

think it's just the breaks? I'm having a bad streak of luck, is that what you think?

EDNA. I think it's the times, Mel. We are going through bad times.

MEL. You have no suspicion of the truth, do you? None at all?

EDNA. What truth? What truth are you talking about, Mel?

MEL. I'm talking about the *plot*, Edna. The *plot*. (*She looks at him for a long time.*)

EDNA. What plot, Mel?

MEL. (*Stares at her incredulously. He laughs.*) "What plot, Mel?" . . . I'm telling you about the plot and all you can say is, "What plot, Mel?"

EDNA. I don't know what plot you're talking about. You mentioned there's a plot and all I can think of to say is "What plot, Mel?"

MEL. What plot? Jeez! (*He turns.*)

EDNA. (*Exasperated.*) What plot? WHAT PLOT??

MEL. (*Turns back.*) The-social-economical-and-political-plot-to-undermine-the-working-classes-in-this-country.

EDNA. Oh, that plot.

MEL. Yes, *that* plot! Instead of rushing downtown every morning, stay home and listen to the radio once in a while. Listen to the talk shows. Find out what's going on in this country. Ten minutes of WQXR and you'll want to move to Switzerland.

EDNA. If it depresses you, Mel, don't listen to the talk shows. Listen to some nice music.

MEL. Nice music . . . (*Laughs.*) . . . Incredible. You're a child. You're an uninformed, ignorant little child . . . They've taken it over, Edna. Our music, our culture, it's not ours anymore, it's *theirs*.

EDNA. They have our music?

MEL. All of it. The arts, the media, every form of mass communication. *They got it, baby!*

EDNA. Don't get mad, Mel . . . Who?

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MEL. Who? . . . WHO?? . . . Jesus God in heaven!
Who???

EDNA. Mel, I've got to be in the office in twenty minutes. Please tell me who's taking over so I won't be late.

MEL. Alright, sit down.

EDNA. I may not get a cab, Mel. Can't you tell me who's taking over standing up?

MEL. Are you going to sit down?

EDNA. Do I have to, Mel? Is it a long name?

MEL. *Sit down, for Christ sakes!* (EDNA sits . . . MEL paces.) . . . Now . . . Once you do away with the middle class—what have you got left?

EDNA. (*Looks at him. It can't be that easy.*) What's left? After you take away the middle class? (MEL nods.) . . . The lower class and the upper class? (MEL stares at her incredulously.)

MEL. I can't talk to you. You have no understanding at all. Go on. Go to work.

EDNA. You mean there's another class besides the lower, the middle and the upper?

MEL. (*He walks to center of the room, looks around suspiciously.*) Come here. (EDNA looks at him.)

EDNA. I thought you wanted me sit down.

MEL. Will you come here. Away from the walls. (EDNA gets up and crosses to him in the middle of the room.)

EDNA. If it's that secret, Mel, I don't think I want to know. (*He grabs her by the wrist, pulls her to him.*)

MEL. (*Soft voice.*) There is a plot, Edna. It's very complicated, very sophisticated, almost invisible . . . Maybe only a half a dozen people in this country really know about it.

EDNA. And they told it on the radio?

MEL. Yes . . .

EDNA. Then everyone heard it.

MEL. Did you hear it?

EDNA. No.

MEL. Then everyone didn't hear it. How many people

you think listen to the radio at ten o'clock in the morning? Everybody is working. But I heard it . . . And as sure as we're standing here in the middle of the room, there is a plot going on in this country today.

EDNA. Against whom?

MEL. Against me.

EDNA. The whole country?

MEL. Not me personally. Although I'm a victim of it. A plot to change the system. To destroy the status quo. It's not just me they're after, Edna. They're after you. They're after our kids, my sisters, every one of our friends. They're after the cops, they're after the hippies, they're after the government, they're after the anarchists, they're after Women's Lib, the Fags, the Blacks, the whole military complex. That's who they're after, Edna.

EDNA. Who? You mentioned everyone. There's no one left.

MEL. There's someone left. Oh, baby, there's someone left alright.

EDNA. Well, I'm sure there is . . . if you say so, Mel.

MEL. (Yells.) Don't patronize me. I know what I'm talking about. I am open to channels of information twenty-four hours a day. (EDNA is becoming increasingly alarmed at MEL's obvious paranoid behavior but doesn't quite know how to handle it yet.)

EDNA. Mel, Mel . . . would you come here for a minute . . . Just sit with me for a minute. (He sits.) . . . Mel . . . You know I love you and believe in you completely. I always have . . . But I just want to say something, I hope you don't misunderstand this . . .

MEL. You think I'm paranoid? You think I'm having some sort of mental, nervous breakdown because I'm out of work . . . Because of the pressure, the strain I've been under, because I sound like a deranged person because of the personal hell I have gone through these past seven weeks. Is that it?

EDNA. (Nods.) That's it. That's exactly it, Mel . . .

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I wouldn't have put it that strongly, but that's more or less it. Exactly.

MEL. Do you want proof, Edna? Do you want me to give you actual, indisputable proof?

EDNA. (*Trying to be kinder now.*) Of what, Mel?

MEL. That me, that Dave Polichek, that Mike Ambrozi, Hal Chesterman, twenty-three secretaries, six point seven of the working force in this country today is unemployed not because of a recession, not because of wages and high prices, but because of a well organized, calculated, brilliantly executed *plot!* Do you want me to give you proof right here and now in this room?

EDNA. (*Hesitates.*) . . . Well—alright . . . If you want, Mel.

MEL. I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY PROOF!!! . . . What *kind of proof do I have?* I'm out of work, that's my proof . . . They won't let me work!

EDNA. Who is it, Mel? Tell me who's behind the plot? Is it the kids? The addicts? The army? The navy? The Book of the Month Club? WHO THE HELL IS IT, MEL?

MEL. . . . It is the human race! . . . It is the sudden, irrevocable, deterioration of the spirit of man. It is man undermining himself, causing a self-willed, self-imposed, self-evident *self destruction* . . . That's who it is.

EDNA. (*Looks at him.*) . . . The human race? . . . The human race is responsible for the unemployment?

MEL. (*A little smirk.*) Surprised, aren't you?

EDNA. (*Nods, quite shaken.*) I never would have guessed. I kept thinking it was somebody else.

MEL. (*Glares at her.*) Don't mock me. Don't patronize me and don't mock me.

EDNA. I'm not mocking you, Mel.

MEL. You're mocking me! . . . I know when I'm being mocked. I know what I'm talking about. You're working, you've got a job, you're not affected by any of this.