

COUNTESS - MIRIAM - SYLVIA

COUNTESS, (She has not been listening.) The trouble with me, Lucy, is I've been marrying too many foreigners. I think I'll go back to marrying Americans. (Enter Miriam R. without a mud mask. She is a breezy, flashy red-head, about 28, wearing a theatrical pair of lounging pajamas.)

MIRIAM Hya, Lucy?

LUCY. "Evening, Mrs. Aarons. (Exits x)

MIRIAM. Hya, Countess, how's rhythm on the range? (Sees jug on table, pours Countess and herself drinks.)

COUNTESS. Gallop, gallop, gallop, madly over the sagebrush! But now, Miriam, I'm having an emotional relapse. In two weeks I'll be free, free as a bird from that little French bastard. But whither, oh, whither shall I fly?

MIRIAM To the arms of that comboy up at the dude ranch?

COUNTESS (Modestly.) Miriam Aarons!

MIRIAM, Why, he's nuts for you, Countess. He likes you better than his horse, and it's such a damn big horse.

COUNTESS (Rises, and pads in her stocking-feet to soja.) Well, Buck Winston is nice. So young. So strong. Have you noticed the play of his muscles? (Reclining.) Musical Musical.

MIRIAM He could crack a coconut with those knees. If he could get them together. Say, Countess, that guy hasn't been arousing your honorable intentions in you, has he?

COUNTESS. Yes, Miriam, but I'm different from the rest of you. I've always put my faith in love. Still, I've had three divorces. Dare I risk a fourth?

MIRIAM. What are you risking, Countess, or maybe I shouldn't ask?

COUNTESS. I mean, Miriam, I could never make a success of Buck Winston at Newport.

MIRIAM. Even Mrs. Astor would have to admit Buck's handsome. If I had your dough, I'd take him to Hollywood first, then New port.

COUNTESS Hollywood? Why not? I might turn him into a picture star. After all, my second husband was a gondolier, and a month after I married him, a Duchess eloped with him. Ah! L'amour! (Enter Sylois, R., wearing smart dinner dress. Her trip to Reno has embittered but not subdued her.)

MIRIAM. Hya, Sylvia? Going to a ball ?

SYLVIA. (Pours drink.) Doing the town with a boyfriend.

MIRIAM. Where'd you pick him up?

SYLVIA, The Silver State Bar. I'm not going to sit around moping, like Mary.

COUNTESS. Poor Mary. If her husband gave her the flimsiest excuse, she'd take him back.

SYLVIA. She has no pride. I'd roast in hell before I'd take Howard Fowler back. Kicking me out like that! After all I sacrificed!

MIRIAM. Such as what?

SYLVIA. I gave him my youth!

COUNTESS. (Dreamily) Hélas, what else can a woman do with her youth but give it to a man?

MIRIAM. Hélas, she can't preserve it in alcohol.

COUNTESS. (Practical.) But, Sylvia, how could your husband kick you out, if you were a femme fidele? S

SYLVIA. Of course, I was a faithful wife. (Miriam shorts.) What are you laughing at?

MIRIAM. Two kinds of women, Sylvia, owls and ostriches. (Raises her glass.) To the feathered sisterhood! To the girls who get paid and paid. (Parenthetically.) And you got paid plenty!

SYLVIA. You bet I got plenty! The skunk! And I'd have got plenty more, if only I could have pinned something on him.

MIRIAM. Didn't you try?

SYLVIA. Certainly not. To put it mildly, Howard has been impotent for years!

COUNTESS. I never got a soul from any of my husbands except my first husband, Mr. Straus. He said the most touching thing in his will. I remember every word of it. "To my beloved wife, Pora, I leave all my estate in trust to be administered by executors, because she is an A No. 1 schlemiel." (Touched anew) Wasn't that sweet?