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# Guess Who's Coming to Dinner

By William Rose

You know,  
I just had a thought.  
Why don't I check in a hotel  
and rest.  
- You go find your folks.  
- Oh, John.  
You wanted to meet them.  
Let's go meet them.  
The sooner we get it over with,  
the better.  
Mom may not even be at the gallery.  
She'll probably be out to lunch.  
Dad's at his office. You may not  
meet them till dinner anyway.  
You may be wrong about them.  
You should have called  
and told them we were coming.  
You may be in for the biggest shock  
of your young life.  
After 23 years living  
in the same house with them...  
don't you think I know  
my own mother and father?  
I hope so.  
There's no problem.  
We'll only be a minute, and then  
we'd like to go out to Claremont Drive.  
Right.  
I'll see if Mom's  
in the office.  
- Joey!  
- Hilary, hi! How are you?  
What a surprise.  
- I'll be with you in just a moment.  
- Okay.  
- Strange.  
- One of Hilary's favorites.  
It's called a kinetic sculpture.  
- A what?  
- Look.  
Why, isn't that something?  
- Darling, what are you doing here?  
- I thought Mother might be here.  
Mrs. St. George, I'd like you

to meet Dr. Prentice.

Dr. Prentice,

I'm so pleased to meet you.

Mrs. St. George.

Pleasure to see you.

Christina's lunching

with Mr. Cazalet.

I can ring up.

No. Just tell her I'm back

and that I'll be home.

Has something happened?

I mean, is anything wrong?

Something's happened,

but everything's right. Thanks.

How was Hawaii?

Was it fun?

Hawaii was simply unbelievable.

Do you live in San Francisco, Doctor,

or are you just visiting?

- I'm just passing through.

- I see.

- It was a pleasure to have met you.

- Thank you.

Bye-bye.

No, Hilary runs the gallery now,  
but it's Mom who has all the ideas.

Her idea for filling hotel rooms  
with originals is brilliant.

It gives people who stay there  
time to decide if they want them.

The hotel gets supplied  
with free decor.

The guests get to look at good paintings  
instead of bad reproductions.

The painter gets a chance to make a sale  
and Mom gets her commission.

Next right.

- Isn't that clever?

- Oh, that is clever.

- What do I owe you?

- 10.50, mac.

Twelve bucks, right?

Right.

Right.

Oh, John.

Come meet Tillie.

Tillie, this is Dr. Prentice.

John, Miss Matilda Binks.

Pleased to meet you, Miss Binks.

I've certainly heard  
a great deal about you.

What are you  
doing home unexpected?  
Your folks didn't know you was coming.  
You told them you're back already?

I left a message for Mom  
at the gallery.

It's lovely to see you.

I missed you.

You still ain't told me  
why you're home early.

- You want those bags to go upstairs?

- Not my two. I'm not staying.

It's personal reasons.

I'll tell you all about it.

You eat any lunch yet,  
or you expecting it now?

Could you make us sandwiches and coffee?

We'll have it on the terrace.

Do you like it?

It's beautiful.

Come out  
and look from the terrace.

- What?

- Hey, who's that?

That's Dorothy. Isn't she a knockout?

She helps Tillie during the week.

- Which days?

- Never mind.

You know, I ought to call my folks  
and get that out of the way.

Okay. Use the phone in the study.

- Are you gonna introduce me?

- Not on the phone.

- Aren't you gonna tell them about me?

- I'd rather write to them.

I have to meet them, don't I?

Before I come to Geneva?

Or are we going to keep our marriage  
a secret from them?  
Why didn't I think of that?  
See, that's a thought.  
I'll shut this  
in case Dorothy goes by.  
Los Angeles, please.  
Area code 213.  
Axminster, two, four, six, nine, nine.  
Time and charges.  
Well, I got a right  
to my own opinions.  
And you want my opinion?  
I don't care to see a member  
of my own race getting above hisself.  
Then I don't want your opinion,  
and if I ever do, I'll ask for it.  
Oh, Tillie, I'm sorry.  
I didn't mean that, but you can't mean  
what you're saying either.  
And you're so wrong.  
Look.  
You're the last person I'd have expected  
to take such a silly attitude.  
You know I've always loved you,  
and you're just as black as he is.  
How could it be all right for me to  
love you and wrong for me to love him?  
Will you just stop  
and think about that?  
Listen. What are we having  
for dinner tonight?  
- Gotta make it something special.  
- Celery soup and rump steak.  
Oh, now, come on.  
Turtle soup and tournedos...  
and one of your best pies.  
It's Mom!  
Joey, darling.  
What the hell? Joey!  
- Mom, I'm here!  
- Hello, darling. Are you all right?  
- There's nothing wrong, is there?  
- Nothing's wrong. Everything's fine.

I rang the gallery to tell Hilary  
that Cazalet agreed to our scheme.  
He has? That's marvelous.  
I knew he would.  
She said you were back. She thought  
you might have a surprise for me.  
What did she mean?  
Do I hear someone?  
- Is there someone here?  
- Oh, Mom, I'm so happy.  
I've never been so happy in all my life.  
I'm just...  
Bursting. Yeah, I can see that.  
And I'm already feeling happy for you.  
Do I know him?  
No. That's just it.  
I only met him myself ten days ago.  
You wouldn't believe what's happened  
in just ten days.  
I think I might if you'd pipe down  
long enough to tell me.  
- Mom...  
- Lots of wonderful things happen...  
He's so wonderful!  
I've never known anyone like him.  
Never known anything like this.  
I fell in love with him  
in 20 minutes.  
Well, that was quick.  
Well, Dad, I wanted to stop  
on the way back...  
but time got so short  
and I've got to get to work.  
Yeah, but I still don't understand  
why you couldn't spend one day with us.  
Well, the fact is, Dad,  
I met this girl.  
You what? You met a girl?  
Why didn't you say so?  
Mary, he says he met a girl.  
Why, that's good news.  
- She live up there in San Francisco?  
- She lives up here. I'm at her house.  
He says he's at her house now,

the girl's house.  
Well, that's different, son.  
Where'd you meet her? Hawaii?  
Yes, in Hawaii,  
and I wanted to meet her folks, see?  
That sounds good, son.  
I mean, serious.  
Yes, it's serious.  
Well, this is quite a surprise.  
Yeah, she's surprising  
in a lot of ways, Dad.  
Your mother says,  
"Is she pretty? "  
- Yes, she's very pretty.  
- She's pretty. What?  
Your mother says,  
"How old is she, son?"  
Mary, what the hell difference  
does that make?  
Well, she's only 23, Dad.  
Twenty-three. Well, that's good.  
You want my opinion?  
You're 37.  
That's just the right difference.  
Women age faster than men,  
you know what I mean?  
- You reckon to marry the girl, son?  
- Well, we've been talking about it.  
But...  
Dad, there's one or two problems,  
you see?  
That I'll write to you about...  
on the plane to New York tonight,  
all right?  
He's so calm...  
and sure of everything.  
He doesn't have  
any tensions in him.  
He knows what he believes...  
and what he thinks is right  
and why and where he's going.  
Oh, Mom, there's one thing  
I must tell you.  
He was married before,

and he had a son.  
It was so tragic.  
Both his wife and his son were killed  
in a train accident...  
in Belgium eight years ago.  
And John...  
I haven't even told you  
his name.  
Mom, it's John Wade Prentice.  
Isn't that a lovely name?  
John Wade...  
Joanna Prentice...  
I'll be.  
But Mom...  
there's something else  
that I must tell you...  
that John's been concerned about,  
very deeply concerned.  
He's been worrying for the past week  
whether you and Dad would be upset if...  
Well, it's about time.  
I was wondering where you'd been.  
Mom...  
this is John.  
Doctor Prentice...  
I'm so pleased to meet you.  
I'm pleased to meet you,  
Mrs. Drayton.  
I take it Joanna's already busted out  
with the big news.  
Well, she has told me a good deal  
and all very quickly too.  
Well, she's only known me  
for ten days...  
so she can't tell you  
when I'm blushing.  
That could be another problem  
for us.  
Mrs. Drayton,  
I'm medically qualified...  
so I hope you wouldn't  
think it presumptuous if I say...  
you ought to sit down  
before you fall down.



He thinks you're gonna faint  
because he's a Negro.

Well...

I don't think

I'm going to faint.

But I'll sit down anyway.

Can't we all sit down?

Well...

I suppose it would be all right  
if I said, "My goodness," wouldn't it?

Well, my goodness.

- Do we mind her saying, "My goodness"?

- I don't mind.

What did they say?

Did you tell them about me?

- Yes.

- What'd they say?

They said I sounded serious  
and asked if you were pretty.

I said you were.

They said this was a big surprise.

