

SUSAN MARY, STEWART

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JOE. (*Grim.*) I am in need of a drink.

SUSAN MARY. I'll get it.

JOE. I can get my own. (*Joe exits.*)

STEWART. Maybe it's not a good time.

SUSAN MARY. (*Wiping her eyes.*) No, it's fine. We just ... (*Beat. Stewart looks at her.*)

STEWART. Tish claims she's got a suitcase all ready to go in the front hall closet, just in case. I'm pretty sure it's only a prop. Never had the nerve to check inside, though. Keeps me in line. Maybe you should try it.

SUSAN MARY. Oh, mine is packed.

STEWART. That bad?

SUSAN MARY. No. Just the usual ... squabbles. (*Attempt at brightness.*) I have found myself looking at apartment listings, though. Glancing, really. Just for fun. They're putting up that new complex, the enormous one, have you seen it?

STEWART. Those are gonna be the ugliest buildings in Washington.

SUSAN MARY. Supposed to be awfully nice, inside. Some of my friends are looking at places there. I wouldn't mind living somewhere new, I've always lived in old houses.

STEWART. It'd be awfully quiet after the center of the universe.

SUSAN MARY. Quiet and obscure sounds all right to me sometimes. (*He looks at her.*) I'm joking, Stewart, don't look so "concerned."

STEWART. I'm not.

SUSAN MARY. Good. Now. How was the last test?

STEWART. Ugh. Tish?

SUSAN MARY. Of course. She keeps me posted.

STEWART. I told her to keep it quiet.

SUSAN MARY. From me? That's absurd.

STEWART. What about — (*Indicates Joe.*)

SUSAN MARY. Never, not unless you give the word, you know that. What have you found out?

STEWART. Nothing.

SUSAN MARY. Still?

STEWART. They have no idea what it is. If it's really anything. They're useless. They've been running the damn tests for nearly a year. I think it's all a lot of bullshit, actually.

SUSAN MARY. Let's hope so.

STEWART. I can't believe she updates you.

SUSAN MARY. I ask her to. Maybe you should say something to Joe. He'd be upset if he got wind of it somehow, and you hadn't mentioned anything...

STEWART. Not yet.

SUSAN MARY. Why not? He can be very understanding, when he — *(She stops. They laugh together. Beat.)* Anyway, he's your brother.

STEWART. Yeah, and I don't want his sympathy. *(This is a slip. Beat.)*

SUSAN MARY. So. They think it might be something that will ... require sympathy. *(Beat.)*

STEWART. Yes. *(Beat.)*

SUSAN MARY. Oh. *(She embraces him, really shocked. She kisses his face. Then, surprising herself, his mouth. Stewart gently moves her away.)*

STEWART. No. No. *(Beat.)*

SUSAN MARY. I'm sorry.

STEWART. They're not sure of anything. *(She nods. Joe enters. Susan Mary leaves quickly.)*

JOE. She's irritable today.

STEWART. Mm. *(Joe goes back to his desk.)* Haven't seen you since I got back from New York.

JOE. How was New York?

STEWART. Fine. How was Vietnam?

JOE. That was a month and a half ago. Fine. *(Beat.)*

STEWART. How many times have you been this year?

JOE. Twice.

STEWART. I need to get back. I haven't been since, God, '63.

JOE. You're still busy with your civil rights things?

STEWART. Yes. Believe it or not, that issue's not quite resolved yet.

JOE. And how are the poor Negroes doing?

STEWART. Read my pieces.

JOE. I'm a little behind in my reading.

STEWART. I'm not. *(Beat.)* You've been pretty tough on Johnson lately.

JOE. LBJ is a complicated fellow. He's physically intimidating but surprisingly sensitive to public accusations of weakness. It's been interesting testing the limits of his vulnerability.

STEWART. A little experiment.

JOE. He will do the right thing on Vietnam if I have anything to say about it. And I have great deal to say about it.

STEWART. Did you read Lippman last week?

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