

ACT I
 JEAN MCCORMACK
 (+ KAREN + SAM)

KAREN ~~She~~ crosses and opens the front door. JEAN

MCCORMACK stands there. She is SAM's secretary. She is a trim, attractive woman about twenty-eight. She is neatly dressed, bright, cheerful, and smilingly efficient.)

Oh! Hello, Miss McCormack.

JEAN. Hello, Mrs. Nash. I hope I'm not disturbing you.

KAREN. No, no, not at all. Mr. Nash and I were just sitting around, joking. Come in. (Still holding roast beef in her hand.)

JEAN. Thank you. (She enters room, closing the door behind her.) I hate to barge in this way but I have some papers that need Mr. Nash's signature immediately.

KAREN. Certainly. (Calls out.) Sam. It's Miss McCormack. (To JEAN.) It is Miss McCormack now, isn't it?

JEAN. (Taking several contracts out of briefcase.) It was Mrs. Colby last year. This year it's Miss McCormack again.

KAREN. (Sitting on arm of sofa.) Oh. You're lucky you can remember. I've been married so long if I got divorced, I'd have to make up a maiden name... Have you had your dinner yet? (Indicates roast beef in her hand.)

JEAN. (Laying out contracts on coffee table front of sofa.) I don't have dinner, thank you.

KAREN. No dinner? Ever?

JEAN. (Getting glasses and pen from purse on console table behind sofa.) I have a large breakfast, a moderate lunch

and a snack before going to bed. On this job I've worked late so often, I had to readjust my eating routine. Now I'm used to it.

(SAM gets up from bed and moves into living room.)

KAREN. Oh. Well, I can understand that. I miss a lot of dinners with Mr. Nash too.

SAM. Oh, hello. You got them, huh? (Sits on sofa and examines contract.)

JEAN. Just came in. All ready for signature.

KAREN. (To JEAN.) How about some black coffee? Or would that fill you up?

JEAN. Black coffee would be fine, thank you.

KAREN. One black coffee coming up. Sam, would you like some black coffee?

SAM. No.

KAREN. That's no black coffee and one black coffee.

(KAREN crosses to table, SAM is looking over the contracts. MISS MCCORMACK sits next to him. KAREN pours coffee.)

SAM. Why is there an adjustment on this figure?

JEAN. (Looks at it.) There was a clerical omission on the Cincinnati tabulations. It didn't show up on the 1400 but I rechecked it with my own files and made the correction. (Points on respective pages of contract.) So that item 17B should read three hundred and twenty-five thousand and disregard the figure on 17A.

KAREN. Cream and sugar?

JEAN. No, thank you.

SAM. But this should have been caught on the IBM.

JEAN. It should have but it wasn't. Obviously it wasn't fed properly.

KAREN. No cream and no sugar or no cream and yes, sugar?

JEAN. No cream and no sugar.

KAREN. So it's yes, no cream and no sugar.

SAM. Did you call this to Purcell's attention?

KAREN. (*Handing cup to JEAN.*) Would you like some pastry or cookies? I could call down. They have beautiful pastry and cookies here.

JEAN. This is fine, thank you. (*To SAM.*) Mr. Purcell says this happened once before this month. He can't pin it down until he rechecks the whole 66 file.

KAREN. (*Leaning on console table behind sofa.*) You're sure? A sandwich? A Welsh rarebit?

JEAN. No, I'm really quite happy, thank you. (*Takes sacharine from purse and puts it in coffee.*)

SAM. Well, I'm just going to have to go over this whole thing tonight with Howard. If we give Henderson any room for doubt, we can blow our entire presentation.

JEAN. (*Sips coffee.*) I told him there was a possibility of this so he made plans to stay in town tonight.

SAM. Damn! Of all nights to have this happen. (*Putting down contract.*) What time is it now?

JEAN. (*Looks at watch.*) Ten past five.

KAREN. (*Looking over JEAN's shoulder.*) Ten past five.

SAM. All right, you tell Howard I'll meet him in the office between six-fifteen and six-thirty. Tell him I went to see every one of last year's 1400 forms.

KAREN. (*Moving around sofa to SAM.*) You're going to the office? Tonight?

SAM. It can't be helped, Karen.

(*JEAN puts coffee cup down.*)

We're having that same damned trouble with the computer again.

KAREN. I could go with you. Maybe all it needs is a little dusting.

SAM. Something in that office sure as hell needs dusting.

(*Getting up and moving to bedroom. JEAN gathers up the contracts and moves to put them in briefcase at the console table.*)

All right, Miss McCormack, why don't you hop in a cab now and get started on these figures with Howard? I just want to clean up and I'll meet you in about twenty minutes.

JEAN. Yes, sir.

SAM. I hope I'm not ruining any plans you had for tonight?

JEAN. When I saw the figures this morning, I expected it. (*Closes case. SAM takes bottle of pills from attache case and crosses to bathroom.*) Mrs. Nash, thank you very much for the coffee.

KAREN. You really should eat something. You'll faint right over the IBM machine.

JEAN. (*Opening front door.*) I'll be all right.

KAREN. (*Moving to her above sofa.*) It's a pity you can't stay two more minutes. I just ordered champagne. Can I tell her why, Sam?

SAM. (*Returns from bathroom, having taken pills. Throws pills back into case.*) What's that? (*Drinks from glass on dresser. Takes jacket from back of chair and puts it on.*)

KAREN. Well, I'm not supposed to go around blurring these things out but it's our twenty-third anniversary...

JEAN. Oh? I didn't know. Congratulations.

KAREN. (*To JEAN, but for SAM's benefit.*) Thank you... Yes, life has been very good to me. I have a beautiful and devoted daughter, a brilliant son who's on the Dean's list, I'm forty-two years old, what more can I ask?

SAM. (*Moving into living room.*) Karen, Miss McCormack has to get back to the office.

(*SAM goes back into bedroom, takes hair brushes from overnight bag and brushes hair in front of closet mirror.*)

KAREN. Oh, I'm sorry. (*To JEAN.*) Don't let him work you too late.

JEAN. It's all right. I'm used to it now. Best wishes again, Mrs. Nash.