

launched a thousand tennis balls! (Smiling, Nat crosses and picks up his bat. He looks up at the Utrillo painting.)

NAT. A very pretty picture indeed; but, as my devoted wife used to say—she should rest in peace—"The prettiest picture of all—who'll disagree?—a mirror!" (Turning.) I'll call you tomorrow, darling . . . (Charlie is sunk in a chair with his drink. Nat heads for the archway. Stopping.) Oh, I suppose you heard about Miss Dixie Evans?

CHARLIE. Dixie? What's wrong with Dixie?

NAT. (Chuckling.) Ahh, I'll tell you some other time. 'Bye 'bye. . . .

CHARLIE. 'Bye. . . . (Nat waves his hands and goes. Charlie, whose speech has thickened, sips his drink, musing, muttering to himself. He takes off and throws his sun glasses aside. Connie Bliss enters by the screen door R.; Charlie does not see her.)

CONNIE. Charlie, talking to yourself? Secret vices? It's me, remember? (Charlie, who has whirled around, drops back.)

CHARLIE. Look what the wind blew in! Hello, Connie.

CONNIE. Isn't Buddy here?

CHARLIE. He isn't here.

CONNIE. (Going to bar.) His secretary said he was. Why stand on ceremony? I'll mix myself a highball and then I'll leave!

CHARLIE. (Muttering.) Thought I'd play some tennis . . . (She goes behind the bar to mix a drink. Charlie closes his eyes. Connie is handsome and blonde, with lissome, fairly uncovered body, any dress she wears looks like a bathing suit. She would be hard were it not for her disposition to please, but this does not mean that she is undetermined. She minces and coquettes a little, her way of asking for your favor, and she laughs constantly, without effort, finally, her blue-eyed, washed-out candor covers enough slyness: hers is a nimble, jumping mind. In a certain mood, you will find her light and refreshing, a veritable Rhine wine of a person.)

CONNIE. A thousand-dollar bond couldn't get me out in this sizzling sun, with a racquet in my hand. You should keep your doors locked, Charlie. You could be kidnapped and held for a delicious ransom.

CHARLIE. I'm a prize. . . .

CONNIE. I like these big, silly ice kegs—they're never empty. Charlie, I'm going right home if you fall asleep on me! (Charlie

opens his eyes as she comes down, she sits on the arm of his chair.)

CHARLIE. I was thinking. . . . (Eyeing her.) Cigarette?

CONNIE. One of those Turkish ones you get. They're awfully sexy, Turkish ones. Hot weather always makes me frisky. . . . (Then.) What about you and Marion? Buddy's my husband, but he won't tell me a thing.

CHARLIE. Where'd you come from now, frisky miss?

CONNIE. Lunch at The Players.

CHARLIE. With that second class neurotic, Wally Weider?

CONNIE. (Surprised.) How did you know?

CHARLIE. (Dryly.) Rumors.

CONNIE. Say, a girl has lunch with a man once and in this town it's a torrid romance. Would I be seen in public if it was?

CHARLIE. No, you'd pull the blinds, if I know you, and I think I do. (Connie laughs heartily. Charlie gets up and walks, swinging an imaginary tennis racquet.)

CONNIE. You have to admit one thing about Buddy—he lacks a sense of humor.

CHARLIE. God didn't make us all alike, Connie. (Stopping his swinging.) You've cornered me at twenty different parties. Why do you sniff me out every time I'm drunk?

CONNIE. (Laughing.) Are you drunk?

CHARLIE. My mood is low, honey, and I'm stewed to the gills.

CONNIE. Is that a warning . . . ?

CHARLIE. (Mordantly.) Yeah, all the red neon lights are on and the sky is full of drunken blackbirds. (Pausing, harshly.) Now, stop shaking that thing in my face and go home!

CONNIE. (Murmuring.) Why stand on ceremony, Charlie? I find you very attractive. (Attracted and repelled, Charlie looks at her, then he steps forward and takes her by the upper parts of her arms.) Darling. . . .

CHARLIE. You don't care what you do to your husband, do you?

CONNIE. Do you . . . ? (Then, twisting away.) No, that hurts, boy friend!

CHARLIE. You're always naked—just to hold you by the soft parts of your arms is a meal. . . . (Revolted, Charlie smirks and drops into his chair. Connie laughs and rubs her arm, then she crosses and touches Charlie's ear, stepping back quickly to avoid his upflung arm.)

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