

THE THIRD STORY

Constance, Steve (1 woman, 1 man)

Act I Scene 8

(1940's. The elegant office of mob queen, Queenie Bartlett. Her devoted gangster son, Steve, is visited by frosty scientist, Dr. Constance Hudson. Queenie has made her a financial offer she can't refuse.)

CONSTANCE

Mrs. Bartlett must be commended on her exquisite taste in decor. I've never seen an office with such flair.

STEVE

Ma's a sucker for anything Louis Quinze. What do you think of this cologne she brought over from gay Paree? Does it do anything for me? (*He brings his wrist to her nose.*)

CONSTANCE

The salt in your epidermis is over-activating the Isopropyl Butanol in the toilet water.

STEVE

Gee, I better haul myself over to a Turkish Bath and sweat this thing off. Nothing I like better than sitting in the raw with my buddies and having a good steam. You should try it some time.

CONSTANCE

I'll take that under advisement. I came here to see your mother.

STEVE

Regretfully, Ma's not available. Anything I can do?

CONSTANCE

I received a very nasty letter this morning from my landlord, Mr. McMullin. He's threatening to put a padlock on the laboratory doors for non-payment of rent.

STEVE

Ah, you shouldn't have gotten that letter. It's old news. Mother's motto has always been "eliminate the middle man," so she decided to buy the whole building from McMullin. We are now the proud owners of the newly christened Bartlett Center for Scientific Research.

CONSTANCE

How extraordinary.

STEVE

Dr. Hudson, you could use a little renovating as well. It doesn't take an expert to see that the basic structure is sound.

THE THIRD STORY

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I'm afraid your mother didn't teach you manners. Now if you will excuse me, I have plasma that needs thawing.

STEVE

I still don't see why you and Ma wanna go around making doubles of people, but I guess I'm not an advanced thinker like the two of youse.

CONSTANCE

Your mother possesses a vision of tomorrow that very few share.

STEVE

If we'd been in business with you earlier, you wouldn't have lost that research grant.

CONSTANCE

Mr. Bartlett, I hardly see what influence you could have had with the Rappaport Foundation.

STEVE

That Professor who got the prize instead of you. Dr. Meinhardt Biederman. Things haven't quite worked out for him lately.

CONSTANCE

He received one of the largest financial grants the scientific community has to offer.

STEVE

It's been rescinded. Dr. Biederman was arrested last week for inappropriate relations with an underage girl. The Judge didn't take kindly to the key evidence; a portfolio of highly incriminating photos.

CONSTANCE

I don't believe it.

STEVE

Thought you'd be pleased.

CONSTANCE

I take no pleasure from Dr. Biederman's disgrace. I'm deeply distressed. That poor young girl.

STEVE

Don't worry. There was no young girl.

CONSTANCE

I don't understand.

THE THIRD STORY

STEVE

Dr. Biederman was indeed photographed by a hidden shutterbug in the privacy of his home but with his own hatchet-faced middle-aged spouse. Through the aid of trick photography, her photo was replaced with that of a very youthful adult circus midget.

CONSTANCE

You? You did this? You ruined an innocent man?

STEVE

He stole your big chance.

CONSTANCE

Did your Mother know about this?

STEVE

Know about it? She bought the dress for the midget. She went to a lot of trouble. You might want to thank her.

CONSTANCE

This is appalling. I must end this association at once.

STEVE

Ah, calm down, sister. You're sitting in clover. Ma's crazy about you and your work and you know she has deep pockets.

CONSTANCE

I can only imagine where that money comes from. Your mother lied to me. She said the accusations from the Senate investigation were unsubstantiated.

STEVE

No one calls my mother a liar. No one.

CONSTANCE

I have no doubt that lying is the least of her crimes.

STEVE

Who do you think you're fooling? You got into this outfit with your eyes open and you'll go out with your eyes open, only there'll be pennies on 'em. ' If you have important work to do in your laboratory, I suggest you do it. Now get out of here.