

PRISONER OF SECOND AVENUE

(The front door opens with a key and MEL enters. He carries a suit jacket and a NEW YORK POST in his arm. His shirt sleeves are rolled up and he looks hot. He closes the door and hangs his jacket in the closet. He doesn't seem to notice the room, consumed with his own thoughts. He crosses to the chair and falls into it exhausted, his head back and sighs. . . His eyes open, then he looks at the room, bewildered. From inside: Edna's voice.)

EDNA. Mel? . . .Is that you, Mel?

(Mel is still looking at the room, puzzled. EDNA appears cautiously from the bedroom. She comes in holding a vase by the thin end and looks at Mel.)

MEL. . . . Didn't Mildred come in to clean today?

EDNA. *(Puts the vase down.)* Not today . . . Mondays and Thursdays.

MEL. What happened here? . . . Why is this place such a mess?

EDNA. . . . We've been robbed . . . *(MEL looks at her in a state of shock . . . he slowly rises and looks at the room, in a new perspective.)*

MEL. . . . What do you mean, robbed?

EDNA. *(Starts to cry.)* Robbed! Robbed! What does robbed mean? They come in, they take things out! They robbed us!!

MEL. *(He keeps turning, looking at the room in disbelief. . . not knowing where to look first.)* . . . I don't understand . . . What do you mean, someone just walked in and robbed us?

EDNA. What do you think? . . . They called up and made an appointment? We've been robbed!

MEL. Alright calm down. Take it easy, Edna. I'm just asking a simple question. What happened? What did they get?

EDNA. I don't know yet. I was out shopping. I was gone five minutes. I came back , I found it like this.

MEL. You couldn't have been gone five minutes. Look at this place.

EDNA. *Five minutes* that's all I was gone.

MEL. Five minutes, heh? Then we'd better call the F.B.I. because every crook in New York must have been in here.

EDNA. Then that's who was here because I was only gone five minutes.

MEL. When you came back into the building did you notice anyone suspicious looking?

EDNA. *Everyone* in this building is suspicious looking.

MEL. You didn't see anybody carrying any bundles or packages?

EDNA. I didn't notice.

MEL. What do you mean, you didn't notice?

EDNA. I didn't notice. You think I look for people leaving the building with my television set?

MEL. They took the television? *(He starts for bedroom, then stops.)* A brand new HD television?

EDNA. They're not looking for 1948 Philco's. It was here. They took it. I can't get a breath out.

MEL. Alright, sit here. I'll get a drink.

EDNA. I don't want a drink.

MEL. A little scotch. It'll calm you down.

EDNA. It won't calm me down because there's no scotch. They took the scotch too.

MEL. *All* the scotch?

EDNA. All the scotch.

MEL. The Chivas Regal too?

EDNA. No, they're gonna take the cheap scotch and leave the Chivas Regal. They took it all, they cleaned us out.

MEL. *(Gnashing his teeth.)* Sons of bitches. *(He runs to the terrace door, opens it, steps out on the terrace and yells out.)* Sons of Bitches! *(He closes door and comes back in.)* All in five minutes, heh? They must have been gorillas to lift all that in five minutes.

EDNA. Leave me alone.

MEL *(Gnashing teeth again,)* Sons of bitches.

EDNA. Stop swearing, the police will be here any minute. I just called them.

MEL. You called the police?

EDNA. Didn't I just say that?

MEL. Did you tell them we were robbed?

EDNA. Why else would I call them? I'm not friendly with the police. What kind of questions are you asking me? What's wrong with you?

MEL. Alright, calm down because you're hysterical.

EDNA. I am not hysterical.

MEL. You're hysterical.

EDNA. You're *making* me hysterical. Don't you understand, my house has just been robbed.

MEL. What am I, a boarder? My house has been robbed too. My HD television and my Chivas Regal is missing the same as yours.

EDNA. You didn't walk in and find it. *I did.*

MEL. What's the difference who found it? There's still nothing to drink and nothing to watch.

