

# LADYKILLER

A Musical Noir

based on Cornell Woolrich's  
"The Bride Wore Black"

Book by  
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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE DETECTIVE

THE MYSTERY WOMAN

MANNING

SHERRY

MURPHY, the Cop

MITCHELL

JOAN BLAINE

THE BARTENDER

COOKIE

MEAD

MRS. MEAD

TWO OUT-OF-TOWNERS (Female)

TWO IN-TOWNERS (Male)

MALDONADO

MISS BLACK

THE YOUNG MAN

THE DETECTIVE'S GIRLFRIEND

PARTY GUESTS, POLICEMEN, CRIME PHOTOGRAPHERS, CORONERS,  
PASSERS-BY, INTERROGATORS

CAST BREAKDOWN

MEN

ACTOR 1  
The Detective

ACTOR 2  
Manning  
Mitchell  
Mead  
Maldonado

ACTOR 3  
Murphy, the Cop  
Party Guest  
Mitchell Double

ACTOR 4  
Cookie

ACTOR 5  
The Bartender  
In-Towner One  
Mead Double

ACTOR 6  
In-Towner Two  
Party Guest  
Maldonado Double

WOMEN

ACTRESS 1  
The Mystery Woman

ACTRESS 2  
Sherry  
Joan Blaine  
Mrs. Mead  
Miss Black

ACTRESS 3  
Party Guest  
Out-of-Towner One  
Mystery Woman Double

ACTRESS 4  
Party Guest  
Out-of-Towner Two  
Mystery Woman Double

ACTRESS 5  
Detective's Girlfriend  
Mystery Woman Double

ACTRESS 6  
Party Guest  
Mystery Woman Double

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Time: 1930s

PROLOGUE

Scene: A CHEAP HOTEL ROOM Late evening.

ACT ONE

Scene 1: A PENTHOUSE IN MANHATTAN A Night in May.  
THE STREET BELOW

Scene 2: A RUN-DOWN RESIDENCE HOTEL The following February.  
A DIVE BAR  
A BOX AT THE OPERA  
A POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM

Scene 3: A HOUSE IN THE SUBURBS The following October.  
A POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM

ACT TWO

Scene 1: AN ART GALLERY The following July.  
AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

Scene 2: A HOUSE IN THE COUNTRY The following April.  
A POLICE INTERROGATION ROOM  
A SUBWAY STATION

EPILOGUE

Scene: A CHEAP HOTEL ROOM Late evening.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

### PROLOGUE

1. "PRELUDE" - (ORCHESTRA)
2. "AGAIN" - (THE DETECTIVE)

### ACT ONE

3. "ONE MORE PARTY" - (ENSEMBLE)
4. "TOP O' THE WORLD" - (MANNING)
5. "ONE MORE KILLING" - (MURPHY, POLICEMEN, DETECTIVE)
6. "CLUE NO. 1" - (DETECTIVE)
7. "GET BACK ON THE BUS" - (JOAN)
8. "BEAUTIFUL" - (BARTENDER)
9. "THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE" - (MITCHELL)
10. "IL LAMENTO DELLA SPOSA" - (PRE-RECORDED)
11. REPRISE: "THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE" - (MITCHELL)
12. "CLUE NO. 2" - (DETECTIVE)
13. "NOTHING AT ALL" - (MEAD, MRS. MEAD)
14. "FUN AND GAMES" - (MEAD)
15. "CLUE NO. 3" - (DETECTIVE)

### ACT TWO

16. "ENTR'ACTE" - (ORCHESTRA)
17. "THE GALLERY SONG" - (ENSEMBLE)
18. "A MALDONADO GIRL" - (MALDONADO)
19. "THAT FACE" - (JOAN, MALDONADO)
20. "THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE" - (DETECTIVE)
21. "WAIT" - (DETECTIVE, ENSEMBLE)
22. "CONFESSION" - (THE MYSTERY WOMAN)
23. INCIDENTAL: "THAT FACE"- (ORCHESTRA)

### EPILOGUE

24. REPRISE: "AGAIN" - (DETECTIVE)

[1] PRELUDE - (Orchestra)

PROLOGUE

Curtain up.

A WOMAN, in full bridal costume, stands center, her back to the audience. The stage darkens.

SOUND: A squeal of brakes, of car tires burning on asphalt. SHE spins around. A set of head-lights sweeps the stage. SHE drops her bouquet at her feet. A splatter of red appears on the apron of her gown.

A WOMAN screams.

A MAN laughs.

Lights up on a MAN at a card table, a cigar sticking out of his mouth. HE pours himself a drink from a bottle on the table. HE laughs at the best joke he's ever heard.