I said it was.

Well, what did they say when you  
told them I wasn't a colored girl?

I didn't. It felt like

too big a shock for the telephone.

After all, a lot of people will think  
that we're a very shocking pair.

Isn't that right?

I know what you mean.

Tillie's made us some sandwiches.

- Let's go outside.

- Yes, let's.

- Come on, Dr. Prentice.

- I can explain it all in two minutes.

You see, John was invited to lecture  
at Hawaii University...

and we met at this big party  
at the dean's.

After the party,

we went for a long drive.

- Thank you.

- And since then, we've been together.

We've been swimming every day.

Then John was supposed to fly back to  
Los Angeles Saturday to see his parents.  
That's where they live.  
Thank you, Tillie.  
Try one of these.  
They're great.  
- Do you want some coffee?  
- No, thanks. No coffee.  
Does your father know  
that you're back?  
No, I was going to phone him.  
Do you think he'd come back early if...  
He's coming back early, all right.  
He's playing golf with Monsignor Ryan.  
That's marvelous.  
Then he can meet John  
and we can all talk over dinner...  
because John has to fly  
to New York tonight to see a friend...  
at Columbia University.  
Then tomorrow night,  
he's flying to Geneva...  
to do three month's work  
for the World Health Organization.  
And I intend to fly to Geneva next week  
so that we can be married.  
And that's the whole situation.  
In a nutshell.  
Except that he thinks...  
that the fact he's a Negro and I'm not  
creates a serious problem.  
Does he?  
I've told him 97 times...  
that it wouldn't make the slightest  
difference to you or Dad.  
But he just wouldn't believe me.  
So that's why we're here.  
And that's why he's watching you  
so closely right now...  
while he's pretending  
not to watch you at all.  
She's absolutely right, Mrs. Drayton.  
I'm sorry.  
I told her not to spring all this

on you so suddenly.

But... Look,

if your father's coming home...

you could at least say

that I'm somebody you met in Hawaii.

- Now, really?

- Give him a half hour to get adjusted.

But what for?

He still has to be told, doesn't he?

Well, you should make up your minds

because I think I just heard his car.

Mr. Matt.

- Hi. How are you?

- All hell's done broke loose.

- That waste disposal out again?

- It ain't that.

Just remember,

all hell's done broke loose.

- What's happened? Where's Christina?

- She's on the terrace with little Joey.

- With Joey?

- And somebody called Dr. Prentice.

Doctor? There's a doc...

Well, what's wrong?

What's happened? Joey!

Here he comes.

- Daddy! How are you?

- What's happened? What are you doing?

- Tillie said there was a doctor here.

- There is! Dr. John Wade Prentice.

- This is my dad.

- Pleased to meet you.

How are you? Nice to know you.

But what is it?

- Is something wrong?

- There's nothing wrong.

I decided to come home early.

Oh, Dr. Prentice and I

met in Hawaii...

and we flew back in the same plane

this morning.

Oh, well, sit down.

I thought something was really wrong.

Tillie said...

Tillie's behaving very strangely today.

Would you like coffee?

No, thanks. I have a date to play golf  
with Monsignor Ryan.

How are you? What's the matter,  
you having a chill?

No, darling, I'm fine.

I...

Doctor, where are you practicing?

In San Francisco?

- Sit down.

- No, sir.

I'm just here for one day.

Oh, where is your practice?

Hawaii?

Well, no, not...

I'm not established in any one place.

I'm in tropical medicines, mostly,  
in Africa...

these past few years.

Well, that sounds interesting.

Everything about Dr. Prentice  
is interesting.

I'm sure it is.

I wish I had more time,  
but if you'll excuse me.

Couldn't you be a half hour late  
and stay and talk with us?

I'd love to, but I mustn't keep  
the Monsignor waiting.

No, I'm gonna be late as it is.

Will I be seeing you later, Doctor?

You certainly will.

Good.

Well, that's good.

Dr. Prentice will be here  
for dinner, Matt.

Oh, fine. Then you can tell me  
all about the African...

There's a great deal to tell too.

Isn't there, Mom?

Well, fine.

See you all later.

What the hell

is going on here?  
- This doesn't make sense either.  
- Well, I told you, didn't I?  
What'd you tell him?  
Look, Chris...  
if you don't explain to me  
in the next few minutes...  
I can explain it, Mr. Drayton.  
You can?  
Well, let's have it  
Well, it's my fault.  
You see,  
we have sort of a situation here.  
Joanna and I didn't just meet  
in Hawaii.  
We spend a good deal of time  
together.  
I mean, all the time  
after we met.  
And, well, we have this problem:  
I fell in love with your daughter.  
And, as incredible  
as it may seem...  
she fell in love with me.  
And we flew back  
to San Francisco...  
to see if you or Mrs. Drayton would have  
any objections if we got married.  
Joanna told her mother  
as soon as she walked in...  
and I had the stupid idea,  
that maybe...  
there was some way to...  
break this gently.  
Daddy, you're making  
John and me nervous.  
Am I?  
Well, I wouldn't want to do that.  
I wouldn't want to make anybody nervous.  
How about you? Are you nervous?  
Sit down, Doctor,  
before you make me nervous.  
Would anybody like  
a cup of coffee?

What did she say  
when Joanna told her?  
- Did she raise any objections?  
- None, so far. There hasn't been time.  
What objections?  
Dad, I know this is sort of a shock  
because it's sudden and unexpected...  
and it never occurred to me  
that I might fall in love with a Negro.  
But I did, and nothing in the world  
is gonna change that.  
Even if you had any objections,  
I wouldn't let him go now if...  
you were the governor of Alabama...  
I mean, if Mom were.  
Tell him, will you?  
Tell John if you have any objections  
and then you could go play golf.  
Well, what is it  
you expect me to say?  
If you want me to think about this,  
you'll have to give me time to think.  
The doctor says you have a problem.  
You certainly have.  
If you're expecting a sensible  
statement, you'll have to give me time.  
Does that sound reasonable?  
It's reasonable, Mr. Drayton,  
but not quite practical.  
You see, Matt...  
there's sort of  
a special problem.  
See, I've got to fly  
to New York tonight...  
and on to Switzerland  
tomorrow night.  
Yes, and what Joey wants...  
what she proposes...  
is to go to Geneva herself  
so they can be married...  
within the next couple of weeks.  
What the hell is all the rush?  
We know that we want  
to get married.

And unless somebody does have any objections, why should we waste time?  
John and I aren't gonna change our minds.  
Are you saying...  
Are you telling me...  
that you want an answer today...  
about how your mother and I feel?  
Of course. We want you and Mom to state absolutely clearly...  
that you have  
no objections whatever...  
and that when we do get married, we'll have your blessing.  
Now, are you gonna play golf or not?  
No.  
I'll just call it off.  
Excuse me, Doctor.  
And that's my dad.  
Do you like him?  
- I don't know. Does he like me?  
- I don't know either.  
When he puts on his American eagle face...  
nobody can tell what he's thinking, except Mom.  
I don't think he liked any of us after the silly way we began.  
Excuse me, will you?  
Give John some more coffee.  
She's beautiful, Joanna.  
She's even better looking than you.  
You know that?  
Hello, Edie?  
Two things, Edie.  
Both of them urgent.  
Call up Monsignor Ryan and tell him I can't play this afternoon.  
Tell him something's come up, something personal at home.  
Then call the library...  
and see if they've got any dope on a John Wade Prentice.

Prentice. He's a doctor of medicine.

Fellow about 35, 36...

- Oh, Matt.

- He's a colored fellow.

Yeah.

If they haven't got anything...

call up the medical association

and see what they've got.

Get anything you can, will you, Edie?

All right. Hurry and call me back.

Surely there can't be

any necessity for that.

- It can't do any harm, either.

- But Joey said he was lecturing...

at the university in Hawaii.

Tell me something. This ever occur

to you that this might happen?

Never occurred to me either.

Not once.

Can you tell me your reaction?

- How do you feel about it?

- Oh, I don't know.

I was shaken at first.

I still am, I suppose.

But, Matt, they're serious.

They mean what they're saying.

Both of them.

They know what they're doing.

No, they may mean what they're saying,

I accept that.

But they don't know what they're doing.

I won't accept that.

If I'm not intruding...

Of course not.

Please, come in.

I'd like to have a couple of minutes

with the two of you, if I may?

Sure, Doctor.

Come on in.

There's something you both

ought to know. I made a decision.

Joanna doesn't know about it,

and I don't see why she should.

What is it, Doctor?



