

Nick: Lili, please—

Lui: I still want—I still want to be with you—I'll pay! I'll pay for everything!

Nick: That isn't what this—

Lui: But did you—did you make a deal with her?

Nick: I didn't—

Lili: And you—and you—

Nick: No, listen—

Lui: I'll pay for anything, but please—please—be on my side—

Eva: My darling—

Nick: Lili, come with me.

Lui: *(To Eva)* I can't breathe! I can't breathe! *(She chokes herself tightly and her mouth opens as if she about to scream, but only a strangulated sob comes out.)*

Nick: Lili— *(She collapses.)*

(Blackout.)

SCENE 2

Nick *lies in the hammock. GIL is looking out at the lake.*

GIL: I sat at the bar through last call. This woman in a gray beehive kept ordering Brandy Alexanders and trying to make me. I was sorely tempted.

Nick: But you resisted.

GIL: I was stalwart.

Nick: You're an admirable young man.

GIL: I think I am. People say so. *(Beat.)* So is tea always such an hysterical occasion here or was this special?

Nick: No. This was special.

GIL: I'm glad . . . Is she okay?

Nick: She's sleeping.

GIL: She seems like a nice girl.

Nick: I love her very much.

GIL: I'm sure you do . . . Why aren't you there?

Nick: I've been banished.

GIL: What?

Nick: Yes. It seems I'm a dangerous influence. It seems I caused all that.

GIL: My god!

Nick: Eva's very clever, she covers her tracks. She said, "Consider where Lili sleeps the castle keep; consider Olivia the sentry."

GIL: And what is she?

Nick *(German accent)*: I am the moat.

GIL: What a night!

Nick: Yeah.

GIL *(looking out at lake)*: I had a hunch you'd be here. It's where I would be at this time of night. Just sort of swaying and swaying.

Nick: Whatever.

GIL *(moving to behind the hammock)*: It's so quiet . . . so dark . . . A real country darkness.

Nick: The hotel's still blazing.

Gi: But behind us it's pitch black. *(Beat.)* No one around. *(Beat.)* No one anywhere. *(Long pause. Then Gi leans over the hammock and kisses Nick on the mouth. Nick allows it, then pulls back.)*

Nick: No.

Gi: What do you mean, "no"?

Nick: It's time to put away childish things.

Gi: Well, I'm sorry, it's a nice quote and all, but that never felt like a childish thing, to me, that never—

Nick *(moving away):* How did you find me here anyway? *(Beat.)*

Gi: Ruth Corbin.

Nick: Ruth Corbin! I don't think I've ever even spoken to Ruth Corbin.

Gi: She heard it from Les O'Hare—they're going out now—he got it from, I think, Jackie de Milne, who works with a guy whose wife is best friends with the cousin of that girl you came here with, what's her name—?

Nick: Mindy.

Gi: Mindy, yes! My research was pretty extensive.

Nick: Nothing's going to happen. Why did you bother?

Gi: Don't you know yet, Nick? I'm here to save you.

Nick *(bursting out laughing):* I'm deeply touched.

Gi: I have spent months looking for you—I've come to these mountains to get you—who else would climb a mountain for you?

Nick: Lili would.

Gi: Yes—but when she got there would it matter?

Nick: I'm marrying her.

Gi: Fine! Wonderful! I have no problems with that—I'm marrying Ginny.

Nick: What?

Gi: At the end of October. It would please me enormously if you'd agree to be my best man.

Nick: You're incredibly perverse.

Gi: I'm not perverse, I'm determined to be happy. I'm inventive.

Nick: Too inventive.

Gi: There can be no such thing. It wasn't even my idea. She kept hinting that she was about to be twenty-four; there was a heavy suggestion that her child-bearing years were drawing to a close. I couldn't let her lie fallow, could I? I think it will be a very good match. She's beautiful, she's smart, and she speaks flawless French.

Nick: She's rich, too.

Gi: Try scoring a point against me with that, see what happens.

Nick: I won't try.

Gi: I like her a lot—and she's crazy about you.

Nick: Is she?

Gi: Asks about you constantly. She keeps saying, "Whatever happened to that nice Nick? I think he's my favorite of all your friends."

Nick: And what do you say?

Gi: I say, "You know what? Mine, too." It's really—it's great.

Nick: It's disgusting.

Gi: Not at all—I have a plan.

Nick: I don't want to know about it.

Gi: You have to—it's yours, too—

Nick: I already know what mine is.

Gi: We marry these women. We become excellent husbands. We prosper. We sire wonderful children. Our families become best friends. And we're . . . us . . . our whole lives. That's my plan.

END