

Mommy's busy! (She exits into the bedrooms while the Baby continues to cry. In a moment, they return exultant.)

LARRY. I'll bribe up to two thousand!

WOMAN. You'll have to.

LARRY. Thank God the landlord was caught harassing the last tenant.

WOMAN. Let's get down to the agent's. I'm going to get a highboy! (She stops on the steps and surveys the apartment.) There's so many things I can do with this place.

LARRY. (Joining her after looking out the window.) If we could turn it around to face the river, it'd be perfect!

WOMAN. (The baby cries.) Knock it off, Justin!!

(They dash out of the apartment with the baby carriage, he poking his head in for a last look and slamming the door. Pause. ANNE enters. She's in her early thirties, attractive. She has an air of mild exhaustion about her, as if she's taken time out from a busy day fighting with the kids and the Super to run over and see the apartment. She keeps pot in a cookie canister, has a shelf filled with books on how to raise children, and is getting a little bored. A satisfactory life, all in all. She looks out the window at the wall.)

PAUL & ANNE START

(A)

ANNE. So, how often do you look out the window? (She begins to pace the room.) Three, six, nine, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, twenty-one, twenty-three. (Starts again at other wall.) Three, six, nine, twelve, fifteen, eighteen, twenty. Twenty by twenty-three, could you die? (Sings and exits into dining room.) "Oh, give me room lots of room, under starry skies . . ."

(PAUL enters through the front door. He is her male counterpart, same age. He's a copywriter at an ad agency, on the Way Up and also a little bored. He looks around the room and out the window.)

PAUL. Yucch! (*He exits into bedrooms. ANNE is heard singing off-stage. PAUL hears her and re-enters. ANNE enters, singing raucously.*)

ANNE.

"... let me be by myself in the evening breeze,  
List'ning to the murmur of the cottonwood trees.  
Send me out forever, but I ask you please,  
Don't fence me . . ." (*She reacts violently as she sees PAUL.*)

PAUL. Sing it, baby.

ANNE. Excuse me.

PAUL. I'm sorry. I was just kidding. (*She exits into bedrooms.*) Three, six, nine, twelve . . .

ANNE. (*Re-enters.*) It's twenty by twenty-three.

PAUL. Thanks.

ANNE. Look, I'm not one of your West Side schizophrenics.

PAUL. I didn't think you were.

ANNE. The apartment's so big, it got to me. I didn't know anybody else was in here.

PAUL. You don't have to explain.

ANNE. Ohh . . . did Schneider/Steinbrunner send you?

PAUL. Yeah.

ANNE. (*Upset.*) God! They told me they wouldn't send anybody else over today.

PAUL. Yeah, that's what they told me! Can you believe those two? (*Pause.*) We've been looking for a bigger place for over a year.

ANNE. Next month is my second anniversary.

PAUL. We have a three and a half.

ANNE. We have one bedroom and an alcove.

PAUL. Any kids?

ANNE. Two.

PAUL. Relax. I'm only the envoy. My wife has the final say.

ANNE. Is she out of town, I hope? Go look at the dining room. (*PAUL goes into the dining area, ANNE into the bedroom. EDDIE enters and exits with the trash*

*basket, leaving the front door open. PAUL and ANNE enter separately and examine the window again.)*

PAUL. Tell me, where's the river?

ANNE. If you lean out the second bathroom, it's to the left.

PAUL. (Looking around.) Well, anyway, it's big.

ANNE. Yeah.

PAUL. And a nice room, huh?

ANNE. I hate to admit it in front of you, but yes, it is. You put a couch over there and a few big overstuffed chairs here, by the window, facing *in* . . .

PAUL. My wife and I are more the caning and spindly-legs type.

ANNE. How eighteenth century of you.

PAUL. I like club chairs, but Janet doesn't. Do you have any club chairs at home?

ANNE. No, we have leather and chrome. My husband likes to sit up straight. (*She is peering into the closet by now.*)

PAUL. Not straighter than my wife. Hey, would you do me a favor? The second bedroom has no closet. I guess I could build one. Would you give me your opinion?

ANNE. Sure. My God, a strange man is inviting me into a bedroom. At last, something to tell the checker at the Daitch. (*They exit. EDDIE enters, eating a butter cookie, and removes the doorknob and exits, slamming the door. ANNE and PAUL re-enter.*) I never knew you could just build a closet. I thought it took an architect.

PAUL. Nothing to it. Do you like club chairs?

ANNE. Yes, I do.

PAUL. That's very significant. A woman who likes club chairs likes men.

ANNE. Erich Fromm?

PAUL. It's a man's chair. My father had a club chair.

ANNE. Everybody's did.

PAUL. What's a Morris chair?

ANNE. Search me. Look, I think I'd better get down to the agent's and wrestle with Eva Braun.

PAUL. Mrs. Schneider or Mrs. Steinbrunner?

ANNE. Schneider.

PAUL. (*In a Nazi accent.*) Und tell me, Madame, vhy do you vish to rent this apartment? Speak. Ve haff vays of making you talk.

ANNE. Notice their initials are S.S.?

PAUL. Right. It's always nice to meet a fellow bigot. My name's Paul Friedman.

ANNE. Anne Miller.

PAUL. Really?

ANNE. You want to call Ripley?

PAUL. Didn't your parents go to the movies?

ANNE. They named me Delaney. The Miller was my husband's idea.

PAUL. My God, I just met Ann Miller. Hey, I'll ride down in the elevator with you. (*He reaches for the door-knob.*) What happened here?

ANNE. Where's the doorknob?

PAUL. (*After trying to open the door.*) No use.

ANNE. (*Banging on door.*) Hello out there. We're stuck!

PAUL. (*Looking out peephole.*) There's nobody there. (*Calls.*) Hello? Hello? This is 4B calling 4A. (*Beat.*) They must be out.

ANNE. Hello, there's a young mother of two in distress in here!

PAUL. Is that how you see yourself? A young mother?

ANNE. When I want sympathy. (*Calls again.*) Hello, there's a college-educated person locked in here! Better?

PAUL. Which college?

ANNE. Barnard.

PAUL. Did you know Beverly Strauss?

ANNE. Not well.

PAUL. Maybe they're walking the dog.

ANNE. (*Calling into hole.*) And I'm a dog lover! (*Beat.*) You want to play Simon Says?

PAUL. Shall we try the window?

ANNE. Why not? I've always loved shrieking.

PAUL AND ANNE

END (A)