

# MILT/HELEN C/B

84 LAUGHTER ON THE 23RD FLOOR

*(The LIGHTS goes out on LUCAS.*

*The LIGHTS come back on in the office. It is night. LUCAS is gone. The CHRISTMAS MUSIC is a little louder and we can hear the chatter from the outside office.*

*MILT walks in in a neat double-breasted suit. HE carries a glass and a half empty bottle of champagne.)*

START

MILT. ... So I get the petition for divorce in the mail yesterday, you hear? ... Two days before Christmas ... We worked out a nice settlement though. She gave me a beautiful picture of the house ... *(HE turns around.)* Where are you? ... Helen? *(HE looks out in the hall.)* Come on in. It's too noisy out there.

*(HELEN comes in cautiously. SHE is wearing a simple black dress, cut revealingly in the front, her hair up. We see for the first time what a handsome woman HELEN is. SHE has a glass of champagne in hand.)*

HELEN. I don't mind the noise. It's a party, isn't it?

MILT. My goodness, Helen, that dress is so becoming to you. Listen, Helen. I'm going to say something now that may shock you. But just hear me out. Because I say it with all sincerity and with my deepest regard and respect for you ... You're very attracted to me, aren't you?

HELEN. Actually, I'm not.

MILT. But a little, right?

HELEN. No. Not even a little.

MILT. You didn't tell Giselle in the office that you thought I was cute?

HELEN. *Me??* No. Never. Why would I say that? *Cute?*  
Oh, God, no.

MILT. Maybe it was Giselle who said I was cute.

HELEN. No. Giselle told me she thought *Kenny* was cute.

MILT. Alright. So what are we talking about?  
Semantics.

HELEN. I think I should be getting back.

MILT. What if I said that I wasn't interested in an affair? What if I said what I really wanted is a deep and lasting relationship?

HELEN. I hope you find it. I really do.

MILT. What if I offered to give you my next year's salary for one night? ... No, don't believe that. There may not be a show next year.

HELEN. I know.

MILT. I'd be out of a job, out of a wife, out of a family... Does pity excite you in any way?

HELEN. I really don't want to miss the party ...

MILT. What kind of a guy are you looking for?

HELEN. I'm not looking for anyone.

MILT. Then what is it you want?

HELEN. I want to be a writer. I want to write comedy.

MILT. A *comedy* writer?? ... Oi vey!! ... Why? You really want to be like me? Like Val? Like Ira? Like any of us?

HELEN. More than anything else in the world.

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MILT. Helen! You *know* us. We're disgusting. We're children. We have no life. This room is our life. We curse each other, hate each other. We throw shoes out the window, we set fire to the desk. We've made obscene phone calls to St. Patrick's Cathedral. We'll humiliate and

**END**