Joanna thinks she's committed...  
and that our whole future  
is settled...  
but there is no real commitment.  
And up to now,  
nothing is settled at all.  
I don't understand.  
Joanna said you're going to be married  
no matter what we think about it.  
Well, that's not the case.  
Unless you two approve...  
and without any reservations at all...  
there won't be any marriage.  
Well, why, John?  
Why have you decided that?  
Well, Mrs. Drayton...  
this thing has happened so quickly...  
I'm just as startled  
as you must be.  
Two weeks ago, I would have said  
such a thing was inconceivable.  
But two weeks ago...  
I had not met Joanna.  
She's not at all  
like anyone I've ever known.  
It's not just that our color difference  
doesn't matter to her.  
It's that she doesn't seem to think  
there is any difference.  
The trouble is,  
this thing has come up...  
at a time when I already have  
all the problems I need.  
And I feel that I couldn't afford  
to get married...  
if it meant that I would have to take  
on any special problems...  
in addition to those  
we're obviously going to have.  
When you say "special problems,"  
Doctor, what do you mean?  
Well...  
Your attitude, Mr. Drayton...  
and yours, Mrs. Drayton.

Joanna is very close  
to both of you.  
If, by marrying me, she damaged  
her relationship with either of you...  
the pain of it  
would be too much for her.  
I wouldn't know how to deal  
with that kind of situation.  
In any case,  
I wouldn't even want to try.  
Well, I'm glad you told us,  
Doctor.  
Don't misunderstand me.  
I love your daughter.  
There is nothing I wouldn't do to keep  
her as happy as she was the day we met.  
But it seems to me,  
without your approval...  
we will make no sense at all.  
That is why I'm asking for...  
the clearest possible statement  
of what your attitude is going to be.  
I appreciate that, Doctor.  
It's almost in the form  
of an ultimatum.  
Not quite, Mr. Drayton.  
All you have to say  
is good-bye.  
Well, that's where it's at.  
Thank you for the opportunity  
to speak my peace.  
Well...  
still think you ought to have someone  
check on him?  
No.  
He's right about Joey too.  
- You know that, don't you?  
- Yes.  
Thank God he is. That's the way I feel.  
Thank God he's right.  
She's 23 years old,  
and the way she is...  
is just exactly the way  
we brought her up to be.

We answered her questions.  
She listened to our answers.  
We told her it was wrong  
to believe...  
that white people were somehow  
essentially superior to black people...  
or the brown or the red  
or the yellow ones, for that matter.  
People who thought that way  
were wrong to think that way.  
Sometimes hateful, usually stupid,  
but always wrong.  
That's what we said...  
and when we said it,  
we did not add...  
"But don't ever fall in love  
with a colored man."  
Edie, Mr. Drayton.  
Do you want the whole story?  
- Yeah, what is it, Edie?  
- He's an important guy.  
Just the main points:  
Born Los Angeles, 1930...  
graduated maxima cum laude  
John Hopkins, '54...  
assistant professor,  
Yale Medical School, '55...  
three years professor,  
London School of Tropical Medicine...  
three years assistant director,  
World Health Organization...  
two textbooks and a list of monographs  
and medical society honors...  
as long as your arm.  
Married Elizabeth Bowers, 1955,  
one son, John Wade.  
Oh, both killed in an accident  
in 1959.  
- There's a lot more here.  
- No, that's all right. Thanks.  
What's the \$2.20?  
He made a call to Los Angeles  
to his parents.  
I guess he doesn't bum

free telephone calls either.  
I can certainly understand why he didn't  
have much to say about himself.  
Who the hell would believe him?  
I beg your pardon, lady.  
He loves me, he loves me not.  
Tell me, what do you think? Aren't they  
exactly the way I said they were?  
I must admit,  
they are very special people.  
- Shall I tell you something?  
- What's that?  
For a whole week,  
I've been nervous.  
No. I don't believe it.  
Not about what they'd ultimately feel.  
Just about their first reaction.  
I thought it was just possible  
for the first time in 23 years...  
they might let me down  
for the first half hour.  
You're a phony. You know that?  
You're a big phony.  
Well...  
She's always been  
a happy human being.  
She laughed out loud  
before she was six months old.  
She was happy as a baby.  
Happy as a little girl.  
Happy all through school and college.  
But I don't think  
I've ever seen her...  
quite so happy  
as she is right now.  
And I have to be happy  
for her, Matt.  
And I am.  
I feel happy for her.  
And proud of the fact  
that we helped make her.  
And whatever happens now,  
I feel glad...  
that Joey's Joey.

How are you today?  
Having a steak fry, huh?  
Well, now, there she is.  
How are you today?  
Wanna give me a lift to Market Street?  
Save me a cab.  
You know it, doll.  
I hope these is better  
than the last we had, hotshot.  
Lady, don't look at me. I deliver it.  
I don't rustle the cattle.  
You said to remind you  
to open the wine.  
Civil rights is one thing.  
This here is something else.  
I went out on to the terrace.  
Oh, I'll never forget it.  
It was so beautiful.  
It was already dark  
and the moon was rising.  
I guess I didn't see him at first  
because I was looking at the view.  
But he was standing there.  
Then all of a sudden  
he moved or something, and I jumped.  
And he just stood there,  
looking at me and sort of...  
- Ah, you're burning your shirt.  
- Oh, yes. Sort of smiling.  
"Hello," I said.  
"Who are you?"  
And I think he thought I was...  
you know, attractive.  
Anyway, finally, he said...  
"Well, do you think  
it could possibly matter?"  
- And it's just crazy, and I admit it.  
- You'd better let me do this.  
But 20 minutes later,  
I felt I was in love with him.  
Mom, how long did it take you  
to fall in love with Dad?  
Oh, well, nothing like  
so long as 20 minutes.

- You mean, is that really true?

- Yes, that's really true.

Oh, Mom.

Joey, I want to ask you something.

How deeply are you and John in...

No, I have no right to ask.

How deeply involved? Do you mean,  
have we been to bed together?

I don't mind you asking me that.

We haven't.

He wouldn't.

I don't think he was in doubt  
about my feelings, but he wouldn't.

You're burning my shirt.

He's been concerned the whole time  
about my getting hurt somehow.

They're still talking.

Wouldn't you think

they'd have said everything by now?

Are you saying they don't have  
any special sense of rhythm?

That's right.

But, hell, you can see it.

You can't turn on the television set  
without seeing those kids dancing...

and I say the colored kids  
are better than the white kids.

But there's an explanation for that.

It's our dancing, and it's our music.

We brought it here.

I mean, you can do the Watusi...

but we are the Watusi,  
if you know what I mean.

I remember,

when I was about your age...

my sports editor telling me that Negroes  
would never be able to play baseball.

Now, I suppose if he wanted to...

Willie Mays could be elected  
mayor of San Francisco.

I own a newspaper,

but I couldn't be elected dogcatcher.

Well, I don't guess

you want to be dogcatcher any more...

than he wants to be  
mayor of San Francisco.  
No, I suppose that's right.  
Doctor, we've talked about  
a good many things...  
but there's one thing  
we haven't talked about.  
Have you given any thought to  
the problems your children will have?  
Yes, and they'll have some.  
And we'll have the children.  
Otherwise,  
you couldn't call it a marriage.  
Is that the way Joey feels?  
She feels that all of our children will  
be president of the United States...  
and they'll all have  
colorful administrations.  
Well, you made her, Mr. Drayton.  
I just met her in Hawaii.  
But how do you feel  
about that problem?  
Well, frankly, I think your daughter  
is a bit optimistic.  
I'd settle  
for secretary of state.  
Would you think it was some kind  
of cowardice if I told you...  
that no matter how confident you two are  
I'm just a little scared.  
No, it wouldn't.  
But you never know.  
Things are changing.  
I have a feeling they're  
not changing anywhere else...  
as fast as they are  
in my own backyard.  
Just tell me this.  
Don't you think this quick decision...  
about how we feel about this thing  
is just a little unfair?  
In a way, I do.  
But it wasn't my idea  
that everything be settled so quickly.

Your daughter said  
there's no problem.  
She says, "My dad is a lifelong fighting  
liberal who loathes race prejudice...  
and has spent his whole life  
fighting against discrimination."  
She said, "My parents...  
They'll welcome you with open arms."  
And I said...  
"Oh, I sure want to meet them."  
Telephone!  
It's Los Angeles!  
- Take it in my study.  
- Thank you.  
- Hello?  
- Dr. Prentice?  
- Yes, this is he.  
- Hello. That you, Little John?  
Hi, Dad. What's up, man?  
Dr. Graves call again?  
Oh, no, it's not that, son.  
I just had an idea.  
What would you say to us  
flying up there to spend the evening?  
- This evening?  
- We could be up there at 6:30.  
I thought maybe we could take you  
and your young lady friend for dinner.  
- Tell them to come to dinner.  
- Just a minute.  
- I'm having dinner with her folks.  
- Don't be silly.  
- Tell them they're invited to dinner.  
- Who's that speaking? The young lady?  
Yes, that's her.  
No, just a minute. You haven't asked  
your mother, and there's Tillie.  
Won't you come to dinner,  
you and Mrs. Prentice?  
John and I will meet your plane.  
- Stop butting in.  
- Who am I talking to? John?  
Hi, Dad.  
Looks like she wants us



even if you don't. We want to meet her.

