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ABOUT eleven o'clock, Lucille Henderson, observing that her party was soaring at the proper height, and just having been smiled at by Jack Delroy, forced herself to glance over in the direction of Edna Phillips, who since eight o'clock had been sitting in the big red chair, smoking cigarettes and yodeling hellos and wearing a very bright eye which young men were not bothering to catch. Edna's direction still the same, Lucille Henderson sighed as heavily as her dress would allow, and then, knitting what there was of her brows, gazed about the room at the noisy young people she had invited to drink up her father's scotch. Then abruptly, she swished to where William Jameson Junior sat, biting his fingernails and staring at a small blonde girl sitting on the floor with three young men from Rutgers.

"Hello there," Lucille Henderson said, clutching William Jameson Junior's arm. "Come on," she said. "There's someone I'd like you to meet."

"Who?"

"This girl. She's swell." And Jameson followed her across the room, at the same time trying to make short work of a hangnail on his thumb.

"Edna baby," Lucille Henderson said, "I'd love you to really know Bill Jameson. Bill—Edna Phillips. Or have you two birds met already?"

"No," said Edna, taking in Jameson's large nose, flabby mouth, narrow shoulders. "I'm awfully glad to meet you," she told him.

"Gladda know ya," Jameson replied, mentally contrasting Edna's all with the all of the small blonde across the room.

"Bill's a very good friend of Jack Delroy's," Lucille reported.

"I don't know him so good," said Jameson.

"Well. I gotta beat it. See ya later, you two!"

"Take it easy!" Edna called after her. Then, "Won't you sit down?"

"Well, I don't know," Jameson said. "I been sitting down all night, kinda."

"I didn't know you were a good friend of Jack Delroy's," Edna said. "He's a grand person, don't you think?"

"Yeah, he's alright, I guess. I don't know him so good. I never went around with his crowd much."

"Oh, really? I thought I heard Lu say you were a good friend of his."

"Yeah, she did. Only I don't know him so good. I really oughtta be gettin' home. I got this theme for Monday I'm supposed to do. I wasn't really gonna come home this week end."

"Oh, but the party's young!" Edna said. "The shank of the evening!"

"The what?"

"The shank of the evening. I mean it's so early yet."

"Yeah," said Jameson. "But I wasn't even gonna come t'night. Accounta this theme. Honest. I wasn't gonna come home this weekend at all."

"But it's so early I mean!" Edna said.

"Yeah, I know, but—"

"What's your theme on, anyway?"

Suddenly, from the other side of the room, the small blonde shrieked with laughter, the three young men from Rutgers anxiously joined her.

"I say what's your theme on, anyway?" Edna repeated.

"Oh, I don't know," Jameson said. "About this description of some cathedral. This cathedral in Europe. I don't know."

"Well, I mean what do you have to do?"

"I don't know. I'm supposed to criticize it, sort of. I got it written down."

Again the small blonde and her friends went off into high laughter.

"Criticize it? Oh, then you've seen it?"

"Seen what?" said Jameson.

"This cathedral."

"Me. Hell, no."

"Well, I mean how can you criticize it if you've never seen it?"

"Oh. Yeah. It's not me. It's this guy that wrote it. I'm supposed to criticize it from what he wrote, kinda."

"Mmm. I see. That sounds *hard*."

"Wudga say?"

"I say that sounds hard. I know. I've wrestled with that stuff puhlenty myself."

"Yeah."

"Who's the rat that wrote it?" Edna said.

Exuberance again from the locale of the small blonde.

"What?" Jameson said.

"I say who wrote it?"

"I don't know. John Ruskin."

"Oh, boy," Edna said. "You're in for it fella."

"Wudga say?"

"I say you're in for it. I mean that stuff's hard."

"Oh. Yeah. I guess so."

Edna said, "Who're ya looking at? I know most of the gang here tonight."

"Me?" Jameson said. "Nobody. I think maybe I'll get a drink."

"Hey! You took the words right out of my mouth."

They arose simultaneously. Edna was taller than Jameson, and Jameson was shorter than Edna.

