

ACT TWO

WALPURGISNACHT

[GEORGE, by himself: NICK re-enters.]

NICK [after a silence]: I . . . guess . . . she's all right. [No answer.] She . . . really shouldn't drink. [No answer.] She's . . . frail. [No answer.] Uh . . . slim-hipped, as you'd have it. [GEORGE smiles vaguely.] I'm really very sorry.

GEORGE [quietly]: Where's my little yum yum? Where's Martha?

NICK: She's making coffee . . . in the kitchen. She . . . gets sick quite easily.

GEORGE [preoccupied]: Martha? Oh no, Martha hasn't been sick a day in her life, unless you count the time she spends in the rest home. . . .

NICK [he, too, quietly]: No, no; my wife . . . my wife gets sick quite easily. Your wife is Martha.

GEORGE [with some rue]: Oh, yes . . . I know.

NICK [a statement of fact]: She doesn't really spend any time in a rest home.

GEORGE: Your wife?

NICK: No. Yours.

GEORGE: Oh! Mine. [Pause] No, no, she doesn't . . . I would; I mean if I were . . . her . . . she . . . I would. But I'm not . . . and so I don't. [Pause] I'd like to, though. It gets pretty bouncy around here sometimes.

NICK [coolly]: Yes . . . I'm sure.

GEORGE: Well, you saw an example of it.

NICK: I try not to . . .

GEORGE: Get involved. Um? Isn't that right?

NICK: Yes . . . that's right.

GEORGE: I'd imagine not.

NICK: I find it . . . embarrassing.

GEORGE [sarcastic]: Oh, you do, hunh?

NICK: Yes. Really. Quite.

GEORGE [mimicking him]: Yes. Really. Quite. [Then aloud, but to himself] IT'S DISGUSTING!

NICK: Now look! I didn't have anything . . .

GEORGE: DISGUSTING! [Quietly, but with great intensity] Do you think I like having that . . . whatever-it-is . . . ridiculing me, tearing me down, in front of . . . [Waves his hand in a gesture of contemptuous dismissal] YOU? Do you think I care for it?

NICK [cold - unfriendly]: Well, no . . . I don't imagine you care for it at all.

GEORGE: Oh, you don't imagine it, hunh?

NICK [antagonistic]: No . . . I don't. I don't imagine you do!

GEORGE [withering]: Your sympathy disarms me . . . your . . . your compassion makes me weep! Large, salty, unscientific tears!

NICK [with great disdain]: I just don't see why you feel you have to subject other people to it.

GEORGE: I?

NICK: If you and your . . . wife . . . want to go at each other, like a couple of . . .

GEORGE: I! Why I want to!

NICK: . . . animals, I don't see why you don't do it when there aren't any . . .

GEORGE [laughing through his anger]: Why, you smug, self-righteous little . . .

NICK [a genuine threat]: CAN . . . IT . . . MISTER!
[Silence.]

Just . . . watch it!

GEORGE: . . . scientist.

NICK: I've never hit an older man.

GEORGE [considers it]: Oh. [Pause] You just hit younger