SOUND: Stiletto heels on cement.

Lights up on a MAN, tossing in a hotel bed. A WOMAN lies on the upstage side of the bed, asleep. Red neon through the window: Hotel Lexington.

Lights up on a MAN, lighting two cigarettes with one match. HE takes one out of his mouth, hands it to someone unseen, out of the light.

Lights up on a LITTLE BOY on a tricycle, moving around and around in a circle.

SOUND: A desperate pounding on a thick wooden door.

Lights up on a WOMAN, standing on the balcony of a penthouse with a breathtaking view. SHE

Prologue-2

grips the rail, the wind blows through her hair.

SOUND: The ticking of a clock.

Lights up: A PAINTER, his easel before him. HE sticks up his thumb as a guide and looks at the audience, his subject. HE gasps in complete horror.

Lights up: A MAN and a WOMAN stand center, holding onto each other. The MAN begins to sink into the stage floor, as if in quicksand. The WOMAN releases him. HE grabs at her for support, pulls a black handkerchief off of the bodice of her dress. SHE moves away. A headstone looms up behind him as he sinks lower and lower. HE holds the handkerchief aloft. The WOMAN picks up the bouquet dropped by the BRIDE, places it before him on the stage floor.

Lights up: A MAN lies prone on the stage floor. A WOMAN draws a white sheet over his face.

A MAN screams.

A WOMAN laughs.

SOUND: A screaming police siren.

The MAN in the hotel room whips the sheet off his face, sits bolt upright in bed. HE sucks air into his lungs. HE looks at the WOMAN in bed with him. SHE sleeps. A bolt of lightning illuminates the room for an instant. Then, a roll of thunder. HE puts his feet on the floor, notices HE's holding a black lace handkerchief in his hands. HE holds it to his nose, inhales. Throws it away, takes a cigarette off the night table, lights it.



[2] "AGAIN"

MAN

I'M NO GOOD TONIGHT  
FOR ME OR FOR YOU--  
I'M WORTHLESS TONIGHT--  
I'M SORRY--

I'M HAUNTED TONIGHT  
WHATEVER I DO--  
TORMENTED TONIGHT  
AGAIN--

I THOUGHT IT WOULD WORK--  
I THOUGHT WE'D BE FINE--  
IT'S NOT GONNA WORK--  
I'M SORRY--

YOU AREN'T TO BLAME--  
THE FAULT IS ALL MINE--  
WE'D BETTER NOT TRY  
AGAIN--

(HE moves to the window, looks out. The  
movement awakens his GIRLFRIEND. SHE  
sits up in bed, faces away from him)

A COUPLE OF DRINKS--  
A JOKE AND A LAUGH--  
A GIRL TO DO MY BIDDING--  
A NEW PAIR OF ARMS--  
A SWEET PAIR OF LIPS--  
JUST WHO DO I THINK I'M KIDDING?

SHE'S SOMEWHERE OUT THERE,  
AS SURE AS I'M HERE--  
SHE'S WAITING OUT THERE--  
I KNOW IT--

I'LL FIND HER OUT THERE--  
I SEE IT SO CLEAR--  
I'LL MEET HER OUT THERE  
AGAIN--

(Spoken)

An accident. Period. Nothing more. But there was so much more. She's still following me. Still, nine months after everyone else has put the period at the end of the sentence. There are two life stories on the wrong side of that period. Hers. And mine. The smallest thing reminds me of her. The smell of perfume...

Prologue-4

MAN (Continued)

(Sings)

IT'S ALMOST A YEAR--  
THE STORY IS DONE--  
BUT BOOKS DON'T CLOSE COMPLETELY--  
IT'S COME TO AN END,  
SO I CAN FORGET--  
IF ONLY LIFE WORKED SO NEATLY--  
(to THE GIRL)  
YOU'RE REALLY A SPORT  
TO STAY HERE WITH ME  
AND FACE ONE MORE NIGHT  
OF WAITING--

BUT WHAT CAN I DO?  
I'M HELPLESS TILL SHE  
WALKS INTO MY LIFE  
AGAIN.

(Spoken)

The smell of perfume...

(Another bolt of lightning. It illuminates his GIRLFRIEND, whose back is to us. HE stares into her face, his eyes widening. Another flash of lightning on the other side of the stage illuminates a WOMAN with long blonde hair in full evening dress, but only for an instant. The GIRLFRIEND puts a cigarette to her lips. HE lights a match. At the same time, at the other side of the stage, a match is struck. A hand holds the match to the BLONDE's cigarette. Another flash of lightning illuminates the hotel room, and the lights go to black at that side of the stage. A huge flash on the other side of the stage: A flashbulb. A group portrait)

ALL GUESTS

Here's to the happy couple!

