

...ore poised than she, women that Steve might meet travels.

...er mind she made up conversations with Steve, telling everything. Telling him she didn't want to be. She couldn't stand it. It wasn't worth the price. And ...n't fair. He had even missed Tommy's first steps.

...when he called she couldn't say the words. They ...ed terrible. And each time he came home, he seemed confident, more self-assured. She even worried that. Would she lose him to this wider world? ...d his wife and his home shrink in comparison?

...ve called two days before the neighborhood barbecue his voice sounded strained. After their usual greeting, ...learned why.

...on," he said, "I hate to tell you this, but I have to go ...the coast. There's a meeting in Los Angeles tomorrow and they want me to stay over and go through the ...there on Monday."

...Oh, Steve, not over the weekend," Katherine said. ...can't be helped."

...ut the barbecue's on Saturday. We were going to meet ...yone."

...You go."

...Alone! Without you?"

...Well, I'm sorry. Look, I'll call you tomorrow night and ...aturday night and Sunday night."

...Does this mean you won't be home till next Friday?"

...Probably not. I'm due back here Tuesday morning for ...ther meeting. Mr. Jacobson will be here. It really ...n't give me much time. You are all right, aren't you? ...d Tommy?"

...Oh yes," she said. "We're all right."

...But when she hung up the receiver, she leaned her head ...nst the kitchen wall and wanted to cry. In a few ...utes the phone rang again. It was Bunny, asking what ...atherine would wear to the barbecue.

...We're not going," Katherine said. "Stephen won't be ...me."

...But you'll go?"

...No, I couldn't."

...Don't be silly. There'll be lots of us there without our ...usbands. We'd never get out if we stayed home whenever ...ey were away. You can bet Steve won't be staying in a ...otel room all weekend. I'll call you again tomorrow. ...aybe you'll change your mind by then."

...I don't think so," Katherine said.

...She really meant not to go. She could not imagine going ...a party without Steve. But he didn't call Friday night. ...She waited up late, past the 11 o'clock news and halfway ...rough a movie, but the phone didn't ring. She thought ...terly to herself: What could keep him so busy that he ...ouldn't even find five minutes for a phone call? Why ...ould she be there Saturday night waiting for his call? ...et him talk to the baby-sitter. See how he enjoyed that.

...The barbecue was a noisy success and Katherine did not ...el out of place without a man. There were several ...omen alone and nobody seemed to care. Everyone mind- ...ed, everyone was interested, everyone was friendly, ex- ...cept Jean's husband, Howard Kelsey. He acted brusque ...nd bored, standing off on the sidelines, nursing his drink. Katherine wondered why he had bothered to come.

...The first rush of fun and chatter began to wear off. Peo- ...ple gathered in little groups. This was the time at any ...arty when Katherine would look for Steve, just to stand ...xt to him, to belong. But Steve wasn't there. She had ...ome with Bunny, who, at the moment was dancing with ...omebody's husband.

...Katherine gulped her drink and welcomed the warm, ...ddy feeling it brought. Howard Kelsey came over with ...fresh one and she accepted it.

...So," he said. "You're one of the new ones."

...We're next-door neighbors," Katherine said.

...And your husband . . . ?"

...He couldn't get home this weekend."

...He nodded. "Of course."

...She poked through her thoughts trying to select some- ...thing to say next.

...Do you enjoy traveling, Mr. Kelsey?"

...Howard," he barked, and then lifted one side of his ...mouth in a half smile. "Enjoy is not exactly the word I'd



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