- So we'll see you at 6:30. What?

- Oh, no.

- See?

- Your mother says she's pleased.

Oh, hell, he knows that.

All right, son.

- Dad!

- We'll see you later. Bye.

What's the matter?

Mom!

John's father and mother  
are coming to dinner.

Oh, good.

- Marvelous.

- We'll meet their plane at 6:30.

Fine.

You'll tell Tillie, won't you?

I told you,

my folks, they don't...

They think

you're a colored girl.

- Why didn't you tell them?

- I was gonna write to them.

What difference does it make?

Do you think they wouldn't come?

Call them back and tell them.

They're gonna know anyway at 6:30

because I'll go with you to meet them.

That's not a good idea.

I'll meet them.

It gives me a chance to explain.

I have to explain.

Why do you keep trying  
to dramatize everything?

Look, I've told Pete and Judith that  
we'll meet them for a drink at 5:30.

It gives us just enough time  
to get to the airport.

She's my best and oldest friend  
so you've just got to let them meet you.

Did he tell you  
about this medical plan of his?

No. What?

It's the damndest thing  
you ever heard of.  
They put a whole medical school  
on about 20 trucks.  
Then they run  
into some African country...  
pick up the brightest native kids...  
hundreds at a time...  
and put them through courses just like  
they do the U.S. Army Corpsmen.  
Only his idea is  
that they're all specialists.  
You know, each one trained  
to do one simple thing...  
like sewing up a wound  
or delivering a baby or what have you.  
They go into places where people  
have never heard of an aspirin tablet...  
let alone a doctor.  
Imagine what that means.  
For every thousand kids they train,  
they can save a million lives a year.  
Now just think of that.  
He seems to have made  
quite an impression on you.  
Yeah.  
I asked him how he got so far.  
You know, he's only 37.  
He said he thought he got the best  
breaks because everybody he met...  
didn't want him to think  
they were prejudiced against him.  
Yeah, he made an impression, all right.  
I wouldn't know how to fault him.  
Are you trying to fault him?  
No, I'm not trying to fault him.  
You know, his father is a mailman.  
Retired now.  
Lives in Los Angeles.  
Now how do you suppose  
a colored mailman...  
produced a son  
with all the qualities he has?  
- You'll find out this evening.

- What?

Guess who's coming to dinner?

Who?

You mean, his parents?

Now wait a minute.

- Whose idea was that?

- Joey invited them.

Yeah, Joey. We're being pressurized.

You know that, don't you?

First there wasn't gonna be a marriage unless we approved.

Then we had one day to make up our minds.

Now we have to spend hours entertaining somebody we never heard of.

What the hell is coming off here?

Oh, don't look at those baby pictures.

That was at Klosters, the year before last.

I'll get it!

Just a second.

Monsignor Ryan!

How wonderful to see you.

- Well, good afternoon.

- Come on in. Good afternoon.

Why are you here when you should be in Hawaii?

What is the problem that caused your father to chicken out on our golf game?

- Who is this gentleman?

- Monsignor, this is Dr. John Prentice.

We met in Hawaii 11 days ago.

The two of us are going to be married.

Are you, indeed?

I take it you mean to each other.

- Dr. Prentice.

- Monsignor.

Well, of course, you're the problem.

I'm afraid I am.

I knew nothing of this.

Why haven't your parents informed me?

They didn't know either.

We only flew back this morning.

Excuse me a second.

I forgot to tell Tillie something.

Well...

- This was all very sudden, was it not?

- Yes, it was.

I suppose you two have had time  
to consider what you're doing.

No, we've not.

We'll be two more for dinner.

How many steaks did you get?

I got four

'cause I was told four.

Order two more because the doctor's  
father and mother are coming.

- We'll be six.

- His father and mother! Here?

That's right.

If the butcher can't send 'em...

tell him to put 'em

in a taxi.

It's gettin' more like

a holy rollers meetin' every minute.

Of course!

I know about you.

I read an article about you  
in "Common Wheel."

I shall want to talk to you  
about that.

You know, this fellow you brought home  
is a very important man?

- Are you aware of that?

- I'm wholly aware of it.

When I'm married to him,

I'll be important.

I guess you will,

as a matter of fact.

- Where's Arnold Palmer?

- Dad and Mom are in the garden.

Good. Well, just go on

with what you're doing. Fore!

Of all the friends we've ever had,

I guess he's the closest.

We're not Catholics, but he and Dad  
and Mom have done things together.  
You know,  
sat on committees and things.  
He's a wonderful man,  
and we love him.  
You're a remarkable fellow, Mike.  
You get younger every minute.  
- Did you...  
- Yes, I've just seen him.  
Handsome fellow, isn't he?  
Little Joey is nothing less  
than radiant.  
It warms me chilly old heart  
just to look at her.  
Aren't you just  
a little shocked?  
Shocked?  
Why should I be shocked?  
I've known a good many cases  
of marriages between races in my time.  
Strangely enough,  
they usually work out quite well.  
I don't know why.  
Maybe because it requires  
some special quality of effort...  
more consideration and compassion...  
than most marriages  
seem to generate these days.  
- Could that be it?  
- Yes, it could.  
I'm glad you said that.  
That's a beautiful thought.  
You do have beautiful thoughts.  
That's my trade, you know.  
What about laddie over here?  
You making heavy weather of it?  
You know, this man is quite  
a famous fellow in his own right.  
He's done incredible work in Asia  
and some awful place in Africa.  
Mom! Hilary's here.  
She wants to see you.  
Excuse me, will you? Express some more

beautiful thoughts to the lad there.

Thank you.

I hope you won't think  
that I'm prying, Doctor...

but naturally  
one is curious.

- Naturally.

- We are going to be married.

Are you?

Well, I didn't even know.

I mean, Christina  
hadn't even mentioned that...

She didn't know.

It was a surprise to her too.

A surprise.

Well, I should think it was.

My dear!

Joey tells me that congratulations  
are in order, and you didn't even know.

What's the problem, Hilary?

What brings you all the way up here?

- Mr. Cazalet phoned about the pictures.

- Oh, that. Excuse us, will you?

I'll walk out to your car  
with you.

- I hope I'll be seeing you shortly.

- Actually, no.

Dr. Prentice is leaving tonight...

and Joey within  
the next couple of weeks.

Well, then you must permit me  
to wish you every happiness.

Come along.

My poor dear,  
what a shock for you.

I knew something was up  
when I came into the gallery.

But this!

Whatever are you going to do about it?

- I mean, the child is of age.

- Yes, the child is 23.

Why didn't you simply ring up  
with the Cazalet information?

Well, I must admit,

I was intensely curious.  
I couldn't believe it.  
It's so unlike Joey to do anything  
so appallingly stupid.  
- Yes, come along.  
- But what you must be going through.  
You must try not to worry about it.  
Now I have some instructions  
for you.  
I want you to go straight back  
to the gallery. Start your motor.  
When you to the gallery,  
tell Jennifer...  
she will be looking after things  
temporarily.  
She's to give me a ring if there's  
anything she can't deal with herself.  
Then go into the office  
and make out a check for cash...  
for the sum of \$5,000.  
Then carefully...  
remove absolutely everything...  
that might subsequently remind me  
that you had ever been there...  
including that yellow thing  
with the blue bulbs...  
which you have  
such an affection for.  
Then take the check for \$5,000...  
which I feel you deserve...  
and get permanently lost.  
It's not that I don't want  
to know you, although I don't.  
It's just that I'm afraid  
we're not really the sort of people...  
that you can afford  
to be associated with.  
Don't speak.  
Just go.  
You see that boy?  
The tall one?  
If he'd played his cards right,  
you'd never even have met me.  
But he fell for some girl

from Pomona.

- That'll teach him.

- Mom!

Do you know what Hilary was doing?

She was being an absolute bitch.

She was. I almost wish you'd fire her.

I really do.

Joey, how can you be so hard?

She has a really quite ruthless streak.

You ought to be warned about it.

She gets it

from her father.

They need all the help

you can give them...

because they're going to have

special difficulties.

No, don't budge.

Please, sit.

Of course, they know all that.

They're serious people.

Fine, intelligent people.

And if they know

what lies in store for them...

and they still want each other

enough to accept it...

I think it's plain as anything

that they love each other very much.

