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MONSIGNOR RYAN

MATT

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Todd Kreidler

(CHRISTINA)

TILLIE. (To MONSIGNOR RYAN:) Good to see somebody with some sense has shown up around here, Monsignor. Maybe you can set this girl to thinking straight.

(JOHN exits into the bedroom.)

JOANNA. Tillie . . . I don't know why you're so mad at everybody.

TILLIE. I ain't mad at everybody.

JOANNA. I have a surprise and I need your help. How many steaks did you get for tonight?

TILLIE. I got four cause I was told four.

JOANNA. Could you get two more? John's mother and father should be here by seven.

TILLIE. Oh hell no. His mother and father? Coming here?

JOANNA. I want it to be a surprise. Will it be any trouble? Can we hold dinner till seven? I'll run for the steaks if you like. But please don't say anything to anybody.

TILLIE. Monsignor, I'll let the Draytons know you're here. This ain't a churchgoing house but we need some higher help here tonight!

(TILLIE begins to exit.)

JOANNA. Why are you acting like this, Tillie?

TILLIE. I'll order two more steaks.

(TILLIE exits to the office.)

JOANNA. John wasn't able to visit with his parents as he had planned so I decided to invite them for dinner. They're driving in from Sacramento. They seem very nice and said they can't wait to meet me. You won't say anything . . .

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Secrets come with the cloth.

JOANNA. You should stay for dinner too. I'm sorry I wasn't thinking. I was so excited about the surprise.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. No, no . . . Tonight make your new family. Break bread together to honor life sustaining . . . Drink wine together to celebrate its survival.

(CHRISTINA and MATT enter from the office.)

MONSIGNOR RYAN. (To CHRISTINA:) How long since I said you are the loveliest woman I've ever known? All these years I've told myself there must be a brand of envy that is in no way sinful.

CHRISTINA. Good to see you, Mike.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. (To MATT:) Today counts as a forfeit. I'm on a winning streak.

JOANNA. Excuse me . . . John's waiting upstairs. Good to see you, Monsignor.

(JOANNA exits upstairs.)

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Little Joey's become a woman now. I met the beau . . . Wakes my tired heart.

MATT. Aren't you a bit shocked?

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Shocked? Why should I be shocked?

MATT. Why's everybody suddenly gone blind?

MONSIGNOR RYAN. I've known a good many marriages between races. Curiously enough, usually works out well. Perhaps because it requires a special quality of effort, more consideration and compassion than most marriages seem to generate these days.

CHRISTINA. That's a beautiful thought. I'm glad you said that. You do have beautiful thoughts, Mike.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. But beautiful acts are the true struggle. Look at the lad here . . . (To MATT:) You making heavy weather of it? Seems to me Joey's not at all the sort of person to make a serious mistake about anybody. She was almost too careful a child. The fact she's obviously mad about the fellow should be recommendation enough for anyone who knows Joey. But he's really quite famous in his own right.

I take it you know that.

CHRISTINA. Matt had a criminal check run on him.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Dr. Prentice's research in tropical medicine is world-renowned. It has saved thousands of lives. Remarkable work, especially for one so young.

MATT. I don't know. I don't know, Mike. I wish I didn't have this—my whole life I've trusted my gut . . . My gut tells me they'll never make it. That the whole idea's impossible.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Let me ask you this. If your daughter had come home with a suitor who was a perfect gentleman, a world-renowned doctor and his skin was white—wouldn't you be in their face right now with a camera?

MATT. Don't try to make me the devil in this. I'm the one person here willing to stand up to the reality of the world. All the trouble they're bound to face. Both of them are about to have their futures destroyed.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. You feel that, do you? You're really thrashing about, then. That's very interesting, indeed.

MATT. I know the world as it really is out there. Not life sheltered atop this hill or protected by a pulpit.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Under different circumstances, this might be amusing. Amusing to see an old phony liberal come face-to-face with his principles. Of course I've always suspected that inside that fighting liberal facade there must be some sort of reactionary bigot trying to get out—

MATT. Go to hell— Are you and your crowd still preaching hell?

(The doorbell rings.)

MONSIGNOR RYAN. If Joanna and Dr. Prentice know what lies in store for them and they still want each other enough to accept it— then it's plain as anything they love each other very much. I believe you have to say to any two people who love like that, many blessings and good luck—

(TILLIE has answered the door and HILARY enters.)

CHRISTINA. Hilary . . . What's the problem?

HILARY. Forgive me for interrupting. I rescheduled with Mr. Cazalet's secretary.

CHRISTINA. You could've called.

HILARY. But you know how important this is— How many clients Mr. Cazalet's business could bring us . . .

CHRISTINA. You didn't need come here to tell me that.

HILARY. I want to talk with you privately.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. *(Starts for the front door.)* I should be off. I may be able to save a few souls before supper. Obviously nothing much I can do here . . . *(Stops.)* But Joey did mention dinner. I told her I wasn't free but now I understand this may be a calling.

CHRISTINA. Please come, Mike. It would be good to have you here. Six o'clock.

TILLIE. Seven now. Joey's changed the time. She's upending everything.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Nothing from the Psalms or from Shakespeare comes to mind now, but in this case I believe the Beatles say it best: "We can work it out, we can work it out. Life is very short and there's no time . . ."