"I think," Edna said, "there's some stuff out on the terrace. Some kind of junk, anyway. Not sure. We can try. Might as well get a breath of fresh air."

"All right," said Jameson.

They moved on toward the terrace, Edna crouching slightly and brushing off imaginary ashes from what had been her lap since eight o'clock. Jameson followed her, looking behind him and gnawing on the index finger of his left hand.

For reading, sewing, mastering crossword puzzles, the Henderson terrace was inadequately lighted. Lightly charging through the screen door, Edna was almost immediately aware of hushed vocal tones coming from a much darker vicinity to her left. But she walked directly to the front of the terrace, leaned heavily on the white railing, took a very deep breath, and then turned and looked behind her for Jameson.

"I hear somebody talkin'," Jameson said, joining her.

"Shhh....Isn't it a gorgeous night? Just take a deep breath."

"Yeah. Where's the stuff? The scotch?"

"Just a second," Edna said. "Take a deep breath. Just once."

"Yeah, I did. Maybe that's it over there." He left her and went over to a table. Edna turned and watched him. By silhouette mostly, she saw him lift and set things on the table.

"Nothing left!" Jameson called back.

"Shhh. Not so loud. C'mere a minute."

He went over to her.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

"Just look at that sky," Edna said.

"Yeah. I can hear somebody talkin' over there, can't you?"

"Yes, you *ninny*."

"Wuddaya mean ninny?"

"Some people," Edna said, "wanna be *alone*."

"Oh. Yeah. I get it."

"Not so *loud*. How would you like it, if someone spoiled it for you?"

"Yeah. Sure," Jameson said.

"I think I'd kill somebody, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know. Yeah. I guess so."

"What do you do most of the time when you're home week ends, anyway?" Edna asked.

"Me? I don't know."

"Sow the old wild oats, I guess, huh?"

"I don't getcha," Jameson said.

"You know. Chase around. Joe College stuff."

"Naa. I don't know. Not much."

"You know something," Edna said abruptly, "you remind me a lot of this boy I used to go around with last summer. I mean the way you look and all. And Barry was your build almost exactly. You know. Wiry."

"Yeah?"

"Mmm. He was an artist. Oh, Lord!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing. Only I'll never forget this time he wanted to do a portrait of me. He used to always say to me—serious as the devil, too— 'Eddie, you're not beautiful according to conventional standards, but there's something in your face I wanna catch.' Serious as the devil he'd say it, I mean. Well. I only posed for him this once."

"Yeah," said Jameson. "Hey, I could go in and bring out some stuff—"

"No," Edna said, "let's just have a cigarette. It's so grand out here. Amorous voices and all, what?"

"I don't think I got any more with me. I got some in the other room, I think."

"No, don't bother," Edna told him. "I have some right here." She opened her evening bag and brought out a small black, rhinestoned case, opened it, and offered one of three cigarettes to Jameson. Taking one, Jameson remarked that he really oughtta get going; that he had told her about this theme he had for Monday. He finally found his matches, and struck a light.

"Oh," Edna said, puffing on her cigarette, "it'll be breaking up pretty soon. Did you notice Doris Leggett, by the way?"

"Which one is she?"

"Terribly short? Rather blonde? Used to go with Pete Ilesner? Oh, you must have seen her. She was sitting on the floor per usual, laughing at the top of her voice."

"That her? You know her?" Jameson said.

"Well, sort of," Edna told him. "We never went around much together. I really know her mostly by what Pete Ilesner used to tell me."

"Who's he?"

"Petie Ilesner? Don't you know Petie? Oh, he's a *grand* guy. He went around with Doris Leggett for a while. And in my opinion she gave him a pretty raw deal. Simply rotten, *I* think."

"How?" Jameson said. "Wuddaya mean?"

"Oh, let's drop it. You know me. I hate to put my two cents in when I'm not sure and all. Not any more. Only I *don't* think Petie would lie to me though. After all, I mean."

"She's not bad," said Jameson. "Doris Liggett?"