You'll have to agree that any two people

who love each other that much...

deserve all the best luck

in the world.

I don't know.

I wish I didn't have the feeling

that they'll never make it...

that the whole thing's

impossible.

You feel that way, do you?

You're really thrashing about then.

That's very interesting, indeed.

And rather amusing, too,

to see a broken-down...

old phony liberal come face-to-face

with his principles.

Of course,



I always have believed...  
that in that  
fighting liberal facade...  
there must be some sort  
of reactionary bigot trying to get out.  
Oh, go to hell. You and your crowd  
are still preaching hell.  
Well, I'm off.  
As much as I'm enjoying  
your discomfiture...  
I may be able to save a few souls  
before supper.  
But, I am, as it happens,  
free for dinner.

**Please, come, 7:**

The doctor's family are flying up  
from Los Angeles.  
Oh, well, in that case,  
you'll actually need me.  
Otherwise, your side  
won't even outnumber the blacks.  
Thank you, my dear.  
Half past seven.  
What was that the Beatles sang?  
We can work it out  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah  
Mom did it.  
Do you think it looks like him?  
Well, it looks a little grim,  
doesn't it?  
- No, don't let me disturb you.  
- Not at all.  
I hope you don't mind, but I've wrangled  
an invitation to dinner.  
- Marvelous! I'm delighted you're coming.  
- Thank you, my dear.  
- I'm very delighted to have met you.  
- My pleasure, Monsignor.  
- See you this evening.  
- Certainly.  
You know,  
you two make me feel...  
quite extraordinarily happy.

I'd better tell Tillie. If you listen,  
you'll hear her going through the roof.  
I brought you  
the latest bulletin.  
Guess who's coming  
to dinner now?  
The Reverend Martin Luther King?  
You're so close.  
It's Monsignor Ryan.  
Bake a second pie, will you?  
You know how he loves your cooking.  
Listen, is the big guest room  
in order?  
Dr. Prentice wants to have  
a shower and change.  
- He does?  
- He does.  
Well, she's 23 years old.  
I guess she has  
a right to do as she pleases.  
Yes, but that's not the point.  
The doctor said...  
I know what the doctor said. Could we  
get out of here for a few minutes?  
- Sure.  
- What are the others doing?  
They're meeting Peter and Judith  
for a drink...  
and then they're going on  
to the airport.  
All right, come on.  
Come on, will you?  
Whatever happened to what's-his-name?  
Homer?  
That lawyer?  
I thought she liked him very much.  
Nothing happened to Homer.  
Dr. Prentice just happened to Joey.  
It was only last Christmas  
she said Homer had the inside track.  
Isn't that the place where we got  
the good ice cream? Let's get some.

**It's after 5:**

You'll spoil...

A little ice cream can't hurt.

- Yes?

- When I had ice cream before...

I had a special kind of flavor  
that I liked very much.

- But I can't remember what it was.

- I'll bring you the list.

No, you must know what it is.

Daiquiri Ice? Honeycomb Candy?

Cocoa Coconut? Jamoca Almond Fudge?

Mocha Jamoca? Peanut Butter and Jelly?

Cinnamon Banana Mint?

- Must have been some other place.

- Fresh Oregon Boysenberry Sherbet?

That's it.

I'm sure that's it. Bring me  
a Fresh Oregon Boysenberry.

- Bring me a big one.

- Right.

- Will you have some? It's delicious.

- No. Black coffee.

One double Fresh Oregon Boysenberry  
Sherbet and one black coffee. Thanks.

You know, Matt...

I think Mike was right  
that Joey is lucky.

The work he's doing  
is so important...

she'll be able to help him with it  
and share it all with him.

The best break  
any wife can have.

You know, for us,  
it's all been great...

but do you know  
what was the best time of all?

It was in the beginning  
when everything was a struggle...

and you were working too hard  
and sometimes frightened...

and there were times  
when I felt...

that I really knew

that I was a help to you.  
That was the very best time of all  
for me.  
- One black coffee.  
- Thank you.  
And one Fresh  
Oregon Boysenberry Sherbet.  
Thank you.  
This is not the stuff.  
I never had this stuff  
before in my life.  
You know, it's not bad.  
Not bad at all.  
I kinda like it.  
Fresh Oregon Boysenberry.  
Yes, sir.  
Well, when I had  
the ice cream before...  
this isn't the stuff I had,  
but I like it.  
- It's very good. I like it very much.  
- Okay.  
- How do you do, Miss Binks?  
- I got somethin' to say to you, boy.  
Exactly what you tryin' to pull here?  
I'm not trying to pull anything.  
I was looking to find me a wife.  
Ain't that just likely!  
You wanna answer me somethin'?  
What kinda doctor  
you supposed to be anyhow?  
Would you believe horse?  
You make with witticisms  
and all, huh?  
Let me tell you somethin'.  
You may think you're foolin'  
Miss Joey and her folks.  
But you ain't foolin' me for a minute.  
I see what you are.  
You're one of those smooth-talkin',  
smart-ass niggers...  
just out for all you can get,  
with your black power...  
and all that other

trouble-makin' nonsense.  
And you listen here. I brought up that  
child from a baby in her cradle...  
and ain't nobody gonna harm her none  
while I'm here watchin'.  
And as long as you are anywhere around  
this house, I'm right here watchin'.  
You read me, boy?  
You bring any trouble in here...  
and you just like to find out  
what black power really means!  
And furthermore to that,  
you ain't all that good-lookin'!  
That was very good.  
If I come in again, remind me about  
the Oregon Boysenberry, will you?  
Yeah, I sure will.  
Thank you, sir.  
Should we take home  
a couple of quarts for dessert?  
No, Tillie's baked some pies.  
You stupid idiot!  
Why can't you  
look where you're going?  
Sorry, son,  
but your car is so low...  
Of course you didn't see me!  
You weren't even looking  
where you were going!  
Look what you did to my car!  
It's my fault.  
My insurance...  
Yeah, yeah. Who cares  
about your lousy insurance?  
I worked over three months on that!  
How much will it cost  
to have it repaired?  
Look at it! Thirty or forty bucks  
it'll cost. Did you see it?  
Stupid old man.  
He oughtn't be allowed out.  
He ought to be put away someplace  
in a home or something.  
There's fifty bucks! Don't bother

to have it fixed. Buy a new one!  
Some of these old guys,  
they're senile!  
Stupid old man.  
There oughta be a law!  
What the hell is it today?  
Less than 12'/. Of the people  
in this city are colored people.  
I can't even have a dish  
of Oregon "Boosenberry"...  
without runnin' into one of them.  
You've  
Got to  
Give a little  
Take a little  
And let your poor heart  
Break a little  
That's the story of  
That's the glory of love  
You've gotta laugh a little  
Cry a little  
Before the clouds  
Roll by a little  
That's the story of  
I can't tell you  
how happy I am for you.  
And the whole thing having  
happened so quickly.  
You remember what it was  
with Peter and me.  
It took us three years  
to decide to get married...  
and we'd been living together  
for two.  
To John and Joey.  
John and Joanna. He won't call me  
anything but Joanna.  
- I'm beginning to like it too.  
- To John and Joanna.  
Where you're so lucky  
is in Joey's folks... Uh, Joanna's folks.  
You've only just met them,  
but take my word for it.  
Matt Drayton really stands

for something in this town.  
Yes. I know the Guardian's  
always been a very good paper.  
It's a great paper,  
and he made it what it is.  
There's never been a public issue on  
which Matt Drayton didn't take a stand.  
When exactly are you flying over?  
Sometime next week?  
Just as soon  
as I can arrange everything.  
Why next week? Why aren't you  
flying over with John?  
Why am I not flying over with you?  
- Is your passport in order?  
- Yes.  
- Do you need clothes or anything?  
- Nothing I couldn't get over there.  
Then it seems crazy for you to be  
going alone when you could go together.  
- Why don't you both leave tonight?  
- Why not?

**It's 6:**

they'll all be here for dinner.  
The doctor's plane leaves

**at 10:**

No matter what it is, you're going  
to have to tell them how you feel.  
I need more than one day  
to make a decision like that.  
It's the silliest thing  
I ever heard of.  
But I'll tell you this.  
I am not going to try to pretend  
that I'm happy about the whole thing...  
because I'm not.  
And if the doctor's decision  
depends upon that, then too bad.  
And I'm thinking only  
of Joey's welfare.  
I have nothing against him personally,  
but he's a grown man.

