

ANIMAL

SCENE 1:

*An artist's studio/apartment. **STAGE RIGHT** is the studio area – an easel, a small side table containing brushes in a jar and paints. **CENTER STAGE** contains a table and chairs and to the rear a cabinet which holds a coffee canister and cups. **STAGE LEFT** contains a bed.*

CASEY, is in the studio area, busy placing some drawings in a large portfolio. RITA, walks in at stage left, the living area, buoyantly carrying a bag of groceries in each hand which she places on a table in the kitchen area. CASEY pays no attention to her

RITA

I saw Howard at the store. It's the first time I've ever seen him cleaned up like that.

(She waits for a response but there is none.)

It's unusual to see him that way. I'm not used to it. Normally he's got that grubby beard that doesn't grow, his clothes are smelly. He always reminds me of that cartoon character ... the one who always has flies buzzing about him.

CASEY

We all do.

RITA

All do what? Smell or have flies flying around us?

CASEY

Both.

RITA

Maybe so but not to the same degree. It was strange to see him that way. So I spoke to him. To my surprise he was pleasant.

CASEY

Why shouldn't he be?

RITA

He never is. He always broods and never says anything unless it's to scream about how terrible society is to the artist. He's always been a one-themed conversationalist.

CASEY

I never thought of him as being a conversationalist.

RITA

Well, you know what I mean.

(She plumps down on a chair at the kitchen table, stretches her legs out.)

CASEY

I never do.

RITA

Whew ... You ought to try shopping down there sometimes. It's a rat race. People shoving you, babies howling ... you have to walk miles from one end to the other end of the store to find what you want. You'd think they'd organize it to make it easy but they don't. I once read that they designed it just so you'd have to go through long aisles so you'd see things you didn't come there for and buy them. Impulse buying, I think ... that's what they call it. We ought to organize and force them to lay it out to where it makes sense. Oh, well. You interested in eating?

CASEY

No.

RITA

Oh.

(This isn't what she expected. She's disappointed and flops around a moment. Gets up to get a cup of coffee but finds the pot empty.)

Jesus! What did you do, drink the whole pot?

CASEY

Just had half a cup.

RITA

I thought I made some before I left. Guess not. You know what Howard told me? He said that Berman and Louise were splitting up. Can you imagine that? How long have they been together ... what was it ... three or four years? You'd think that by now they'd be getting married rather than splitting up. I'll never understand relationships. They always seem so stable when actually they're very tenuous. Wouldn't you say?

CASEY

I wouldn't.

RITA

Well, you're full of things to say today. I've got a rehearsal in a bit. I may as well get there early.

(She moves to a table alongside the bed and picks up a flute case.)

We're going to be working on some Mozart today. I find Mozart very calming. It helps me forget everything.

CASEY

I like to remember everything.

RITA

I know. It must help you in your work.

CASEY

It does more than that.

RITA

What is that supposed to mean?

CASEY

Just what it says.

(Starts to clean his brushes.)

RITA

No more?

CASEY

Should there be more?

RITA

Is this a puzzle of some kind? Am I supposed to take three guesses?

CASEY

One good one should do it.

RITA

(Puts her flute case down on a table.)

Well, I guess you do want to play with me.

(She waits for his response but there is none.)

All right. Go ahead, you can tell me. I'm a big girl.

CASEY

Nothing to say. I'll be late if I don't get moving.

(He puts on a cap, grabs the portfolio, gives her a peck on the cheek and crosses to exit.)

See you later.

RITA

Wait. I'll go with you.

(She grabs her flute case and they both start for the door. At the door she stops.)

Oh, Christ, I forgot. I've got to call Delman. You go ahead.

(CASEY EXITS, she closes the door and crosses to the phone on the bedside table and dials.)

Hi, it's me ... yes, I know ... I couldn't ... maybe after rehearsal ... yes, in about two hours ... Bye.

(She hangs up, hesitates, picks up her flute and leaves.)