

thing to drink?

STEWART. Don't go to any trouble. I can help myself.

SUSAN MARY. It's no trouble. *(Joe enters.)*

JOE. There you are. I was afraid you went to bed.

SUSAN MARY. No. Are we expecting anyone else?

JOE. Not to my knowledge. There should be some champagne chilling, bring it in here, would you my dear?

SUSAN MARY. Mm-hm. *(She goes. Stewart looks at Joe.)*

JOE. She keeps a dressing gown here, and some comfortable shoes, for late nights. I shouldn't let her?

STEWART. Just never known you to share the house with anyone.

JOE. It's hardly sharing the house. She's here two or three nights a week as it is, for parties. She's an ideal hostess. I have to have someone at the foot of the table. Especially now. My God socially this place is going to become electrifying. Don't smoke that. Smoke this.

(Joe gives him a cigar. Stewart examines it.)

STEWART. Wow. Thanks. Inside?

JOE. Tonight, yes.

STEWART. You are feeling good.

JOE. He's our kind of man, Stewart. Jack will make this country interesting again but more importantly, he'll make the town interesting again. He's got that gleam in the eye that FDR had. I didn't realize how much I'd missed it. Eisenhower was so plodding and dreary. His Washington was like going to bed with a glass of warm milk and a woman in curlers.

STEWART. That's not bad. Have you used it?

JOE. It's all yours.

STEWART. Everyone would know it was you.

JOE. Kennedy ... Kennedy's Veuve Clicquot, and a starlet on each arm. And one of them has a degree from the Sorbonne.

STEWART. That one needs work.

JOE. Oh. stop affecting nonchalance. You feel the same way I do.

STEWART. I just don't think we should get carried away.

JOE. I do. I will. This one night, I will be carried away, and so will you, goddamnit. Only get your feet off my coffee table. Or at least take off your shoes — Oh, never mind. You know what? Put your feet up. Stand on the sofa, do whatever you want, tonight.

STEWART. I want to go to bed.

JOE. Then you're an ass. How many nights do we get like this? He's our man. A tough man and a thoughtful one too, the kind

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we've been dreaming of and waiting for. He's like Stevenson with balls. Brains and balls, finally, in one package! And beauty. And charm. And he owes us.

STEWART. Does he?

JOE. You're damn right he does. The "missile gap" — we gave that to him on a plate, hell, you named it, and he beat Nixon to death with it.

STEWART. He barely squeaked by.

JOE. All the more reason then. Without me pushing the Johnson pick, and the missile gap pieces, he might well have fallen short. And don't think he doesn't know it. Don't think he won't remember that debt either and repay it, because that's the sort of man he is.

STEWART. We'll see.

JOE. Yes, we will. We're going to see everything. We're in an extraordinary position, Stew, at an extraordinary time, this is our moment, so why do you look so goddamn depressed? Go home if you're not going to celebrate with me, for chrissake.

STEWART. I'm just tired.

JOE. You have no sense of history.

STEWART. I have enough of a sense of history to know that when a man in a tuxedo smoking a cigar announces, "This is our moment," he's generally fucked.

JOE. Then here's to being fucked. It's a new day, Stew. We should revive the partnership.

STEWART. What?

JOE. Why not? Come back to the column. The Alsop brothers. Together again. What do you say?

STEWART. "No."

JOE. Foolish. Short-sighted.

STEWART. I'm happy at the *Post*.

JOE. The *Saturday Evening Post*. It's in decline. Becoming pablum for salesmen and housewives. Don't you want to write for the people who matter?

STEWART. I think housewives matter.

JOE. Don't be sentimental.

STEWART. I get to write nice long pieces at the *Post*, and the editors mostly stay out of my way. Okay, I don't have the impact I did when we wrote together ...

JOE. So why wouldn't you want to come back?

STEWART. Because you're such a colossal pain in the ass.

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JOE. Yes, but what else?

STEWART. You never paid me enough. Actually, I was never sure why you paid me at all.

JOE. We'll go sixty-forty this time.

STEWART. That's mighty generous, Joe.

JOE. Fifty-five-forty-five. That's fair — you can keep your contract with the *Post*, the column is all I have.

STEWART. I can't do both. And I've got a family to support.

JOE. So have I.

STEWART. Who?

JOE. Susan Mary. And her daughter.

STEWART. What?

JOE. We're getting married.

STEWART. When?

JOE. Next month. (*Beat.*)

STEWART. Congratulations.

JOE. Thank you. I asked her last March, actually, and she turned me down. My fault, it was too soon after Bill's death. Then after Jack got the nomination I suppose I was emboldened, and I asked her again, and she said yes.

STEWART. That's terrific, Joe. I'm happy for you.

JOE. I'm happy for me. I can't believe my luck, honestly. She's everything I want. She's sparkling and bright and at home in the world. And she'll fit in here, beautifully. She already does. And her daughter has become very dear to me.

STEWART. I should have seen this coming.

JOE. Surely it can't be that much of a surprise. We've been friends for years.

STEWART. I didn't realize you'd become more than friends.

JOE. I didn't either, until suddenly I did.

STEWART. And does she know...?

JOE. What? Oh, of course. I told her myself. In a letter.

STEWART. What did she say?

JOE. It's not a major concern. You haven't given me an answer. The column.

STEWART. I thought I did. Not in a million years.

JOE. You haven't given me a reason.

STEWART. Okay. Apart from the money ... and the abuse ... and the general indignity of working for my big brother at the age of forty-six ... I guess I just like where I am.