

House (B)

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A DELIGHTFUL QUARANTINE

~~CHESTER. No. But you don't have to. Really.~~

JUDEEN. I understand allergies, Chester. I can more than sympathize. I'm allergic to yams, beets, tomatoes, certain aroma-therapy scents – I think “tranquility” and “serenity” – they both make me very edgy – and most kinds of honey – especially clover. It gives me hives. I always thought that was funny. Honey giving a person hives. Can you BEE-lieve it?

CHESTER. *(Straight-faced)* No, I certainly can't.

JUDEEN. That was *my* joke.

CHESTER. What?

JUDEEN. “Can you BEE-lieve it?”

CHESTER. Yes, I see. It *is* funny.

JUDEEN. You're not laughing.

CHESTER. I've got a lot on my mind.

JUDEEN. Are you worrying about the aliens and what they might be up to?

CHESTER. No. I mean not exclusively.

JUDEEN. Are you worrying about my toilet? You fixed my toilet. Oh dear, you're thinking: what if all this woman can cook is cod? Here I am trapped in her house and I have to eat her food and I *know* I'm not getting any honey, tomatoes, yams or beets while I'm here. I'll bet it's Mrs. Paul's frozen fish sticks with every meal. Which, by the way, I noticed you hardly touched at dinner.

*(CHESTER gets up and goes to the implied window.*

*JUDEEN crosses to him.)*

CHESTER. The cod was good. I guess I just don't have much of an appetite.

JUDEEN. Was it because I kept jumping up and down to check on the cats?

CHESTER. No. Well, maybe.

JUDEEN. I'm sorry about the racket. They're not used to having to all stay in one room. And it's such a tiny room.

CHESTER. Yes. I noticed.

JUDEEN. You went into the guest bedroom – with those terrible allergies of yours?

CHESTER. While you were in the bathroom, I thought I might say hello.

JUDEEN. That was so thoughtful! And I'll bet they could smell the cod and I'll bet they all thought you were a visiting fisherman who'd come to tease all of their palates with your fishy wares.

CHESTER. My fishy what?

JUDEEN. Who came out to see you? Patty Paws? Grimalka? Did Debbie Reynolds do her little furry butt dance?

CHESTER. Furry what? (*JUDEEN demonstrates.*) No. I mean no cat came out to see me.

JUDEEN. All fourteen cats hid themselves under the bed? That's a physical impossibility!

CHESTER. The physical impossibility, Judeen, is that you have any cats at all.

JUDEEN. I beg your pardon?

CHESTER. You say you have cats. I don't see them. I didn't see evidence of them from the cat boxes either.

JUDEEN. You're saying that you don't see my cats?

CHESTER. I don't see your cats. Not a single one. Nor – please take note – am I sneezing and wheezing.

JUDEEN. You haven't been around them long enough.

CHESTER. Do other people – other visitors to your house – do *they* see them?

JUDEEN. I don't get a lot of visitors to my house.

CHESTER. What about the vet? What happens when you take one of the cats to the vet? Is there interaction between the two of them?

JUDEEN. Of course there's – (*Suddenly affronted.*) Are you saying that I'm imagining these cats?

CHESTER. Maybe even the vet too.

JUDEEN. In your mind I'm just some crazy cat lady made even crazier by the fact that her fourteen cats *don't even exist*?

CHESTER. Well. *Yeah.*

JUDEEN. I have never been so insulted in my life. (*CHESTER sneezes.*) What was that?

CHESTER. It was a sneeze.

JUDEEN. From my non-existent cats.

CHESTER. It could be from anything.

JUDEEN. I'm afraid that I'm going to have to ask you to leave now.

(*CHESTER looks at her as if she's lost her mind.*)

JUDEEN. I'm sorry. I'd temporarily forgotten our circumstances. Well, at least I don't have to be in the same room with someone who questions my sanity. So you stay in here and I'll keep to the rest of the house, and don't expect any further hospitality from Judeen Dempsey, Mr. Chester Banderhorn.

CHESTER. (*Not confrontationally.*) Perhaps if you saw a psychiatrist.