

the moon?... Oh... Well, we got your letter just day before yesterday... ain't nothin' gone wrong now, has it?... You're still comin' to Mona's reunion party ain't ya?... Good... good... Mona would be real heart-sick not to have you here. No, no, she went over to Marfa this weekend... her bus is nearly two hours late in gettin' back... Sure hope there ain't been no... What?... She goes there every year 'bout this time to get together with all them others who was in that movie with her (SHE hears the bus coming down the street.) Wait... wait, I think I hear her bus pullin' in now, if you want to hang on... All right then... fine... fine, I'll tell her. You drive careful now, you hear... and tell Edna Louise we're all lookin' forward to seein' her too... now, you don't pick on her like that, you hear?... Bye, see you real soon.

(During the above a fly has been annoying her. SHE goes behind the counter for her fly swatter and stations herself in wait. SHE notices the "Last Supper" picture isn't lit and pulls the string. MONA appears at the door. SHE is in her late thirties and wears a simple shirtwaist dress and low heels. SHE carries a purse, small beat-up suitcase and a paperback copy of "Gone With The Wind." The long bus ride and horrible heat show their effects on her. The built up anxiety of the reunion along with the haunting memories churned-up during the trip to Marfa has caused her to become restless and high-strung.)

MONA. (*Ruffled*) That darn-fool of a bus broke down out there in the middle of nowhere and it took them nearly forever to get it repaired. Look at me... would you just take a look at me, I'm a shambles... an absolute shambles.

JUANITA. Come sit yourself down and let me fix you a nice cold Orange Crush. You do look like somethin' the cat mighta dragged in.

MONA. (*Pulling her dress away from her sticky body.*) Isn't this heat somethin' terrible though? My clothes are just stickin' to my body like glue. (*Fanning herself.*) We were forced to sit out there in that desolute emptiness in that broken down old bus for nearly four hours... four hours in this oppressin' heat.

JUANITA. Two.

MONA. What?

JUANITA. Two hours. It was only two hours.

MONA. (*Laughs.*) Well, it seemed more like four. (*Suddenly remembers.*) Sandwiches... did anybody remember about sandwiches?

JUANITA. Sissy's gone by to pick up the fixin's... all we gotta do is put 'em together... just calm yourself down.

MONA. (*A sigh of relief.*) Well thank heavens that worry can be erased from my mind. (*Takes a deep breath.*) It's so hot an' suffocatin' I can hardly hold a breath. (*SHE switches on the lights around the photo of Dean.*) Where's Jimmy Dean?

JUANITA. He ran off sometime after lunch an' I haven't seen hide nor hair of him since...

MONA. Juanita, somethin' awful coulda happened

to him and you'd never know about it.

JUANITA. (*Irritated.*) Ain't nothin' happened to that boy, awful or otherwise... He's prob'ly just over to Luke's Texaco watchin' him work on the cars or somethin'.

MONA. You know how I hafta worry about...

JUANITA. You worry about him entirely too much... now, drink this here Orange Crush an' cool yourself down. He's a big boy an' can take care of himself.

MONA. (*Laughs.*) Well, that's not a true remark and you very-well know it. (*SHE chuckles.*) My, that really does hit the spot. He shouldn't be runnin' aroun' out there in this heat though, he could get himself sun-stroke. (*Looks up.*) I sure wish that poor old broken ceilin' fan up there could see its way to start spinnin' again in time for tonight's party.

JUANITA. Sissy's stoppin' over to see if Luke'll come on by an' take a look at it... although I don't know what good it would do even if he could get it to spinnin' again.

MONA. It's prob'ly just too hot an' tired to move.

JUANITA. Aren't you even gonna mention the decorations?

MONA. (*Startled.*) Good heavens, I neglected to even notice. (*SHE rushes down to get the full view.*) My, would you just look how this place has been all gussied up... and what a clever idea to use the holidays as a way of showin' the passin' of the years.

JUANITA. Sissy worked all day long practic'ly, stringin' that stuff up there...

MONA. (*Rushes to JUANITA.*) Are you as excited and nervous as I am? I could hardly contain myself the whole week-end long in Marfa just thinkin' about it. (*Studying the sign.*) Twenty years tonight... seems like only yesterday, doesn't it... when that fatal crash took away his life.

JUANITA. Lord, I nearly forgot, Stella May called-up just as your bus was pullin' in to say she's stopped off over in Odessa to give Edna Louise a ride... just as quick as Edna can close-up the Beauty Parlor, they'll be on their way.

MONA. (*Excited.*) Won't it be wonderful to see them again... Stella seem like she's changed any to you?

JUANITA. Her voice sounded much the same as it did back then... an' she was pickin'-away at Edna same as before.

MONA. Anybody else call you an' say they was comin'?

JUANITA. 'fraid not.

MONA. Maybe they're intendin' to surprise us... do ya think?

JUANITA. Don't get your heart too set on...

MONA. I sent them little reminder notes to every-one askin' them to R.S.V.P.

JUANITA. It's been twenty years... things change.

MONA. (*SHE goes to the group photo of the Disciples.*) I certainly hope we'll all be able to recognize each other... wouldn't that be awful? (*Putting down the photo.*) I'm sure they'll all remember... how could they possibly have forgotten such a devoted promise as that. (*SHE turns to see a figure standing behind the screen door. It is a young boy (Joe)*)

looking like a vision of an angel with the pale look of vulnerable innocence. His face is soft and delicate with eyes like a wounded animal. HE wears a short-sleeved shirt, faded denim overalls and high-top black tennis shoes looking ever so much like James Dean in "East of Eden." MONA turns away from him quickly losing a breath.)

