

Jimmy — was on one of those destroyers. There I was, sitting in that little shore station in the middle of the night, sending that message out over the whole Atlantic Ocean to that ship at sea. Hoping that radio operator out there's on his toes, hoping it works. There I am — one part of this huge system they're depending on for their lives — more than that, for victory — for freedom — Europe — hell, for the world. And it all comes down to me in that room sending those radio waves out through my fingers to that ship in the middle of the ocean. And I saved it. *(Out to house.)* Do you know what that felt like? Can you imagine how proud I was? I was the whole U.S. Navy that night. The whole U.S.A. *(Lights go up on the stage around her, revealing four identical kitchen units. Dot looks out at Dudley.)* Well?

DUDLEY. I'm not sure about the hat. *(She takes off the hat as Dudley enters from house. He's an energetic young executive in a gray flannel suit.)* Better. Much better.

DOT. How did you like my Proudest Moment?

DUDLEY. We'll talk about it later. Family Fun. *(Stage Manager enters.)*

STAGE MANAGER. No. Excuse me Dudley. Sound rehearsal DUDLEY. Take a break Dot. *(Dot sits and watches as Stage Manager calls signals up to the booth.)*

STAGE MANAGER. Sound check. Go Able. RECORDED MAN'S VOICE. Welcome to the beautiful Ambassador Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, where from the stage of the world famous Coconut Grove nightclub, four lovely and talented finalists are vying for the coveted title of Mrs. California — and the chance to represent our state next month in the Mrs. America Contest in Daytona Beach, Florida.

STAGE MANAGER. Go Baker. Go Charlie. *(Four signs are lowered into place over each kitchen: Modesto, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Francisco as we hear.)*

RECORDED WOMAN'S VOICE. Each one of our contestants will be required to sew an apron from an original pattern, prepare a full course meal, and iron a man's white shirt. Our panel of judges will evaluate these lovely ladies on the efficiency and creativity of

5 TART
their domestic skills and techniques as homemakers. This is not a beauty contest.

STAGE MANAGER. Go Dog RECORDED MAN'S VOICE. Cash prizes total well over 15 thousand dollars including a new 1955 Desoto Firedome Sedan, an all expense paid air trip to Europe and a complete New Freedom All Gas Kitchen.

STAGE MANAGER. Close with the jingle and we got it. The stage is yours, Dudley.

DUDLEY. Thank you. Ok, Dot, where were we?

DOT. Family Fun. Car camping in Yosemite.

DUDLEY. No, no, that's Recreation. What happened to Halloween, you know ... the Carmen Miranda outfit you sewed for little

— ah —

DOT. Naney.

DUDLEY. Right. That's the one. It's a knockout. Go ahead. *(Silence from Dot.)* Dot?

DOT. Oh hell, I got lost.

DUDLEY. You're going to want to watch that language, Dorothy.

DOT. What comes after Proudest Moment? I thought it was Int Q Six.

DUDLEY. Pardon?

DOT. Interview Question Six. I wrote all the questions down on cards. They were right here. *(She fishes through her purse.)*

DUDLEY. Relax, Dot. Composure counts.

DOT. But if Family Fun comes after Proudest Moment, where does Housekeeping Hints fit in?

DUDLEY. "Homemaking." Dorothy. Always say "homemaking." They're really watching for that.

DOT. Right. Homemaking. I'm sorry, Dudley, I had it all in order.

DUDLEY. Don't worry about order. The judges can change the order anyway.

DOT. They can? I have to get it right.

DUDLEY. You'll get it right. What do you say we skip to My

Hope for the Future.

DOT. No. I don't want to skip.

DUDLEY. This isn't helping your Personality.

DOT. Oh Lord, if you want Personality, go sponsor Mrs. San Bernardine.

DUDLEY. Dorothy—

DOT. All I did was bake a cake. Now everybody thinks I'm the perfect housekeeper.

DUDLEY. Dot—

DOT. "Homemaker."

DUDLEY. That's the ticket.

DOT. It wasn't even my idea. Babs entered the contest in my name. The entry form was in her magazine.

DUDLEY. But your cake won. You had that secret ingredient.

DOT. Bordon's cream cheese is not a secret. The recipe's right on the box. *(Beat.)* I wish she was here. I bet she's got the cards.

DUDLEY. Alright now, we're getting flustered.

DOT. I'm not flustered. I'm very good at this. Dudley. I was perfect at home. I've been perfect every time until now.

DUDLEY. It's just nerves.

DOT. Let me phone Babs. *(She gets up to go out.)*

DUDLEY. Sit down, please.

DOT. It won't take a minute.

DUDLEY. Dorothy.

DOT. If I'm going to do this, I have to do it right.

DUDLEY. NO. *(Dot stops in her tracks.)* We have more important things to discuss. *(He offers a chair. Dot sits. Dot stares at him, waiting.)* First of all — your meatloaf.

DOT. My meatloaf? What's wrong with my meatloaf?

DUDLEY. It sounds ordinary.

DOT. It's supposed to be ordinary. "An Everyday Dinner at Home." This is a housekeeping contest—

DOT and DUDLEY. Homemaking.

DUDLEY. Homemaking, you see? It has to be special.

DOT. I trim it with parsley. *(Pause.)* If one of the girls is sick, I make a clown face on top with a hard boiled egg and a maraschino

cherry. It's not an ordinary meat loaf, Dudley. They loved it for Mrs. Eastern Division.

DUDLEY. I'm sure it's a fine meatloaf. We'll give it a title and fix it right up. What we lose on the meatloaf we can make up in your evening gown. Now let's think about Appearance.

DOT. Appearance? They score you on appearance?

DUDLEY. Not officially. But it counts. The question they ask you in your evening gown is worth 65 Points. That could beat Sewing, Cooking and Ironing.

DOT. Which question is it?

DUDLEY. It's one of the eleven but they won't announce it till tomorrow night.

DOT. Jesus.

DUDLEY. Language, Dot. *(He pulls a chair near to her.)* Now listen, I'm the only sponsor here with experience in Promotion. For the first time in history, the final events in this contest are going to be televised. I know how these things work. Appearance and personality come first. And with careful management we can get them to work for us.

DOT. How do we do that?

DUDLEY. First of all we emphasize your hair. Blondes always have the edge.

DOT. They do?

DUDLEY. Sure.

DOT. That's good.

DUDLEY. It's traditional. But the real key is the gown. Let's have a look at your choices.

DOT. They aren't here yet. Jim's bringing them in tomorrow.

DUDLEY. You were supposed to bring them today. It's in the rule book.

DOT. Babs has the rule book.

DUDLEY. Dorothy—

DOT. Don't worry, Dudley. They're both very pretty.

DUDLEY. They have to be more than just pretty — Dorothy, when you are up here for that 65 Point Question, you'll be showing every woman in this state who you are. The gown says everything