

ACT TWO

SCENE 1

About six weeks later. It is mid-September, about one in the afternoon. A radio is on playing music. From the bedroom we hear dull, rhythmic thump sounds. It is repeated every few seconds. MEL emerges from the bedroom. He is wearing khaki slacks, a pajama top, a bathrobe with the belt half open, and a pair of slippers. A baseball glove on his left hand and a baseball in his right. He keeps throwing the ball into the glove—thump—thump—thump . . . Six weeks of unemployment has turned MEL into a different man. His eyes seem to be sunken into his sockets, he has rings under his eyes and only seems to shave sporadically. There is also a grimness about him, an anger, a hostility, the look of a man who is suffering from a deep depression coupled with a tendency to paranoia. He comes into the living room aimlessly. He has no place to go and no desire to go there. He wanders around the room not seeming to see anything. He walks in all the available walking spaces in the living room and dining room, like a prisoner taking his daily exercise. He keeps banging the ball into his glove with increasing intensity . . . thump—thump—thump . . . He throws ball up against wall where the banging came from. Then crosses into kitchen looking for something to eat. A key in the door, it opens. EDNA rushes in dressed smartly in a suit and carrying a small bundle of food in a brown paper bag. She throws down a magazine, calls out:)

EDNA. Mel? . . . Mel, I'm home. *(She closes door and*

crosses to living room, turns off radio, then into kitchen.)
You must be starved. I'll have your lunch in a second . . . *(Takes things out of package.)* . . . I couldn't get out of the office until a quarter to one and then I had to wait fifteen minutes for a bus . . . God, the traffic on Third Avenue during lunch hour . . . I got a cheese souffle in Schrafft's, is that alright? I just don't have time to fix anything today, Mr. Cooperman wants me back before two o'clock, we're suddenly swamped with work this week . . . He asked if I would come in on Saturdays from now until Christmas but I told him I didn't think I could . . . *(She is crossing into kitchen and getting out pots.)* . . . I mean we could use the extra money but I don't think I want to spend Saturdays in that office too. We see each other little enough now as it is . . . Come in and talk to me while I'm cooking, Mel, I've only got about thirty-five minutes today . . . *(EDNA has put the casserole on the stove and is now crossing into kitchen, setting up two places with dishes and silverware.)* . . . My feet are absolutely killing me. I don't know why they gave me a desk because I haven't had a chance to sit at it in a month . . . Hi, love. I bought you Sports Illustrated . . . Mr. Cooperman told me there's a terrific story in there about the Knicks, he thought you might be interested in it . . . *(MEL tosses the magazine aside with some contempt . . .)* . . . You just can't move up Third Avenue because there's one of those protest parades up Fifth Avenue, or down Fifth Avenue, whichever way they protest . . . Fifteen thousand women screaming "Save the Environment" and they're all wearing leopard coats . . . God, the hypocrisy . . . Come on, sit down, I've got some tomato juice first . . . *(She pours tomato juice into two glasses. MEL listlessly moves to table and sits.)* . . . Isn't that terrible about the Commissioner of Police? . . . I mean *kidnapping* the New York Commissioner of Police? . . . Isn't that insane? I mean if the cops can't find him, they can't find anybody . . . *(She sits, picks up her glass of juice and sips.)* . . . Oh, God, that's good.

That's the first food I've had since eight o'clock this morning. We're so busy there we don't even have time for a coffee break . . . He's going to ask me to work nights, I know it, and I just don't know what to say to him . . . I mean he's been so nice to me, he buys me sandwiches two or three times a week, not that I don't deserve it, the way I've been working this past month, but I just don't want to spend any nights down there because I don't even have the strength to talk when I get home anymore . . . I don't know where I'm getting the energy, I must have been saving it up for the past twenty-two years . . . (*She sips again.*) . . . I've got to stop talking because I'm all wound up and I'll never stop . . . How are you, darling? You feeling alright? (*MEL sits, staring into his tomato juice.*) . . . Mel? You alright?

MEL. (*Mumbles something affirmative.*) Mmm.

EDNA. (*Looks at him.*) Don't feel like talking much?

MEL. Mmm.

EDNA. . . . Oh, come on, Mel. I've got to leave in about thirty minutes and I probably won't get home until seven o'clock. Talk to me . . . What did you do today?

MEL. (*Looks at her. He takes a long time before he answers.*) . . . I took a walk.

EDNA. Oh, that's nice. Where?

MEL. From the bedroom to the living room . . .

EDNA. (*Nervous about his frame of mind, restrains from putting him on edge.*) . . . Is that all?

MEL. No. I walked back into the bedroom . . . Once I went into the kitchen for a glass of water. What else you want to know?

EDNA. Nothing. You don't feel like talking, that's alright.

MEL. I feel like talking. You want to hear about the rest of my morning?

EDNA. (*Sensing his anxiety.*) I said it's alright, Mel.

MEL. I looked out the window three times, listened to Martha Deane and went to the toilet which is still flush-