He behaved irresponsibly in the first place by letting this thing happen. Now he wants me to be happy about a situation... when I happen to know that they'll both get their brains knocked out. I'm sorry, but that's the way I feel. And I know how you're reacting. You're so wrapped up in Joey's excitement over the whole thing... that you are not behaving in her best interest! Yes, Mom. But there wasn't any reason not to go tonight. You can understand, can't you, Mom? My passport's in order. There's nothing at all that I really need. And it won't take me an hour to pack. I'll be able to be with him. We'll be together the whole time. Mom, they're here. I can see them. They look like awfully nice people. His mother looks lovely. You break it to Dad for me, will you? Well... I guess I should have called you back because there is this one thing... I should have... I've been meaning to write to you about it. There was one thing I didn't explain, Dad. And... I'm afraid it's gonna be kind of a shock. You see what I mean? Mom, Dad, this is Joanna Drayton.



Joanna, my mom and dad.

Mrs. Prentice, I'm so happy.

- Miss Drayton?

- Yes.

Mr. Prentice,

I'm very pleased to meet you.

I can explain.

I can imagine what's going on  
in your mind...

but we can explain.

You can?

Of course we can.

You have bags?

Of course you have bags.

Let's go get your bags.

Mama?

- What did your folks say?

- All's well.

- Did you talk to your father?

- To Mom. But she'll tell him.

Tonight?

- I thought I ought to tell you.

- That's out of the question.

This whole damn thing is...

No, that's out of the question.

I'll tell you something else.

I couldn't do what you're about to do...

so I don't begin to understand  
how you propose to go about it.

But you can't break their hearts  
over a drink...

and expect them

to sit down to dinner.

Don't you think I know that?

I have to talk to the doctor...

I'll talk to him after dinner.

Tell him exactly how I feel.

I'm not trying

to give you an argument.

There's nothing I can say

that you don't know.

It's important that you understand

just how wrong I think you...

I believe you're making the worst

mistake you've ever made in your...  
You're gonna regret it with more  
bitterness that you've ever known...  
for as long as you live.  
You're wrong.  
You're as wrong as you can be.  
Because I'm thinking of her  
and even the doctor is going to know...  
I'm thinking of her.  
There's something else.  
I'm surprised  
it hasn't occurred to you.  
The doctor will accept  
whatever you say to him...  
because he's a terribly sensitive man  
and because he said he would.  
But Joey won't. The most obvious  
mistake you're making...  
is in underestimating  
your own daughter.  
She'll fight you and  
your whole attitude...  
and everything you do and every  
argument you ever try to give her.  
And one thing more.  
Until today, I would never have believed  
that I could say such a thing...  
but when she fights you...  
and for what it may be worth...  
I'm going to be on her side.  
I never believed I'd hear you  
say a thing like that.  
- Can I get you another drink?  
- No, thanks. I'll get it myself.  
I wish we had more time.  
What, Mom?  
I was going to ask Miss Drayton  
how her father and mother reacted to...  
Yeah. I wanted to ask that too.  
Please call me Joanna.  
They were shaken, all right.  
I don't think  
I've ever seen them so surprised.  
The thing that really shook them...

was that I wanted to marry anybody  
they hadn't even heard about.  
I can't blame them  
for being sort of stunned by it all.  
Well. Then you couldn't blame us if we  
were a little stunned, too, could you?  
I mean, I wouldn't appear unreasonable  
if I suggested...  
that the two of you were behaving like  
a couple of escaped lunatics, would I?  
This whole thing...  
happened so quickly...  
it's like trying to ride a rocket.  
We didn't plan it that way.  
It just happened that way.  
It's a little hard on Joanna's folks and  
I'm sure it's gonna be hard on you.  
We've got one evening  
to discuss it...  
and if you have any objections,  
you'd better raise them in a hurry...  
because in exactly four hours  
we're gonna be on that plane and gone.  
I don't think I could list  
all my objections in four hours.  
I think I'd need  
more like eight hours.  
Well, you've only got four hours.  
So you'll just have to talk  
twice as fast.  
Hello, darling.  
How are you?  
Forgive me.  
I am a little bit early.  
Ego absolvo te.  
Come in.  
I don't like to be  
always repeating myself...  
but how long is it since  
that I remarked that I thought...  
that you were the loveliest woman  
I have ever known?  
You know, there is a kind of envy  
that is no way sinful.

That's what I've always

had for Matt all these years.

- What can I give you to drink?

- Well, I like Scotch if...

- Are we drinking wine?

- Yes.

Oh. I'll have

a little drop of Scotch anyhow.

Equal amount of soda, please.

Thank you.

My dear, what's the matter?

Sorry.

We're in trouble.

Mike...

we're in terrible trouble,

terrible trouble.

John told us...

Matt and me...

that he wouldn't marry Joey

unless we could say...

that we approved the marriage

with no reservations whatever.

Joey doesn't know

that he said that.

Now she's suddenly decided to go

with him tonight. She has her tickets.

The two of them are on their way in

from the airport with John's parents...

and neither of them knows

that Matt has decided...

Well.

Matt has decided

that he can't approve.

That's not true.

Please tell me it's not true.

- Where is Matt?

- He's upstairs changing. He's...

He's not himself.

Excuse me.

It's incredible!

- Table all right?

- It's fine.

- Thank you.

- Miss Christina, what's gonna happen?

I don't know, Tillie.  
You and Mr. Matt, you gonna put a stop  
to this damn nonsense foolishness?  
I don't want to put a stop  
to anything.  
He's a fine man.  
He's a wonderful man,  
and Joey is very much in love with him.  
And it isn't just  
damn nonsense foolishness.  
Well, I tell you, Miss Christina.  
The way you are talkin',  
I don't understand nothin' no more.  
Nobody understands nothin' no more.  
No, I don't think you're butting  
into something that doesn't concern...  
Damn blast these lousy laundries.  
I understand how you feel.  
I understand how everybody feels.  
But you have to  
understand something too.  
They've boxed me  
into a hell of a corner here.  
And no matter what Christina says  
or what you say...  
I am not going to behave  
irresponsibly.  
I'm not gonna tell them they can't get  
married. I don't have the right.  
But they don't have the right  
to come in here...  
and expect me to be happy  
about something any normal man...  
Oh, for God's sake!  
You're on the point of destroying  
all the happiness there is...  
in one of the happiest families  
I've ever known.  
Have you any appreciation  
at all for Christina...  
Have you any appreciation at all  
of how that woman has behaved today?  
From the moment they walked in, she was  
for it, as if there were no problems.

But there are no problems that Joey  
and young Prentice don't know about.  
Christina has more respect for Joey's  
judgment than you have. I must say...  
Oh, come off it!  
If Joey came home with some fuzzy-wuzzy  
and said "This is the man for me"...  
Christina would say,  
"Oh, really? How wonderful.  
Where will we get enough roses  
to fill the Rose Bowl?"  
I'm trying to remember  
where I've seen you so angry.  
Oh, yes. When you took  
nine shots on the seventh green.  
Would you mind  
getting the hell out of here?  
I think I know why you're angry too.  
Not with the doctor,  
whom you obviously respect.  
Not with Joey or Christina,  
not even with me.  
You're angry with yourself.  
You're a pontificating  
old poop!  
You're angry because all of a sudden,  
and in a single day, you've been thrown.  
You're the last man in the world I would  
have expected to behave the way you are.  
You're not yourself.  
You're off balance.  
You don't know who your are,  
what you are or what you're doing.  
That's your trouble.  
You've gone back on yourself, laddie,  
and in your heart you know it.  
Now, listen, there's a limit  
to what I'll take, even from you.  
For 30 years, there's been no man  
I've admired or respected more.  
You know that.  
And for the first time in all  
those 30 years, I feel sorry for you.  
Damn it, that's enough!

Are you really capable  
of putting yourself in my position?  
Unless you've got  
some kids of your own...  
hidden away somewhere  
that haven't shown up in the record...  
how can you possibly know how a father  
would feel in a situation like this?  
You don't know!  
I happen to believe they wouldn't  
have a dog's chance...  
not in this country,  
not in the whole, stinking world.  
They are this country.  
They'll change this stinking world.  
Yeah, sure. Fifty years, maybe,  
or a hundred years.  
But not in your lifetime.  
Maybe not even in mine.  
My dear friend...  
I wish with all my heart  
you could be restrained.  
And if I were ten years younger...  
to prevent you  
from going downstairs...  
I believe I'd make some sort of effort  
to wrestle you to the floor.  
That'll be the day.  
Is that the car?  
Did you hear a car?  
Mrs. Prentice,  
I'm Christina Drayton.  
- How do you do?  
- How do you do, Mr. Prentice?  
I'm so pleased to meet you.  
Come on in.  
Let me take your coat and hat.  
And yours?  
Thank you.  
How good of you to come  
all this long way to see us. Do go in.  
What did Dad say? Did you tell him?  
I'll bet he was shaken.  
- It was a surprise.