ACT ONE  
Scene 1

A penthouse apartment in New York City. There is a balcony with a breathtaking view. An engagement party is in progress. The happy couple, MANNING and SHERRY, stand center, surrounded by their guests. All glasses are lifted. The WOMAN WITH THE CIGARETTE is seated on a chaise. Her eyes are riveted to MANNING.

A GUEST

May your love stay as strong as it is now for the rest of your lives.

ANOTHER GUEST

Or, at least, until the morning after the honeymoon.

SHERRY

You've made this the most exciting day of my life.

[2] "ONE MORE PARTY"

GUESTS

ONE MORE GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE SHOULD DO IT--  
ONE MORE CANAPÉ, ONE MORE JOKE--  
ONE MORE GLORIOUS BIT OF GOSSIP--  
ONE MORE WHISPER ABOUT WHO'S BROKE--

SHERRY

Who is she?

MANNING

Who?

SHERRY

Who. The blonde who's been boring a hole in you all evening. I've never seen her before in my life. I assumed you knew her.

MANNING

Isn't she a friend of yours?

SHERRY

Well, do something about it.

MANNING

What do you suggest I do? Go over and say, "Stop staring at me?" That'll make it worse.

SHERRY

I don't care what you have to do, just get her out of here.  
This is a shower, not a stag party.

GUESTS

ONE MORE PARTY TO GO FROM THIS ONE--  
ONE MORE PARTY, OR IS IT TWO?  
ONE MORE MARVELOUS DROP OF SLANDER--  
WHO'S BEEN SLEEPING WITH YOU KNOW WHO--

BORED--  
GOD, IT'S TOUGH TO BE BORED--  
TIME ENOUGH TO BE BORED  
WHEN WE'RE ANCIENT AND PUSHING FORTY--

ONE MORE GROPE IN THE MASTER BEDROOM--  
ONE MORE KNIFE IN THE BACK AND THEN  
ONE MORE PARTY TO GO TO FROM THIS ONE--  
ONE MORE CHANCE TO GET DRUNK AGAIN--

MANNING

Do you really think I'd let some fly-by-night blonde stand  
in the way of what we have?

SHERRY

(Skeptically)  
Well...

MANNING

What a thing to be jealous of.

SHERRY

I'm not jealous. I'm nervous. She gives me the creeps.

GUESTS

APPLE SELLERS ON EVERY CORNER--  
ALL ARE COMMUNIST PARTY PLANTS--  
ONE MORE GRIPE ABOUT THIS DEPRESSION  
AND WE'LL MOVE TO THE SOUTH OF FRANCE--

ONE MORE PARTY IS JUST THE TICKET--  
HELPS YOU COPE WITH THE COUNTRY'S ILLS--  
AND SO YOU CAN GET THROUGH THEM SOMEHOW,  
TAKE A LOVER OR TAKE SOME PILLS--

JOE--  
HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT JOE?  
HE LOST ALL OF HIS DOUGH--  
WHAT A PITY--WE LOVED HIS PARTIES--

ONE MORE PASS AT EACH OTHER'S PARTNERS--  
SHOULDN'T SOMEONE BE KEEPING SCORE?  
ONE MORE PARTY TO GO AND THEN IT'S  
ONE MORE PARTY AND--

## GUESTS (Continued)

ONE MORE PARTY AND--  
 ONE MORE PARTY AND  
 THEN  
 ONE  
 MORE!

(The MYSTERY WOMAN exits to the balcony,  
 keeping her eyes on MANNING all the  
 while)

SHERRY

There she goes. Alone on the balcony. Now's your chance,  
 Romeo.

MANNING

You're the only one I'll ever want. Ever need.

SHERRY

Prove it.

MANNING

Watch me.

SHERRY

You do what you have to. I'll be in my room.  
 (SHE grabs one of the GUESTS)  
 Sylvia! Love the dress.

GUEST

Do you? Hubert said, "How much?" I said, "About as much as  
 your affair with Muriel Dedrickson is costing you."

SHERRY

Tell me all about it. Somewhere else. It's too... It's  
 too unstuffy in here. Darling? You have ten minutes.

MANNING

I won't need ten. In five minutes, it'll all be over.

(SHERRY and the GUEST exit. MANNING  
 goes to the bar, fixes himself a drink.  
 HE and the MYSTERY WOMAN stare at each  
 other through the sliding glass doors.  
 MANNING goes out to the balcony.  
 MYSTERY WOMAN turns away from him and  
 looks out at the night. A pause)

MANNING

Nice night.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Perfect.

