HELEN We thought you must be out.

BARBARA No, I...

Peter

HELEN Weren't in the john, were you?

BARBARA No...

HELEN *(as she walks to the sitting room)* If there's one thing I hate, it's being hauled out of the john in the middle of it.

BARBARA *closes the front door.*

PETER How are you, Barbara?

BARBARA I'm just about to do some painting.

PETER We're not staying, don't worry. We're just—

HELEN *(overlapping)* We're going up to town. Is there anything you want? *(She catches sight of the easel.)* Hey – how's the easel?

BARBARA What?

HELEN The easel – is it okay?

BARBARA Oh yes. Yes, it's fine.

HELEN If it's not, you just say and I'll take it back.

BARBARA No, it's fine, I love it.

HELEN The guy in the store said he'd change it if you didn't like it.

PETER *(to HELEN)* She says it's fine, she loves it, what more can she say? *(going to the door)* Come on, let's leave the girl in peace.

HELEN What's the hurry?

PETER The whole idea was to get up to town before the crowds, remember?

HELEN Okay, okay.

PETER *(to* BARBARA*)* We're making an early start on the Christmas shopping. Helen's got a list a mile long. *(to* HELEN*)* Show her.

HELEN Show her...?

PETER Show her the list.

HELEN You've got it. I gave it to you.

PETER You didn't.

HELEN In the kitchen – you were putting your coat on.

PETER You put it in your purse.

HELEN I did what?

PETER Didn't you?

HELEN *(suddenly remembering)* I left it on the kitchen table – Jesus!

PETER Are you sure?

HELEN Sure I'm sure – it's on the goddam table.

PETER *(grinning)* Okay, I'll go get it. *(to* HELEN, *as he goes to the hall)* And I want you outside, in the car, ready to go, in five minutes – okay?

HELEN Okay.

PETER *(to* BARBARA*)* Take care of yourself, Barbara.

BARBARA You too.

PETER *exits.*

HELEN Just imagine going up to town and forgetting your goddam shopping list! Jeeze, I must be going out of my mind.

BARBARA, *ill at ease, manages a small smile.* HELEN *watches as* BARBARA *prepares to start painting.*

So who's the mystery man, huh? And don't pretend you don't know what I'm talking about.