- Does he want to talk to me?  
Yes, I'm sure he does. Later.  
Please come in.  
May I get you a drink?  
What would you like?  
May I have some sherry, please?  
What a lovely room.  
Thank you. John, would you be bartender?  
I'll have some sherry too.  
- Of course.  
- Shall we sit over here?  
What will you have, Dad?  
Bourbon?  
- Thank you.  
- You have such a magnificent view.  
Thank you. Please sit down.  
Sit down, Mr. Prentice.  
Did you have a pleasant flight?  
Very pleasant, thank you.  
The view of the sunset  
was breathtaking.  
Only took forty minutes.  
Four hundred miles.  
It's incredible, isn't it?  
My husband will be down directly,  
I think.  
He's upstairs changing.  
And we have a friend of ours  
who's coming to dinner with us.  
Monsignor Ryan.  
I'm sure they'll be down  
in a minute.  
- Thank you.  
- Mom.  
- Thank you.  
- There you are, Dad.  
Thanks, son.  
Are you Catholics?  
Well, no, we're not.  
I'm afraid we're  
nothing in particular.  
Monsignor Ryan just happens to be  
a very old friend.  
Do you come often



to San Francisco?

I've got to talk to your father.

There he is.

Dad, I'd like you to meet

Mr. And Mrs. Prentice.

- This is my father.

- Mrs. Prentice, nice to meet you.

- How do you do?

- Mr. Prentice, happy to meet you.

- How do you do?

- May I present Monsignor Ryan?

- How do you do, ma'am?

- How do you do?

Glad to meet you, sir.

- Are you and John tending bar?

- Yes.

The monsignor and I

are both drinking Scotch.

Coming up.

Sit down.

Well.

Did you have a nice flight

from Los Angeles?

Oh, yes. Very nice flight.

Only 40 minutes.

Only 40 minutes from Los Angeles.

- Terrifying.

- If you're going to talk about flying...

you could talk

about flying to Geneva...

because John and I

are hoping to persuade...

all of you to fly over

for the wedding.

Would anybody like to talk about that

before I go up and start packing?

I take it they've told you

all about their plans?

Of course. It's only when you're  
eloping that you keep it a secret.

I don't know about you,

Mr. Prentice...

but it seems to me that these two  
are rushing it just a little bit.

It seemed that way to me too.  
It seems like that to you too?  
That's right.  
I'm certainly relieved  
to hear that.  
I was beginning to think I was the only  
one around here who had any...  
I would like Mrs. Prentice  
to see the view.  
What the hell are you talking about?  
What view?  
From the terrace.  
Before it gets too cold.  
- Would you care to see the view?  
- Oh, yes, thank you. I would.  
Good. Excuse us.  
Bring your drink with you.  
Have you had any chance  
to speak privately with John?  
Well, no.  
Because it's important that  
you understand what's happened here...  
and what I'm terribly afraid  
is going to happen.  
May I explain the situation to you  
or try to?  
Yes, please.  
I wish you would.  
First, I have to ask you...  
Forgive my being so abrupt  
and so direct.  
Are you shocked  
by the fact that John...  
that your son is involved  
with a white girl?  
Surprised.  
It never happened before.  
I guess it never occurred to me  
that such a thing might happen.  
But it wouldn't be true  
to say that I'm shocked.  
Are you?  
Well.  
I think I was at first

this afternoon.  
Because it came  
as a complete surprise to us too.  
But now I know  
how they feel about each other.  
Joey's still very young...  
but she's not a child.  
And they're...  
deeply in love  
with each other.  
Are you about to tell me...  
that you'd be willing to approve  
the marriage but your husband won't?  
Is that it?  
Yes, that's it.  
My husband won't either.  
I wish there were more time...  
if only so that we could adjust  
to the situation.  
But the way things are,  
there just isn't any time.  
If we're going to accept  
the thing at all, it seems to me...  
we'll have to trust  
the two of them...  
and accept that they know  
what they're doing.  
And, Mrs. Drayton...  
my husband just won't do that.  
They seem to be having  
quite a conversation out there.  
It might do no harm  
if we could have a few words.  
Yeah, sure.  
We can go in my study.  
Will you excuse us, please?  
I'll have another drink  
if you will, Doctor?  
If you'll excuse me, I'll go up  
and throw a few things together.  
Like for the next ten years.  
Mr. Drayton...  
I don't know you at all, and  
I certainly wouldn't want to offend you.

But are you some kind of a nut?  
Are you going to tell me that you  
approve of what's been going on here?  
- I wasn't going to tell you that at all.  
- Because if you do...  
You may be a big, successful  
newspaper publisher...  
and I'm nothing but  
a pensioned-off mailman...  
but you are right out of your mind.  
I have a pretty good idea  
of what my father is saying to him.  
But I wish I knew...  
You were talking with him upstairs.  
Have you any idea what  
Mr. Drayton is saying to my father?  
I can tell you one thing.  
I was very sorry to hear...  
that you intend  
to withdraw from the situation...  
if you encounter any opposition.  
She's up there packing.  
Your mother  
would like to speak to you.  
This is a mess.  
Where's Joey?  
- She's upstairs, my dear.  
- I'm going up.  
Everything is ready  
whenever you all are ready.  
We're not ready, Tillie.  
Well!  
What you're saying is that you feel  
practically the same as I do about this.  
That's right.  
But even so...  
this is a hell of an unhappy situation  
for both your son and my daughter.  
I think it would be best  
if you talked to John yourself.  
I said that...  
if they didn't approve,  
there'd be no marriage.  
I set the terms, Mama.

They don't disapprove.  
Only Mr. Drayton.  
Are you sure?  
She said she'd even drive  
the two of you to the airport.  
I've lived with your father  
for almost 40 years.  
God willing,  
there'll be a lot more.  
And even though...  
I've only known about this situation  
for one hour...  
I feel the same way  
Mrs. Drayton does.  
She says Joanna  
will never give you up.  
I guess...  
it depends upon  
how much you want her.  
Want her?  
I want her, Mama.  
You know what it's been like for me  
these past eight years?  
I felt like I never wanted  
anybody again.  
But, Mama...  
these last few days with her...  
it's like I'm alive again  
and it's marvelous.  
Excuse me, Doctor.  
Your father wants to talk to you.  
- Does he?  
- He's in my study.  
I've been talking to your husband.  
He seems pretty much upset  
by all this.  
I know.  
Your wife says you are too.  
Not upset, exactly.  
It's a very difficult problem.  
For whom?  
For you and my husband?  
I think you'll solve your problem,  
all right.

All you have to do is tell them  
you're against them.  
That's all.  
And you'll have no problem.  
You're not going to tell me  
you're happy about this relationship?  
This is not a night  
for talking about happiness.  
This is an unhappy night.  
You've been talking to Christina.  
I know how she feels.  
Can you imagine for one minute that  
I want to see either one of them hurt?  
No more than my husband does.  
But hurt they're going to be.  
Worse than my husband knows.  
I think worse than you know too.  
I tell you he's as much  
against this thing as I am.  
Maybe more!  
Son, you've got to listen to me.  
I'm not trying to tell you  
how to live your life...  
but you've never  
made a mistake like this before.  
You've been nothin'  
but a source of pride...  
for me and your mother  
your whole life.  
But you don't know what you're doin'.  
This affair here...  
It all happened too fast.  
You said so yourself.  
But you've got to stop and think.  
Have you thought what people  
would say about you?  
In 16 or 17 states you'd  
be breakin' the law. You'd be criminals.  
And say they changed the law.  
That don't change  
the way people feel about this thing.  
For a man who all his life never  
put a wrong foot anywhere...  
you're way out of line!

That's for me to decide, man.  
- So just shut up and let me...  
- You don't say that to me!  
You haven't got the right to ever say  
a thing like that to me.  
Not after what I've been to you!  
And you know that,  
and I know that.  
Yeah, I know what you are  
and what you've made of yourself.  
But I worked my ass off to get the money  
to buy you all the chances you had!  
You know how far  
I carried that bag in 30 years?  
75,000 miles.  
And mowin' lawns in the dark so you  
wouldn't have to be stokin' furnaces...  
and could bear down on the books.  
There were things your mother should  
have had that she insisted go for you.  
And I don't mean fancy things.  
I mean a decent coat.  
A lousy coat!  
And you're gonna tell me  
that means nothin' to you...  
and you could  
break your mother's heart?  
What happens to men  
when they grow old?  
Why do they forget everything?  
I believe...  
those two young people  
need each other...  
like they need  
the air to breathe in.  
Anybody can see that  
by just looking at them.  
But you and my husband are...  
You might as well be blind men.  
You can only see  
that they have a problem.  
But do you really know  
what's happened to them?  
How they feel about each other?

