

and hit your head on the coffee table. Little things like that.

GEORGE. It's great to be totally honest with another person isn't it?

DORIS. It sure is.

GEORGE. I haven't been totally honest with you.

DORIS. No?

GEORGE. No. I told you I was a married man with two children.

DORIS. You're not?

GEORGE. No. I'm a married man with three children. I thought it would make me seem less married. Look, I just didn't think it through. Anyway, it's been like a lead weight inside me all morning. I mean denying little Debbie like that. I don't normally behave like this, I was under a certain stress. You understand?

DORIS. Sure, we all do dopey things sometimes. How come your wife doesn't travel with you?

GEORGE. Phyliss won't get on a plane.

DORIS. Is she afraid of flying?

GEORGE. Crashing.

DORIS. *(Noticing that GEORGE is staring at her.)* Why are you looking at me like that?

GEORGE. I love the way you eat.

DORIS. You wanta share some coffee with me?

GEORGE. No thank you. Doris, do you believe that two perfect strangers can look at each other across a crowded room and suddenly want to possess each other in every conceivable way possible?

DORIS. No.

GEORGE. Then how did this whole thing start?

DORIS. It started when you sent me over that steak in the restaurant.

GEORGE. They didn't serve drinks. They're known for their steaks.

DORIS. Then when I looked over and you toasted me with your fork with a big piece of steak on it, that really made me laugh. I never saw anybody do that before. What made you do it?

GEORGE. Impulse. Usually I never do that sort of thing. I have a friend who says that life is saying "yes". The most I've ever been able to manage is "maybe".

DORIS. So then why did you do it?

GEORGE. I was lonely and you looked so vulnerable. You had a run in your stocking and your lipstick was smeared.

DORIS. You thought I looked cheap?

GEORGE. I thought you looked beautiful.

DORIS. I really should be going. The nuns will be wondering what happened to me.

GEORGE. Nuns?

DORIS. Yeah. It didn't seem right to bring up when we met yesterday in the restaurant but I was on my way to retreat.

GEORGE. Retreat?

DORIS. It's right near here. I go every year at this time when Harry takes the kids to Bakersfield.

GEORGE. What's in Bakersfield?

DORIS. His mother. It's her birthday.

GEORGE. She doesn't mind that you don't go?

DORIS. No, she hates me.

GEORGE. Why?

DORIS. I got pregnant.

GEORGE. Her son had something to do with that.

DORIS. She blocks that out of her mind. You see, he was in his first year of dental college and he had to quit and take a job selling waterless cooking. And so now every year on her birthday I go on retreat.

GEORGE. To think about God?

DORIS. Well, Him too, sure. See I have three little kids. I got pregnant the first time when I was eighteen and so I never really had any time to think about what I think. Never mind . . . sometimes I think I'm crazy.

GEORGE. Why?

DORIS. Well, take my life. I live in a two bedroom duplex in downtown Oakland, we have a 1948 Kaiser,

a blond three piece dinette set, Motorola TV, and we go bowling at least once a week. I mean what else could anyone ask for? But sometimes things get me down, you know? It's dumb!

GEORGE. I don't think it's dumb.

DORIS. You don't? Boy, I can really talk to you. It's amazing I find myself saying things to you that I didn't know I thought. I noticed that yesterday right after we met in the restaurant.

GEORGE. We had instant rapport! Did you notice that too?

DORIS. No, but I know we really hit it off. Harry's not much of a talker. How about your wife. Do you two talk a lot?

GEORGE. Doris, naturally we're both curious about each other's husband and wife. But rather than dwelling on it and letting it spoil everything why don't we do this. I'll tell you two stories one showing the best side of my wife and the other showing the worst. Then you do the same about your husband and then let's forget that. Okay?

DORIS. Okay.

GEORGE. I'll go first. I'll start with the worst side. Phyllis knows about us.

DORIS. Now you said that before. How could she know?

GEORGE. She has this thing in her head.

DORIS. Oh, you mean like a plate?

GEORGE. Plate?

DORIS. My uncle has one of those. He was wounded in the war and they put this steel plate in his head and now he says he can always tell when it's going to rain.

GEORGE. I'm in a lot of trouble.

DORIS. Why?

GEORGE. I find everything you say absolutely fascinating.

DORIS. Tell me about your wife's steel plate.

GEORGE. No, it's not a plate—it's more like a bell. I

could be a million miles away but if I even look at another girl she knows it. Last night at 1:22 I just know she sat bolt upright in bed with her head going, ding, ding, ding, ding!

DORIS. How'd you know it was 1:22?

GEORGE. My watch said 4:47.

DORIS. Okay, now tell me a story about the good side of her.

GEORGE. Well. She helped me believe in myself. I mean, it may be hard for you to imagine but I used to be very insecure.

DORIS. How did she do that? Help you believe in yourself?

GEORGE. She married me.

DORIS. That was very nice of her. I mean bolstering you up and all.

GEORGE. Okay, your turn. Tell me the worst story first.

DORIS. Okay. (*Pause.*) It's hard.

GEORGE. To pick one?

DORIS. No, to think of one. Harry's the salt of the earth—everyone says so.

GEORGE. Look, you owe me at least one rotten story.

DORIS. Okay. This is not really rotten but well—It was on our fourth anniversary. We were having kind of a rough time. I was pregnant and we'd gotten in over our heads financially but we decided to have some people over to help celebrate. Now Harry doesn't drink much but he did have three beers that night. It was after the Gillette fights and I overheard him talking to some of the guys and he said his time in the Army were the best years of his life.

GEORGE. A lot of guys feel that way about the service.

DORIS. Harry was in the Army four years. Three of those years were spent in a Japanese prison camp! And he said this on our anniversary. Oh, I know he didn't mean to hurt me—Harry would never hurt