch.) Eight o'clock. Ready or not, here I come. (She takes a small step into the room.) Paul? (She feels around the wall for the light switch and turns on the overhead light. She comes into the room, goes to the bedroom hall and turns on the light switch there.) All right, I'll start without him. (She approaches the dining room nervously, tip-toes in quickly and turns on the lights, then returns to the living room. She paces the room.) Three, six, nine, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-three. You haven't changed a bit. What am I doing here meeting a man I hardly know for a picnic on the floor of an empty rent-controlled apartment? Dear Rose Franzblau, my problem is this . . . (ANNE starts to leave, gets to the front door where she hears PAUL coming from the elevator. She rushes back into the room and does a little "twist" step as she goes which causes her skirt to fall to its full length revealing the long gown she has worn for the occasion. PAUL appears in the doorway laden down with three shopping bags and a smaller brown paper bag.)