

# JOE, SUSAN MARY (8)

START

SUSAN MARY. ~~I just~~ In four years here I haven't bought a piece of furniture, or a dish ... hung a picture on a wall ...

JOE. Susan. If you're unhappy with the decor, by all means, change it.

SUSAN MARY. I'm not unhappy with the decor. That's not the —

JOE. I've put considerable care into the place, and never actually had my taste questioned before —

SUSAN MARY. Your taste is impeccable, Joe, you know I —

JOE. But if you think you can do better —

SUSAN MARY. I don't. I just — I never think of this as my house, is all I —

JOE. Surely that is your failing, not mine. (*Beat.*)

SUSAN MARY. (*Flat.*) Surely it is.

JOE. I put an entire addition on the house just for you. Your room. It's what you said you wanted.

SUSAN MARY. I know. It's not your fault.

JOE. Evidently it is.

SUSAN MARY. No. You did everything right. I —

JOE. You said you needed your own room ...

SUSAN MARY. I didn't. That wasn't —

JOE. You didn't? I don't see how I could possibly have misunderstood that, for God's sake, we looked at the architect's drawings together.

SUSAN MARY. Joe! I didn't want my own room, I wanted —

JOE. What?

SUSAN MARY. Never mind. Let's drop it.

JOE. You began it.

SUSAN MARY. It's my fault. I thought I didn't care about ... all that. And I don't, really. I've never been one of those people who really needs that. Not even in my first marriage. I mean, it was perfectly nice, but after the children ... And so I thought with you it wouldn't matter, that it might even be a relief not to ... But it is a marriage. And without the physical ... element ...

JOE. Without sex. Is that what you mean?

SUSAN MARY. Yes, of course.

JOE. You can say sex, can't you?

SUSAN MARY. Yes.

JOE. Shall we review the whole vocabulary set? Intercourse, erection, balls, cock, tits ...

SUSAN MARY. Stop it.

JOE. I told you when I proposed what my situation was.

SUSAN MARY. I know. You were very honest.

JOE. You said you understood.

SUSAN MARY. I did. I do.

JOE. Then what is the problem?

SUSAN MARY. I thought it would change.

JOE. It, madam?

SUSAN MARY. Your ... nature. I thought I could ...

JOE. Oh Susan, for God's sake.

SUSAN MARY. What?

JOE. Don't humiliate yourself.

SUSAN MARY. I'm trying to explain to you —

JOE. You thought what, exactly? That your feminine wiles ... your Mata Hari-like erotic aura ... the pulsing electric charge of your sensuality would magnetically flip the poles of my *nature*, as you call it? Dear God, woman. You're attractive enough, but there are limits.

SUSAN MARY. Why do you have to be such a bastard?

JOE. Why do you have to be such a child? You knew exactly who I was because I was honest and I told you. You said yes anyway, because, you said, you loved me, and you wanted the life I could give you. And important men came to your dinner parties. And they're still coming. They're coming tonight, you'd better go get ready. *(She starts to go, in tears.)* ~~And do put the young man in with~~ your daughter, you're so concerned there's too little fucking in our house. *(Susan Mary slaps him. Beat.)* I'm sorry. *(Beat.)* That was unforgivable. I haven't been myself lately.

SUSAN MARY. Lately.

JOE. I'm sorry.

SUSAN MARY. It's been two years since Dallas. *(Beat.)*

JOE. I feel like my life has been broken in half. I don't enjoy anything anymore. Not the town. Not the work. Not even the damned parties. I — *(A tap at the door. Stewart enters.)*

STEWART. Hello. *(Joe quickly resumes work.)* Working late?

JOE. I've been trying to finish a column, but there have been a number of distractions.

STEWART. I haven't seen you for a few weeks, I thought I'd say hello to my brother and sister-in-law before the company came. If you mind I'll go walk around the damn block.

SUSAN MARY. Of course we don't mind. Hello, Stewart.

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END