

ALBERT. (*As a reflex.*) Thank you.

(*He leaves, closing the door behind him. YVONNE looks up, realizing what just happened. She stands.*)

YVONNE. Was that him? Did he just say "Thank you"? ... Oh, dear God. He spoke to me.... HE SPOKE TO ME!!!

(*The door reopens. ALBERT reenters, his head down in despair. He bangs on the door with his fist, angrily.*)

ALBERT. I knew one day this would happen.... But I NEVER thought it would be like THIS!

(*He bangs door again.*)

YVONNE. For whatever reason, even if you didn't mean it, it's over, Albert.... You spoke to me.

ALBERT. I didn't speak to you. It was a reaction to God Bless You.... If you had sneezed, I would have Gezuntheited you.

YVONNE. Still it's over, Albert. I'm free. I can breathe again.

ALBERT. You're not free. I was just being polite.

YVONNE. No, I'm free. Free free free. I'm free as a bird. (*She jumps and twirls through the air like a ballerina.*) Gold bless you, Albert, my dear sweet friend.

ALBERT. I spoke not because I wanted to. But because I couldn't take the pressure any more.

YVONNE. Was your anger that great?

ALBERT. It was the only defense I had.

YVONNE. Defense against what?

ALBERT. Against admitting to myself that I still loved you. Still wanted you.... If I kept silent, unapproachable, I would have built a wall so high, it would keep me safe from you forever.

YVONNE. What's safer than two divorces, Albert? ... I'm sorry I caused you so much pain.

ALBERT. Not talking to you kept me from not wanting you.

YVONNE. Why do you still want me?

ALBERT. I will always want you ... but now I can survive without you.... It's safe for me to say your name now. (*Cheerfully.*) Hello, Yvonne. What's new, Yvonne? How've you been, Yvonne?

YVONNE. Oh, so so. Not much new. Saw a wonderful movie last week.

ALBERT. I know. I waited for you to come out and not say a word to you.

YVONNE. Yes, I saw you.

ALBERT. Please don't smile.

YVONNE. I'm not laughing at you.

ALBERT. I know. But your smile weakens my resolve.

YVONNE. Sorry.... So, are you seeing anyone? Special, I mean.

ALBERT. Actually, yes. Well, very, very briefly. I'm not sure it will work out.

YVONNE. Who is she?

ALBERT. Mariette.

YVONNE. I thought you just met her.

ALBERT. Yes. I said it was very, very brief.... What about you? Are you seeing anyone?

YVONNE. Well, you would know. You've been four steps behind me the entire year.

ALBERT. Partly hounding you and partly to protect you from unsuitable men ... like me.

YVONNE. You weren't the wrong man, Albert. We were the wrong couple.... And now that we've settled things, you'll never confront me on the street corners and other places, will you?

ALBERT. No. Never. (*They shake on it. ALBERT doesn't flinch.*) It doesn't hurt with you!

YVONNE. Thank you.... So since you've promised not to hound me anymore, I promise not to marry you a third time.

ALBERT. A third time? I don't have a friend close enough to come to a third wedding.

YVONNE. Then let's be grateful for little things.

ALBERT. It's nice talking to you again ... without rancor and anger about — well, what I've done to you this year.

YVONNE. But I understand why you did it. I'm sure you thought I was very cruel to you. (*ALBERT shrugs.*) But in marriage, people are

always cruel to each other.

ALBERT. I loved you all the time.

YVONNE. You *thought* you did. But many's the time I saw that "God, I dislike you intensely" look.

ALBERT. I never disliked you intensely.

YVONNE. In-*tense*-ly. Sometimes you would glare at me and your eyes would grit their pupils.

ALBERT. You can't grit your pupils. You'd go blind.

YVONNE. And you would flare your nostrils. And bite your lower lip. And bang the side of your head with your knuckles. (*She does it to show him. She flares her nostrils, bites her lower lip and bangs the side of her head with her knuckles.*) ... You looked like a small gorilla that hadn't been fed in the zoo.

ALBERT. I NEVER did that. EVER.

YVONNE. I have pictures of it.

ALBERT. You went and got your camera while I was banging my head with my knuckles?

YVONNE. Yes. You were furious with me because I was angry with you. And do you know what you did to *make* me that angry?

ALBERT. No, but I'm sure you have a picture of it.

YVONNE. I'll tell you what you did.... You loved me too much.

ALBERT. I *loved* you too much?? ... How is a thing like that possible?

YVONNE. Because it was all about *your* feelings, *your* emotions, *your* need to tell me how wonderfully happy you were. Gushing all that love and devotion for me with, "God, I'm so lucky to have you. How did a man like me wind up with someone as great as you?" ... Never *once* thinking that I may be having a terrible day but *no*, you're too busy *fawning* all over me to ask how I'm feeling.

ALBERT. (*Glares at her.*) I'm not going to take a picture of what you just said, but I could do a quick oil painting of how neurotic and deranged you are.

YVONNE. I'm deranged? (*She laughs.*) Was I the one following me all around the city, running into me face to face, for the satisfaction of not saying a word to me?

ALBERT. If I didn't seek you out, how would you know I wasn't speaking to you? I had to chase you all over the city to let you know I

was ignoring you.

YVONNE. Yes. To punish me for leaving you. But it was you who divorced me. Remember?

ALBERT. Who else would I divorce? The maid? She had already quit. And she quit because she disliked you intensely.

YVONNE. Oh, yes. I can feel it coming on again. I can hear every single word you're never going to say to me.

ALBERT. No. Running after you is too exhausting. Instead I'll write to you. Blank page after blank page.

YVONNE. And I'll answer you. I'll write *blanter* pages and speak silent words. I don't care anymore. Divorce me again. Get an invisible lawyer and sue me in a non-existing court. I've beat you at your own game, Albert.... Go! Leave! I'll even say goodbye for you. (*She pantomimes writing on a wall.*) "Farewell and goodbye." ... This is the last time I shall be speaking to you, Albert.

(ALBERT walks to the door, turns.)

ALBERT. ... I'm sorry this happened, Yvonne. (*She turns her back to him.*) Will you be staying for dinner?

(*She drops her shoulders, walks hunched over, looks at the sky, stretches her arms out, et cetera. All the things he did in silence but in an exaggerated way.*)

ALBERT. Aren't you going to run over there and slam the door twice?

YVONNE. I don't want to be cruel to you ... again.

ALBERT. Thank you.... Well, goodbye then ... Yvonne. (*He crosses to the door and as he goes, she looks at him, not wanting him to go.... In an effort to stop him she sneezes, then turns away.*) Gezunheit. (*His eyes are fixed on her to answer. She covers her face with her hands, trying not to let him see she is crying, but she doesn't answer.*) You don't have to cry, I'll finish it.... God bless you.... Goodbye.....

(*He goes. She removes her hands. MARIETTE comes back in.*)