

(NORMA enters through the front door.)

MILLIE. Norma! You had me worried, are you alright?

NORMA. I'm fine. Hello ... everyone.

BOB. You left without even speaking to me.

NORMA. You'd been in closed session since this morning,

Bob. When could I have? You received my note, did you not?

BOB. Yes, but –

MILLIE. Wanted to get a jump start on the weekend?

NORMA. I had a sick headache. I needed fresh air.

JIM. Feeling better now?

NORMA. Yes, thank you, Jimmy. I am feeling better.

MILLIE. Are you sure? You seem a little tense.

NORMA. Nothing a hot bath and time alone with you won't cure, darling. See you tomorrow, Bob. Jimmy.

JIM. Oh, Norma. Principal Stone's retirement party is tonight.

NORMA. Send my best, give my regrets.

JIM. Well I can hardly go stag. Everybody's bringing spouses, what would I say?

NORMA. Say whatever you like. Lie. It's what we do. It's *all* we do.

BOB. What has come over you?

NORMA. You want to keep Millie's picture on your desk, Bob, go right ahead. If I have to throw a "my darling Jim" to the girls at the coffee counter once in a while, no real harm. But lately... We're living the falsehood full-time, and it is *exhausting*. We don't even get to have the real relationships we're supposed to be protecting, because we gotta be show ponies for the safety and comfort of *people we can't stand*.

BOB. We're in a very special situation these days –

NORMA. Jesus Christ, I know that, Bob! Every poor bastard you fire has to walk right by my desk, sobbing and destroyed. And I sit there, staring at my wedding band, feeling every inch the fraud I am. And today, when Oswald Neeves, who you *know* is not a damn fag, walked out with his life in a shambles, unemployable, fired for something that isn't true for him, but is very

true for the four of us, it just *got to me*. But I will do it, Bob. For you, for us, for the arrangement we've made, I will go back there Monday morning and do it. As long as tonight, you get out of my house, and let me take a bath, be myself, and fuck my wife. Will you do that for me, boss? Huh? Could you please afford me that tender courtesy?

*(BOB regards her, then walks into the closet and departs.)*

JIM. Norma, I'm sorry, I –

NORMA. I'm sorry, too, Jimmy. But tonight you're on your own.

JIM. No problem. It's fine, truly. You get some rest.

NORMA. I will.

*(JIM goes to the closet and departs. MILLIE shuts the door as NORMA sits on the sofa.)*

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