

The setting is Agnes' apartment. Charlotte is looking at travel brochures as Agnes prepares coffee.

Well... CHARLOTTE

Yeah... AGNES

(Pause.)

(Enters.) DORA

Hi, guys!

Hi, Dora. AGNES & CHARLOTTE

So? DORA
(Gives Agnes a tin of cookies; takes off her coat and tosses on an empty chair.)

Well... We can't put it off. Dad must have his holiday... and soon. We promised. AGNES

Yes, he could never afford anything like that before—as long as I can remember. DORA

We always promised him a nice holiday if ever there was enough in the kitty. AGNES

Only there never was. DORA

And now Uncle Percy leaving Dad all that money. AGNES

Not as much as it should have been. Uncle Percy splashed it around too much. DORA

I think Dad would have done the same—if he'd ever had any. AGNES

DORA

I wished Uncle Percy would have left us a little. We're the only ones he had.

AGNES

I suppose we'll inherit it eventually... if there's any left.

DORA

Dad can never spend it all.

AGNES

I hope not.

CHARLOTTE

Let's get on with planning his trip.

AGNES

A week somewhere up country, that would be nice for him.

CHARLOTTE

We promised him two... two weeks.

AGNES

We did?

DORA

Uh-huh.

AGNES

Do you think he'll remember that?

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

AGNES

Now, it shouldn't be any kind of touring holiday—too tiring. Just some nice place where he can settle in and be peaceful. Somewhere within easy reach of a hospital.

CHARLOTTE

Why a hospital? He hasn't been in hospital since he had his tonsils out.

AGNES

Charlotte, he's eighty five; anything could happen.

CHARLOTTE

His doctor seems to think he's okay.

AGNES

That man is a fool. At Dad's age there's bound to be something wrong.

DORA

He needs a quiet, gentle place—no steep trails or steps to tire him. Best if his room is in the main building.

CHARLOTTE

He still walks quite a lot.

DORA

Too much for his age, if you ask me.

AGNES

A place nice and clean, but not too expensive. We'd be paying for services he wouldn't even use—like dancing, swimming pool, shuffle board...

DORA

He'll need nourishing food, though. We'll have to contact some places and get sample menus.

AGNES

Ah, food.

(Opens cookie tin.)

Do you know what I found out? All the broccoli and greens I've been bringing him... he's been trading most of it to a man at the residence down the hall from him—for chocolate pies and cookies.

(Bites into a cookie.)

That man must have a totally irresponsible family.

DORA

Well, let's face it, we can't expect a social director to act as a nursemaid to him all the time. Not these days, anyway.

AGNES

I'll be worried about him every minute he's away.

DORA

Well...

AGNES

Well what?

DORA

It's no use. One of us will have to go with him.

AGNES

Go with Dad?

CHARLOTTE

Go with him where?

DORA

Wherever it is we're sending him—on his holidays.

All simultaneously give reasons why they can't go.

CHARLOTTE

We'll never get anywhere by arguing. There's only one way to decide this. Agnes, bring a deck of cards.

AGNES

What?

CHARLOTTE

A deck of cards.

AGNES

(She goes.)

Why cards?

CHARLOTTE

Unless you want to throw dice.

DORA

What?

CHARLOTTE

Or draw straws.

DORA

Oh, you mean...

CHARLOTTE

Uh-huh.

(Agnes gives Charlotte the cards.)

Now, just one cut. The highest card wins this relaxing holiday.

(Each picks a card from the stack.)

DORA

I don't think it will be me—the three of diamonds.

AGNES

The three of spades.

CHARLOTTE

Who left the joker in the deck?

DORA

Well, the Joker is the highest card there is.

CHARLOTTE

No, the Joker acts as a wild card—anything you like. I choose the two of

clubs.

(They argue briefly.)

Well, seeing you two are so sold on the Joker being on top, we'll do it this way. See, I divide the deck into three equal piles. We each take one. The one with the Joker is it.

They each pick up their stack of cards.

DORA

I don't have it.

AGNES

Neither do I. It must be you, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

I don't have it.

DORA

Oh, I took the Joker out. Isn't that what you wanted?

CHARLOTTE

Okay, shuffle them, Dora, and we'll cut, and this time it's final— highest card.

AGNES

Six of spades.

DORA

Queen of hearts.

CHARLOTTE

I've got the bloody Joker again!

DORA

Well, you complained because it wasn't in the deck, so I put it back. What *do you want?*

CHARLOTTE

I want it *out*. Out! Now one more cut—highest card.

AGNES

The four of clubs.

DORA

The eight of diamonds.

CHARLOTTE

The eight of spades.

DORA

Spades are higher; you're it.

CHARLOTTE

Who says spades are higher?

DORA

In bridge—

CHARLOTTE

Why bridge? You haven't played bridge for years.

DORA

I still play sometimes. And in bridge it's spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs... or is it clubs, diamonds?

CHARLOTTE

Well, in the game we play it's hearts, diamonds, spades, clubs.

AGNES

I think it's clubs, spades.

CHARLOTTE

Enough! One more cut. If two equal cards are drawn, those two cut again.

DORA

The nine of hearts.

AGNES

The two of hearts.

CHARLOTTE

The king of clubs.

DORA

There you are! That's final.

AGNES

Dora...

(She beckons Dora as she moves away from the card table. They whisper together.)

Charlotte, much as we would like to see you take this trip, we feel that you are not firm enough with Dad. He can wrap you around his finger. It just has to be either Dora or me. And as Dora had the next higher card—

DORA

Not fair! We'll decide this later on... and not with cards.

CHARLOTTE

After all that! What about this little holiday he's already on?

DORA

Holiday? Hah! Staying with Aunt Hilda for four days—you think that's a holiday?

CHARLOTTE

Well, it's—

AGNES

You know, in the past he has used Hilda as a blind, when he wanted to sneak off for a couple of days, hanging out with his cronies—fishing or whatever.

CHARLOTTE

One time they even went on an excursion to Reno.

DORA

That was a long time ago.

AGNES

Still...

(Pause.)

Do you think...

DORA

No, not this time. He doesn't go far without letting us know. Besides, most of his old buddies are dead and gone—at least the ones that would have taken him on some of those reckless adventures.

AGNES

I hope you're right.

(Phone rings. She picks up.)

Hello?... Dad!... You *are* at Aunt Hilda's place, right?... You what?

(To the others.)

He decided to take a little holiday.

(Into phone.)

How sweet. But we were just planning a delightful little get-away for you... No, no, Dad, it's no trouble at all... Silly... What's that banging I can hear in the background?... Drums? You're in a night club? Ha, ha, ha, just kidding, Dad... No, I didn't think so. Anyway, where are you? One of us will drive out to join you... What do you mean— "You can't drive there"? Don't be so mysterious. Where are you?

(To the others.)

He must have gone over to—

(Into phone.)

What did you say?... Nairobi? What's Nairobi?... Where?!...

(To the others.)

I don't believe this. He's in bloody—

ALL

Africa!