"Leggett," Edna said. "I guess Doris *is* attractive to men. I don't know. I think I really liked her better though—her looks, I mean—when her hair was natural. I mean bleached hair—to me anyway—always looks sort of artificial when you see it in the light or something. I don't know. I may be wrong. Everybody does it, I guess. Lord! I'll bet Dad would *kill* me if I ever came home with my hair touched up even a *little!* You don't know Dad. He's terribly old fashioned. I honestly don't think I ever *would* have it touched up, when you come right *down* to it. But you know. Sometimes you do the craziest things. Lord! Dad's not the only one! I think *Barry* even would kill me if I ever did!"

"Who?" said Jameson.

"Barry. This boy I told you about."

"He here t'night?"

"*Barry?* Lord, no! I can just picture Barry at one of these things. You don't know *Barry.*"

"Go t'college?"

"Barry? Mmm, he did. Princeton. I *think* Barry got out in thirty-four. Not sure. I really haven't seen Barry since last summer. Well, not to talk to. Parties and stuff. I always managed to look the other way when *he* looked at *me*. Or ran out to the John or something."

"I thought you liked him, this guy," Jameson said.

"Mmm. I did. Up to a point."

"I don't getcha."

"Let it go. I'd rather not talk about it. He just asked too much of me; that's all."

"Oh," said Jameson.

"I'm not a prude or anything. I don't know. Maybe I am. I just have my own standards and in my funny little way I try to live up to them. The best I can, anyway."

"Look," Jameson said. "This railing is kinda shaky—"

Edna said, "It isn't that I can't appreciate how a boy feels after he dates you all summer and spends money he hasn't any right to spend on theater tickets and night spots and all. I mean, I can understand. He feels you owe him something. Well, I'm not that way. I guess I'm just not built that way. It's gotta be the real thing with me. Before, you know. I mean, love and all."

"Yeah. Look, uh. I really oughtta get goin'. I got this theme for Monday. Hell, I shoul'da been home hours ago. So I think I'll go in and get a drink and get goin'."

"Yes," Edna said. "Go on in."

"Aren'tcha coming?"

"In a minute. Go ahead."

"Well. See ya," Jameson said.

Edna shifted her position at the railing. She lighted the remaining cigarette in her case. Inside, somebody had turned on the radio, or the volume suddenly had increased. A girl vocalist was huskying through the refrain from that new show, which even the delivery boys were beginning to whistle.

No door slams like a screen door.

"Edna!" Lucille Henderson greeted.

"Hey, hey," said Edna. "Hello Harry."

"Wuttaya say."

"Bill's inside," Lucille said. "Get me a drink, willya, Harry?"

"Sure."

"What happened?" Lucille wanted to know. "Didn't you and Bill hit it off? Is that Frances and Eddie over there?"

"I don't know. He hadda leave. He had a lot of work to do for Monday."

"Well, right now he's in there on the floor with Dottie Leggett. Delroy's putting peanuts down her back. That *is* Frances and Eddie over there."

"Your little Bill is quite a guy."

"Yeah? How? Wuttaya mean?" said Lucille.

Edna fish-lipped her mouth and tapped her cigarette ashes.

"A trifle warm-blooded, shall I say?"

"Bill Jameson?"

"Well," said Edna, "I'm still in one piece. Only keep that guy away from me, willya?"

"Hmm. Live and learn," said Lucille Henderson. "Where is that dope Harry? I'll see ya later, Ed."

When she finished her cigarette, Edna went in too. She walked quickly, directly up the stairs into the section of Lucille Henderson's mother's home barred to young hands holding lighted cigarettes and wet highball glasses. She remained upstairs nearly twenty minutes. When she came down, she went back into the living room. William Jameson, Junior, a glass in his right hand and the fingers of his left hand in or close to his mouth, was sitting a few men away from the small blonde. Edna sat down in the big red chair. No one had taken it. She opened her evening bag and took out her small black, rhinestoned case, and extracted one of ten or twelve cigarettes.

"Hey!" she called, tapping her cigarette on the arm of the big red chair. "Hey, Lu! Bobby! See if you can't get something better on the radio! I mean *who* can dance to that stuff?"