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JOANNA/JOHN/TILLIE/MATT/CHRISTINA/MONSIGNOR

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Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

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down to something as if I've never had my own mind or have gone the way of a crazy old coot. I know I'm the only one thinking sense today. This whole thing is the doctor's fault. He's a grown man who behaved irresponsibly letting this idiotic thing happen between them in the first place.

CHRISTINA. Our daughter's a grown woman.

MATT. But still our daughter. And as her father, how the hell can I support this when I know she's bound to run into a real Klansman one day and get her brains beat in with a baseball bat! Now I need a drink...

(CHRISTINA escapes out to the terrace where the last light of the unwelcome sunset glows. She is adjusting her garden when MATT returns with a bourbon in one hand, his sock in the other. CHRISTINA is silent. MATT wrestles on his sock then finally settles.)

CHRISTINA. There's nothing I can say that you don't think you know. But it's important you understand how wrong I think you are. I believe you're making the worst mistake you've ever made in your life. I believe you'll regret this with more bitterness than you've ever known and for as long as you live...

MATT. Well, you're wrong. You're as wrong as you could be. I'm thinking of Joey. Even the doctor will understand that I'm thinking of her.

CHRISTINA. There's something else. And I'm surprised this hasn't occurred to you. John will accept whatever you say to him because he's a terribly sensitive man who will keep his word and accept yours. But Joey won't. The most obvious mistake that you're making is in underestimating your own daughter. She'll fight you and your whole attitude and anything you do and every argument you give her. And one thing more. Until today I would never have believed I could say such a thing... But when she fights you, Matt, and for what it may be worth, I'm going to be right there with her. Shall I bring you another drink?

MATT. I'll get it myself.

(The doorbell rings. TILLIE enters to answer the door.)

JOANNA. (Offstage:) No! No! Wait... Don't answer the door! Don't answer it!...

(The doorbell rings again. JOANNA runs down the stairs.)

Wait! Wait... John! John, come out here! Let John answer the door! John!

(JOHN enters.)

John, you should answer the door.

JOHN. Why would I—

JOANNA. Don't question— Please answer the door...

(All focus is on the door. JOHN answers it... MONSIGNOR RYAN enters.)

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Forgive me, I'm a bit early... Why, am I the belle of the ball tonight?

JOANNA. You spoiled my surprise...

MONSIGNOR RYAN. Sorry, my dear.

JOHN. Why did you want me to answer?

CHRISTINA. What surprise?

MATT. What's going on?

JOANNA. Guess who's coming to dinner?

MATT. Who?

TILLIE. I know—

JOANNA. No, Tillie!

TILLIE. She's expecting the Reverend Martin Luther King!

MATT. Who the hell's coming to dinner?

JOANNA. John's parents should be—

JOHN. My parents... My parents are coming here? How?

JOANNA. I called and invited them since you weren't going to have the chance to see them.

JOHN. You talked with my parents?...

JOANNA. They are so proud of everything you're doing, John. You do know that don't you? But they really miss you. I don't think they say that to you but I can tell they miss you. They're very excited to see you tonight.

JOHN. They're going to expect someone different.

JOANNA. Do they think I'm older?

JOHN. Darker.

JOANNA. You said you told them everything...

JOHN. I was going to write them a letter.

START



MONSIGNOR RYAN. Would anyone else care for a scotch?

CHRISTINA. We could all use a drink now.

JOANNA. I did this for you . . . And for us. Why are you getting mad?

JOHN. It's made everything more complicated.

MATT. This is too goddamn much. Simply behaving like nobody's going to have a problem with what is very clearly an enormous problem isn't going to solve it.

JOANNA. (To JOHN:) Is that how you feel?

JOHN. I was going to write them a letter.

JOANNA. Does everyone think I'm stupid, unaware of what we're doing?

CHRISTINA. Nobody thinks you're stupid, Joey . . . But optimistic . . .

MATT. Outrageously optimistic! You don't seem to understand—

CHRISTINA. (To MATT:) You don't understand that it's her—

JOANNA. (To MATT:) Don't understand? You don't think I understand . . . I don't think you understand yourself. I understood very well what you wrote last month in your newspaper.

MATT. What the hell's that have to do with this?

JOANNA. You wrote that the whole world needs a round table. Remember? That gathering over issues and talking best expresses our humanity.

MATT. I was writing about the Middle East and Vietnam.

JOANNA. Exactly . . . That a round table could save the bloodshed of millions. Not war but discourse is our true nature. You wrote that. Now look at us . . .

(She embraces JOHN.)

This is the issue. An issue that should include John's parents. Now look in the dining room . . . There's our round table.

MONSIGNOR RYAN. That's the finest sense spoken today. Strange that it's coming in part from you, Matt.

MATT. I have to finish dressing for dinner.

(MATT exits upstairs.)

CHRISTINA. Mike, I'll join you for that drink.

(CHRISTINA and MONSIGNOR RYAN exit to the parlor.)

TILLIE. Glad I don't got to sit at the table.

(TILLIE exits into the kitchen. JOHN and JOANNA are alone together.)

JOHN. I really was going to write them a letter.

JOANNA. Now you can say it.

END.

(JOHN leads her to a kiss. The doorbell rings. He jumps away. JOANNA pulls him to her and they kiss once more. The doorbell rings again. They turn to face the door together as the lights fade down on the scene.)

End of Act One