EDNA. Don't yell at me. I'm just as upset as you are.

MEL. I'm sorry. I'm excited, too. I don't mean to yell at you. *(Starts for bedroom.)* Let me get a Valium, it'll calm you down.

EDNA. I don't want a Valium.

MEL. Take one. You'll feel better.

EDNA. I'm not taking a Valium.

MEL. Why are you so stubborn?

EDNA. I'm not stubborn. We don't have any. They took the Valiums.

MEL. *(Stops.)* They took the Valiums?

EDNA. The whole medicine chest. Valium, seconals, aspirin, shaving cream, tooth paste, razor blades. They left your tooth brush. You want to go in and brush your teeth, you can still do it.

MEL. *(Smiles, disbelieving.)* I don't believe you. *I don't believe you!* *(MEL looks at her, then storms off and disappears into the bedroom . . . EDNA gets up and picks up a book from the floor. From the far recesses of the bathroom we hear MEL scream: Offstage.)* DIRTY BASTARDS!!! *(EDNA is holding the book upside down and shaking it, hoping some concealed item will fall out. It doesn't. MEL storms back into the living room.)* I hope they die. I hope the car they stole to get away in hits a tree and turns over and burns up and they all die!

EDNA. You read about it every day. And when it happens to you, you can't believe it.

MEL. A television I can understand. Liquor I can understand. But shaving cream? Hair spray? How much are they going to get for roll of dental floss?

EDNA. They must have been desperate. They took everything they could carry. *(Shakes book one last time.)* They even found my kitchen money.

MEL. What kitchen money?

EDNA. I kept my kitchen money in here. Eighty-five dollars.

MEL. In cash? Why would you keep cash in a book?

EDNA. So no one will find it! Where else am I gonna keep it?

MEL. In a jar. In the sugar. Someplace they're not going to look.

EDNA. They looked in the medicine chest, you think they're not going to look in the sugar?

MEL. *Nobody looks in sugar!*

EDNA. Nobody steals dental floss and mouth wash. Only sick people. Only that's who live in the world today. SICK, SICK, SICK PEOPLE! *(She sits, wrung out emotionally. MEL crosses to her, puts his arm on her shoulder comforting her.)*

MEL. . . . It's alright . . . It's alright, Edna . . . As long as you weren't hurt, that's the important thing. *(He looks through papers on table.)*

EDNA. Can you imagine if I walked in and found them here? What would I have done, Mel?

MEL. You were lucky, Edna. Very lucky.

EDNA. But what would I have done.

MEL. What's the difference? You didn't walk in and find them.

EDNA. But supposing I did? What would I have done?

MEL. You'd say, "Excuse me." Close the door and come back later. What would you do, sit and watch? Why do you ask me such questions? It didn't happen, did it?

EDNA. It *almost* happened. If I walked in here five minutes sooner.

MEL. *(Walking away from her.)* You couldn't have been gone five minutes . . . It took the Seven Santini Brothers two days to move everything in, three junkies aren't gonna move it all out in five minutes.

EDNA. Seven minutes, eight minutes, what's the difference?

MEL. (*Opens the door, looks at the lock.*) the lock isn't broken, it's not jimmied. I don't even know how they got in here.

EDNA. Maybe they found my key in the street.

MEL. (*Closes door. Looks at her.*) What do you mean found your key? Don't you have your key?

EDNA. No, I lost it. I thought it was somewhere in the house, maybe I lost it in the street.

MEL. If you didn't have your key, how were you going to get back in the house when you went shopping?

EDNA. I left the door open.

MEL. You-left-the-door-open???

EDNA. I didn't have a key, how was I going to get back in the house?

MEL. *So you left the door open?* In a city with the highest crime rate in the history of the world, *you left the door open?*

EDNA. What was I supposed to do? Take the furniture with me? I was only gone five minutes. How did they know I was going to leave the door open?

MEL. They know! They know! A door opens, it doesn't lock, the whole junkie world lights up. "Door open, 14th floor, 88th street and Second Avenue." They know!