

MAUREL. Then why'd you come up here?

ARNOLD. To see how my paint job was holding up. Y'know, I painted this room. Took me days. I was so scared I'd drip on the "original wide plank oak" floors.

LAUREL. I'm sorry. I'm obviously pushing you to admit something you're not ready to face.

ARNOLD. You're pushing all right, but I don't think you know toward what. Laurel, are you happy with Ed?

LAUREL. The happiest I've ever been in my life.

ARNOLD. Then, what more do you want?

*(Laughs out on them and up on ALAN and ED as they pass the brandy bottle back and forth.)*

ALAN. To own a disco. I knew this guy, he was a few years older than me, who'd met this older guy who set him up in business. I figured I could do the same. But when I made my entrance into the Big Apple, and believe me, fourteen-year-old gay boys make quite an entrance into any apple, I found that no one was interested in my business plan. No one was interested in anything much beyond my price tag for the evening. See, people with a taste for fourteen-year-olds are used to paying for it and consider a freebie suspicious if not downright immoral so I became a hustler. I figured I needed the affection more than they needed the money. Now, of course, things are different, but then...? Anyway, the hustling led to some connections, the connections to the modeling, the modeling to...

ED. Arnold.

ALAN. No, Arnold was more of a detour. One night I was out drinking with a friend and got more than usually polluted. Somehow I ended up in a Lower East Side bar that had a drag show.

Anyway, I got into a fight with this big guy who threw me down across a table, jumped up onto my chest and put a knife to my neck. Everyone was screaming and crowding around to watch me get cut when, all of a

sudden, there was silence. The crowd parted to make an aisle and, up through it like Moses parting the Red Sea, came this Amazon woman.

I'd never seen anything like her. She was beautiful. Not like pretty beautiful, but like mountain beautiful. She put her hand out to the guy, he handed over the knife and was gone. No words. No nothing.

ED. Did you realize right away that it was a guy?

ALAN. I was too drunk that night to realize I was a guy. I fell on that discovery the next morning. And we've been together ever since. Now tell me about you. That's why we're here.

ED. Is it?

ALAN. Arnold didn't want to come, but I wasn't going to let this opportunity to see my competition go by.

ED. I'm no competition.

ALAN. That's what I was thinking. So, tell me about you?

ED. I'm sure Arnold had plenty to say on the subject.

ALAN. He said you're a self-centered, insensitive, boring fool who wouldn't know love if it wore wings, a diaper, and shot heart-shaped arrows at your butt.

ED. Meaning himself?

ALAN. Meaning himself. Anything you'd care to add.

ED. No. That'll do. And what do you think?

ALAN. I think I'll reserve judgment until I can make a closer inspection.

*(ED lies down next to ALAN.)*

ED. Close enough?

ALAN. Too close for comfort. You asked me to sit in the hay, not roll in it.

ED. It was a two-part question. I think you're very beautiful.

ALAN. I thought you were reformed.

ED. I'm not proposing marriage.

*(Gently pulling ALAN closer.)*

If you want me to stop just say so. Do you?