I believe...  
that men grow old.  
And when the...  
When sexual things no longer matter  
to them, they forget it all.  
Forget what true passion is.  
If you ever felt what my son...  
feels for your daughter,  
you've forgotten everything about it.  
My husband too.  
You knew once...  
but that was a long time ago.  
Now the two of you don't know.  
And the strange thing...  
for your wife and me...  
is that you don't even remember.  
If you did...  
how could you do  
what you are doing?  
I don't care what your mother says.  
Maybe she's gone haywire too.  
This is between you and me.  
That's the first thing you've said  
that makes any sense...  
because that's exactly where it's at.  
- And what I mean to say is...  
- You've said what you had to say.  
You listen to me.  
You say you don't want to tell me  
how to live my life?  
What do you think  
you've been doing?  
You tell me what rights I've got  
or haven't got...  
and what I owe to you  
for what you've done for me.  
Let me tell you something.  
I owe you nothing.  
If you carried that bag  
a million miles...  
you did what you  
were supposed to do...  
because you brought me  
into this world...



and from that day you owed me...  
everything you could ever do for me,  
like I will owe my son...  
if I ever have another.  
But you don't own me.  
You can't tell me when or where  
I'm out of line...  
or try to get me to live my life  
according to your rules.  
You don't even know  
what I am, Dad.  
You don't know who I am,  
how I feel, what I think.  
And if I tried to explain it the rest of  
your life, you would never understand.  
You are 30 years older than I am.  
You and your whole lousy generation...  
believes the way it was for you  
is the way it's got to be!  
And not until your whole generation  
has lain down and died...  
will the deadweight of you  
be off our backs!  
You understand?  
You've got to get off my back.  
Dad.  
You're my father.  
I'm your son.  
I love you.  
I always have  
and I always will.  
But you think of yourself  
as a colored man.  
I think of myself...  
as a man.  
Now, I've got a decision to make.  
And I've got to make it alone.  
And I gotta make it in a hurry.  
So...  
would you go out there...  
and see after my mother?  
You've just got to talk John's parents  
into flying over with you.  
It would mean so much to John

to have them there...  
and I know they can afford it.  
You know, I think John's father  
is gonna make it a bit rough for him.  
Did you see his expression when he  
walked off to have a talk with Dad?  
But isn't she lovely?  
- Don't you like her already?  
- Yes, darling, I do.  
She's a good one.  
When John's father first saw  
that I was a white girl...  
I thought he was going to faint.  
What about your father?  
Yes, that was funny, wasn't it?  
Oh, Mom, isn't this thrilling?  
Aren't you just...  
Yes, darling, I am. Just.  
I should be able to say something  
to you, Mrs. Prentice.  
In my trade, there are  
a hundred cliché phrases of comfort...  
for every human condition.  
But in the midst  
of this heartbreaking distress...  
I must admit...  
I'm completely stumped.  
There's simply  
nothing I could say.  
Mary, you've just got to understand...  
Please, John.  
The monsignor is right.  
Please say no more.  
I'll be a son of a bitch.  
Close the door, Mr. Drayton.  
You didn't have the guts  
to tell me face-to-face, did you?  
Before you start telling me  
how much guts I've got...  
I told you  
I'd have something to say.  
Now I'm ready to say it.  
Are you gonna stay in here?  
You know that I'm

completely sympathetic, don't you?  
You know that I have  
no reservations about anything.  
And that whatever makes you happy  
is my happiness too.  
Of course I know that.  
Then listen to me, darling.  
There's something  
I have to tell you...  
about this situation...  
which you don't really...  
What are you doing up there?  
Come on down here, both of you!  
How about your glasses?  
- Can I get you a drink?  
- No, thank you.  
No, you've had  
enough as it is already.  
What's going on?  
There's something I want to say  
and I'd like you to sit down...  
see if you can keep quiet  
for once in your life.  
Please, sit down, John.  
Sit down, Chris, please.  
I have a few things to say and  
you might just think they're important.  
This has been a strange day. I don't  
think that's putting it too strongly.  
I might even say  
it's been an extraordinary day.  
I've been out there  
thinking about the day...  
and the way it has gone...  
and it seems to me that now...  
I need to make a few  
personal statements.  
For a variety of reasons.  
The day began for me when I walked into  
this house and Tillie said to me...  
Excuse me.  
Tillie!  
This'll only take a second.  
- Everything's been ready for...

- I know.  
All right. Sit down.  
This is Miss Matilda Binks...  
who's been a member of this family  
for 22 years...  
and who today has been  
making a great deal of trouble.  
Sit down, Tillie.  
Now. The minute I walked  
into this house this afternoon...  
Miss Binks said to me,  
"Well, all hell's done broke loose now."  
I asked her, naturally enough,  
to what she referred...  
and she said, "You'll see."  
And I did.  
Then after some preliminary guessing  
games, at which I was never very good...  
it was explained to me  
by my daughter...  
that she intended to get married.  
And that her intended was a young man  
whom I had never met...  
who happened to be a Negro.  
I think it's fair to say  
that I responded to this news...  
in the same manner that any  
normal father would respond to it...  
unless, of course, his daughter  
happened to be a Negro too.  
In a word, I was flabbergasted. And  
while I was still being flabbergasted...  
I was informed by my daughter...  
a very determined young woman...  
much like her mother...  
that the marriage was on...  
no matter what her mother and I  
might feel about it.  
Then the next startling development  
occurred when you walked in...  
and said that unless we...  
her mother and I...  
approved of the marriage,  
there would be no marriage.

You didn't!  
What a funny thing to do.  
This may be the last chance  
I'll ever have...  
to tell you to do anything.  
So I'm telling you  
shut up.  
Now.  
It became clear that we had one  
single day to make up our minds...  
as to how we felt  
about this whole situation.  
So what happened?  
My wife, typically enough...  
decided to simply ignore...  
every practical aspect  
of the situation...  
and was carried away  
in some kind of romantic haze...  
which made her, in my view...  
totally inaccessible  
to anything in the way of reason.  
Now I have not as yet referred  
to His Reverence...  
who began by forcing his way  
into the situation...  
and then insulting my intelligence....  
By mouthing 300 platitudes...  
and ending just a half hour ago  
by coming to my room...  
and challenging me  
to a wrestling match.  
- What time is your plane?

- 10:

Right.  
Now, Mr. Prentice...  
clearly a most reasonable man...  
says he has no wish to offend me...  
but wants to know  
if I'm some kind of a nut.  
And Mrs. Prentice says...  
that like her husband,  
I'm a burnt-out old shell of a man...

who cannot even  
remember what it's like...  
to love a woman...  
the way her son loves my daughter.  
And strange as it seems...  
that's the first statement  
made to me all day...  
with which I am prepared  
to take issue.  
Because I think you're wrong.  
You're as wrong as you can be.  
I admit that I hadn't considered it,  
hadn't even thought about it...  
but I know exactly  
how he feels about her.  
And there is nothing,  
absolutely nothing...  
that your son feels  
for my daughter...  
that I didn't feel for Christina.  
Old? Yes.  
Burnt out? Certainly.  
But I can tell you  
the memories are still there...  
clear, intact, indestructible.  
And they'll be there  
if I live to be 110.  
Where John  
made his mistake, I think...  
was attaching so much importance  
to what her mother and I might think.  
Because in the final analysis,  
it doesn't matter a damn what we think.  
The only thing that matters  
is what they feel...  
and how much they feel...  
for each other.  
And if it's half...  
of what we felt...  
that's everything.  
As for you two and  
the problems you're going to have...  
they seem almost unimaginable.  
But you'll have no problem with me.

And I think...  
that when Christina and I  
and your mother...  
have some time to work on him...  
you'll have no problem  
with your father.  
But you do know...  
I'm sure you know...  
what you're up against.  
There'll be a hundred million people  
right here in this country...  
who'll be shocked and offended...  
and appalled at the two of you.  
And the two of you will just  
have to ride that out.  
Maybe every day  
for the rest of your lives.  
You can try to ignore those people...  
or you can feel sorry for them  
and for their prejudices...  
and their bigotry and  
their blind hatreds and stupid fears.  
But where necessary...  
you'll just have  
to cling tight to each other...  
and say screw all those people!  
Anybody could make a hell of a  
good case against your getting married.  
The arguments are so obvious  
that nobody has to make them.  
But you're two wonderful people...  
who happened to fall in love...  
and happen to have  
a pigmentation problem.  
And I think that now...  
no matter what kind of a case  
some bastard could make...  
against your getting married...  
there would be only one thing worse.  
And that would be if...  
knowing what you two are...  
knowing what you two have...  
and knowing what you two feel...  
you didn't get married.

Well, Tillie, when the hell  
are we gonna get some dinner?