

BILL. Norman. Um. I don't want to offend you, but there's a rather important little topic that I feel I have to broach.

NORMAN. I beg your pardon?

BILL. I don't want to offend you, but...if it's all right with you, we'd like to sleep together.

NORMAN. What do you mean?

BILL. We'd like to sleep...together...in the same room...in the same bed. If you don't find that offensive.

NORMAN. All three of you?

BILL. What? Oh, no. Just two.

NORMAN. You and Billy?

BILL. No.

NORMAN. Not Chelsea and Billy?

BILL. No, sir.

NORMAN. That leaves only Chelsea and you then.

BILL. Yes.

NORMAN. Why would I find that offensive? You're not planning on doing anything unusual, are you?

BILL. Oh, no. Just...

NORMAN. That doesn't seem too offensive, as long as you're quiet.

BILL. Um. I'll be sure to exemplify restraint.

*He smiles; Norman doesn't.*

NORMAN. Chelsea always used to sleep in the same bed with her husband.

BILL. Oh, I'm sure.

NORMAN. And Ethel and I do, you know. We sleep together. Been doing it for years.

BILL. Well, of course. But you're married and all.

NORMAN. So?

BILL. Well...

NORMAN. I think I'm beginning to see this more clearly. It's a moral issue. isn't it?

BILL. Well, it's just that we're of different generations, different mores...

NORMAN. What is a more? I've never known.

BILL. Um...a custom, I'd say. Or something.

NORMAN. Go on. Forgive me for interrupting.

BILL. Well, it's just a matter of points of view...

NORMAN. (*Interrupting.*) I shouldn't have interrupted.

BILL. Oh. Of course. It's just that I don't want our relationship to...

NORMAN. It's a terrible social problem, I think.

BILL. Um...?

NORMAN. Interrupting. Not listening. The art of conversation went out with radio probably.

BILL. Yes.

NORMAN. Or maybe with mirrors.

BILL. Um...

NORMAN. Ever notice how people start to check themselves out in a mirror or a window or your eyeglasses when they're supposed to be listening?

BILL. Yes, I have noticed that.

NORMAN. It's a shifty sort of quality, I think.

BILL. Yes.

NORMAN. Or perhaps it's just a form of egocentricity.

BILL. Yeah.

NORMAN. I do it.

BILL. You do?

NORMAN. Sure. Conversations bore me to tears. I always look for a little *divertissement* while I'm waiting for my turn to talk.

BILL. Huh.

NORMAN. Pretty shabby, huh?

BILL. Well...

NORMAN. I don't do it with Ethel. She's so pretty, isn't she?

BILL. Yes.

NORMAN. After all these years I still can't get over how pretty she is. Or how handsome I am. That's the real reason I always look for a mirror. I like to keep checking. Make sure I haven't faded.

BILL. Oh.

NORMAN. They say you fade with age. They say your looks just go. Haven't seen a sign of it.

BILL. No, indeed.

NORMAN. What were we talking about?

BILL. Um...

NORMAN. Sex, I believe. You were concerned that my morals somehow wouldn't mesh with yours.

BILL. Yes.

NORMAN. Don't be silly. I'd be delighted to have you abusing my daughter under my own roof. Would you like the room where I first violated her mother, or would you be interested in the master bedroom?

BILL. Norman...

NORMAN. Ethel and your son and I could all sleep out back and you could do it right here on the hearth. Like that idea?

*Bill nods; he's heard enough.*

BILL. You're having a good time, aren't you?

NORMAN. Hmmm?

BILL. Chelsea told me all about you, about how you like to have a good time with people's heads. She does it, too, sometimes, and sometimes I can get into it. Sometimes not. I just want you to know that I'm very adept at recognizing crap when I hear it. You know, it's not imperative that you and I be friends, but it might be...preferable. I'm sure you're a fascinating person, and I'm sure it would be fascinating to get to know you. That's obviously not an easy task. But it's all right, you go ahead and be as *poopy* as you want, to quote Chelsea, and I'll be as receptive and as pleasant as I can. I just want you to bear in mind while we're sitting here smiling at each other and you're jerking me around that I know precisely what you're up to and that I can take only so much of it. Okay? Okay. Now. What's the bottom line on the illicit sex question?

NORMAN. *Excellent.* Magnificent speech. I liked that a lot. So, bottom line, huh? You're a bottom-line man. All right. Here's the bottom line: oh-kay. Ethel and I haven't always been married. It just seems that way. We tipped over a canoe or two in our day, trying to accommodate another generation's *mores*. You seem like a decent person, a bit verbose perhaps, a bit outspoken, but...decent.

BILL. Thank you.

NORMAN. And you're right about me. I *am* fascinating.

BILL. I'm sure you are.

NORMAN. I didn't mean to weigh down our conversation. We can go back to talking about sex if you like.

BILL. Oh, no. That's okay.

NORMAN. I like talking about sex. Anything you want to know, just ask me.

BILL. Okay. I...I do want to make sure I have this little matter clear in my mind. Chelsea and I *can* sleep together, right?

NORMAN. Yes! Please do! Just don't let Ethel catch you.