

Capricorn: Caution

With a screech of brakes the car veered around the curve. "Man, she's got good control!" marveled Tom who, unaffected by the sudden need to slow down, again applied his foot to the accelerator.

"I'm glad the car's got good control; *you* sure don't!" said Pamela angrily. "You promised to take it easy if I let you drive."

"What's the matter with you?" asked Tom impatiently. "Just because I had to slow down a little. Nothing happened, did it?"

"It's a miracle nothing did. Slow *down*, will you!"

"Boy, I never knew you were such a chicken. You never acted like this before." Tom, annoyed, drove even faster.

"When you drive your own car, I figure it's your business, and if it scares me I don't go with you. But this is my car — brand new — and there are a number of reasons why I'd like it, and us, to get home in one piece. Tom, slow *down*. Do you know you're in a speed zone?"

"So what," sneered Tom. "I don't see any cops."

"OK, stop the car. I'm going to drive."

Tom had rarely heard Pam sound so determined. "Aw, come on," he begged. "I'm just getting started."

"You're just getting *stopped*," corrected Pam. "Pull over here — NOW!"

Tom was so surprised at Pam's behavior that he shrugged his shoulders, stopped the car, and let her take the wheel without further argument. They started off in angry silence, Pam adhering strictly to the speed limit and Tom fidgeting in his seat. They were soon overtaken by two young men in a red convertible, who waved condescendingly as they passed.

"Are you going to let them get away with that?" blurted out Tom. "This baby could outrun them any time."

"I'm sure it could, but I'm not in any contest," answered Pam.

"Boy!" was all Tom could manage.

"Look, Tom," said Pamela after a while, trying to relieve the oppressive silence, "I don't deny that I like to go fast. I really *love* to go fast, and on freeways and super highways it's OK. But can't you see that on these narrow back roads it's just asking for trouble to speed?"

"Not if you're careful," said Tom.

"You can't be careful on a road like this if you're speeding."

"Rubbish!" exploded Tom.

"Oh, well, I suppose it's going to take an accident to make you learn," sighed Pam.

"That's a nice thing to say," said Tom sarcastically. "Are you wishing one on me?"

"Of course not, but you seem to be asking for one." Pam applied the brake and Tom looked at the speed sign they were passing.

"I suppose you're going all the way down to 20 now, just because the sign says to?" he asked, still sarcastically.

"That's right. I'm sure *you* wouldn't, but if you don't like it you can get out and walk." Pam was angry again, and Tom glowered and said nothing.

In the next second, several things happened at once. They rounded another sharp curve, Pam slammed on the brakes, and even at their very slow speed she barely avoided hitting a young boy who was bending over his bicycle in the middle of the road.

Pam leaned back, breathed deeply, and looked at

Tom, whose face was ashen. "Glad we weren't going 60 — or even 25," she managed to whisper, and got slowly out of the car, followed by Tom.

The boy, who seemed not to realize his narrow escape, said simply, "The chain came off my bike and it won't go."

"How come you were riding that thing in the middle of the road? Don't you know that's dangerous?" asked Tom roughly, and Pam, whose heart was still beating fast, managed to look at him knowingly.

"I dunno," muttered the boy.

"Well, I'll fix this chain for you, but you're going to listen to some safety rules while I do, and you're going to have to promise to obey them." Tom's voice was still rough.

While Tom fixed the chain and sternly instructed the boy, Pam found a safe place for the car and sat there, suddenly exhausted. Tom sent the boy on his way and got into the car, still white-faced. "I hope he's learned his lesson," he muttered.

"I'm sure he has," said Pam, who could have said more but decided it wasn't necessary.

They didn't talk much going home, but when he got out of the car Tom turned. "Would you — would you go to the show with me Saturday night?" he asked. "I *promise* to take it easy driving."

"Sure, I'd love to," smiled Pam, who was very certain that this time Tom would keep his promise.