JUANITA. You all right?

MONA. It seems like my heart just skipped a beat or somethin' (SHE turns again. The figure has disappeared.) ... it's just all this dry air I guess, affectin' my asthma somethin' awful.

JUANITA. (Going to the counter.) Now, you come set over here an' drink some more of this Orange Crush. It'll do wonders to cool off your insides.

MONA. I don't think I'll be able to sit again for a week or more. (Rubs her backside.) It seems that bus ride gets longer and longer every year. Either that or I'm gettin' older and less tolerable. (SHE starts to drink but is interrupted by something that makes her laugh.) Alice Marie... you remember Alice Marie from over in Waco?... She says I remind her of Scarlett O'Hara. Isn't that an odd thing to say though? (Laughs.)

JUANITA. (Tracking a fly with her swatter.) Why on earth would she say somethin' like that?

MONA. Well, I suppose it's because that's who I remind her of. She says Reata is my Tara and James Dean is my Clark Gable. (Smiles as SHE picks up the copy of the novel and flips through it.) I never had given that a thought before but you know, it really is an interesting coincidence.

JUANITA. You find yourself some silly kinda co-

incidence in everythin'. You an' that Scarlett O'Hara are about as similar as me an' Jean Harlow. (SHE seats a fly.) Aha!

MONA. (Moves up to the door.) Well, Alice Marie discovered a resemblance.

JUANITA. It's all that movie watchin'... an' book readin' that puts them ideas in your head, if you ask me.

MONA. Bein' deprived of a formal college education the way I was... because of an affliction of which I had no control if I may again remind you... I have been forced to investigate on my own the mysteries of the universe or become totally ignorant of life like everybody else in this town... present company excluded, of course. I have managed to save my life from becomin' merely an existence with an aid of the novel-of-the-month club and the motion picture industry, of which I am totally indebted.

JUANITA. (Heading toward the back room.) Church goin' an' Bible readin' would have done you a whole lot better good.

MONA. You are well aware of my religious feelin's.

JUANITA. (Stepping into the back room.) You have none.

MONA. (Moving down to the shrine.) Precisely, the Lord turned his back on me at a very crucial time in my early life, causin' scars that will never heal.

JUANITA. (In the back room.) You can't blame the Lord for what...

MONA. (Moves up to the screen doors.) I can...

and I do! *(From outside, a young female voice calls out.)*

MONA (THEN). Juanita! *(The lights begin to change focus, altering the look of the store.)*

JUANITA. *(Sticking her head through the curtains and gestures toward the shrine.)* The blame belongs to that face there hangin' all over these walls... It was him, not the Lord, who put all them foolhardy notions in your young head.

MONA (THEN). Juanita!

MONA. At that time of our lives he was our savior... the only one who understood us. *(SHE goes outside. The sound of thunder and rain. The fan starts spinning and the lights have transformed the store dramatically to September 30, 1955.)*

JUANITA. Don't you just walk away from me like that, young lady.

*(MONA (THEN) appears in the doorway. SHE is seventeen and wears a mid-calf school dress of the fifties, anklets and saddle shoes. Her hair is long and in a pony tail. She carries a beat-up suitcase. As we move into the past, JUANITA remains the same, but twenty years earlier.)*

MONA (THEN). *(Excited.)* Juanita, I'm back! Aren't you surprised?! *(Laughs.)*

JUANITA. *(Going to her. Surprised.)* Mona!... Lord, child, what are you doin' back here, already? We just waved you off to that college not more than a week ago.

MONA (THEN). I don't have to go after all... Isn't that wonderful?

JUANITA. Don't have to go? What in heaven's name went wrong? *(MONA, behind the screen door, watches the scene in shadow.)*

MONA (THEN). My asthma. It got worse, it really did. That climate there was not right for my asthma. The Doctor said so.

JUANITA. They had to send for a doctor?

MONA (THEN). It was terrible. It really was. I was standin' in line waitin' to sign up for my classes when I just collapsed in a dead heap on the floor. It was real scary to everybody. They told me so afterwards... They all thought I was dead or somethin'. *(Rushes and hugs JUANITA.)* Oh, I'm so excited to be back home with everybody. I was a fool to think I could ever leave here. Sidney will give me my job back, won't he?

JUANITA. *(Stunned.)* I'm sure he will.

MONA (THEN). *(Moving to a photo of Dean.)* How lucky for me it happened in time to return for tonight's meetin' of the "Disciples." I was real worried how the club would continue without my leadership. *(All smiles.)* Oh, I just missed everybody so very much. *(Quickly.)* Where's Sissy?... and Joe?... I can't wait to see their faces when they hear I'm back to stay. *(The lights begin to return to 1975. The thunder and rain fade. The fan stops.)*

JUANITA. Sissy's in the back room unpackin' some...

MONA (THEN). *(Grabs her suitcase.)* I brought them back a surprise I can't wait to show 'em... It's a whole entire magazine devoted to James Dean... they'll just die when they see it... *(Rushes to the back room.)*

JUANITA. Mona, honey, Joe's not...