MANNING

(Overlapping)  
What's the game?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Excuse me?

MANNING

I don't know why you're after what you're after, but it won't work. Not tonight, at least.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Excuse me?

MANNING

At least wait until we're back from the honeymoon, sweetie.  
(Another GUEST comes out onto the balcony)

GUEST

So here's where you've hidden yourself. You're missing it all.

(HE sees the MYSTERY WOMAN)

Oh. Hello.

(SHE turns away from him)

Jack told a good one just now. Guy walks into a bar, see...?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Excuse me, but would you be a dear?

GUEST

For you? Name it.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Would you get me a refill?

GUEST

But your glass is full.

(SHE tilts it over the balcony, hands the glass to the GUEST)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Now it's empty.

(A pause. HE stares at her. HE looks at MANNING)

GUEST

The heiress you're supposed to marry is in the next room. Don't blow it.

(HE exits)

That wasn't very bright. MANNING

I wanted to be alone. MYSTERY WOMAN

You're not alone. MANNING

I will be. MYSTERY WOMAN

Huh? MANNING

He bored me. It's you I'm interested in. MYSTERY WOMAN

MANNING  
But I have to turn you down. That girl in there is my fiancée, for your information. And this is our engagement party. From now on, all that's mine is hers. And vice versa. And this apartment is hers. And this building. And that one. And that one. Well, her father's. It's as good as hers.

(A bolt of lightning. A roll of thunder)

[4] "TOP O' THE WORLD"

MANNING (Continued)

(Sings)

TOP O' THE WORLD--  
THAT'S WHERE I'M STANDING--  
TOP O' THE WORLD--  
GOD, WHAT A SIGHT--

LOOK AT THAT WORLD--  
SEE IT EXPANDING--  
ALL OF IT MINE  
STARTING TONIGHT!

You're pretty sure of yourself. MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't have to be. Everyone else is sure of me. I'm just beginning. And no one stands in my way. MANNING

(Sings)

TOP O' THE TOWN  
IS THE SPOT WHERE I'M LOCATED--  
TOP O' THE LINE  
ARE THE PRIZES I HAVE WON--

MANNING (Continued)

TOP O' THE HEAP  
IS THE PLACE FOR WHICH I'M FATED--  
TOP O' THE CLASS  
IN AMBITION ONE-OH-ONE!

WOULD YOU BELIEVE  
ONCE I WAS NOWHERE?  
LOOK AT ME NOW,  
BANNERS UNFURLED!

YOU CAN BE SURE  
I'M GONNA GO WHERE  
WINNERS BELONG--  
TOP O' THE WORLD!

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'd knock on wood, if I were you.

(SHE takes out a cigarette)

I was sure of myself once, too. I had it all. When I was married...

MANNING

You're married? Strike two, baby.

(HE lights her cigarette)

MYSTERY WOMAN

I was. But things happen. You don't expect them, but they're just 'round the corner, waiting. Everyone has dreams. But sooner or later, the alarm goes off and it's time to wake up. Someone comes along and ruins your dream.

MANNING

TOP O' THE POLE  
IS THE POINT WHERE YOU CAN FIND ME--  
TOP O' THE LIST  
IS RESERVED FOR NUMBER ONE--  
TOP O' THE PEAK  
LEFT THE OTHERS FAR BEHIND ME--  
TOP O' THE MORN  
TO TOMORROW'S RISING SUN!

(HE begins an impromptu dance. HE does a balancing act on the balcony rail. HE swings his legs over and walks along the edge of the terrace. HE holds onto the railing with one hand, swinging his body out into space)

SEE 'EM DOWN THERE,  
ANTS IN A HURRY--  
SEE 'EM DOWN THERE,  
INSECTS GALORE--



MANNING (Continued)

THEY'RE ALL DOWN THERE,  
LOOK AT 'EM SCURRY--  
I AM UP HERE--  
LIVING UP HERE--  
TOP O' THE WORLD! ...

MYSTERY WOMAN

Not anymore.

(SHE stubs out the lit end of the cigarette in his hand. HE lets go of the railing, reacting in pain. Then, HE realizes what HE's done. HE lets out a squeak before HE disappears. SHE grabs the rail and watches him go. The wind blows through her hair. SHE notices SHE's broken a nail)

Damn. That'll take a month to grow back.

(SHE goes back into the room. The GUEST approaches)

GUEST

Your drink.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, why don't you keep it. You'll probably need it.

GUEST

Can't you just...leave him alone.

MYSTERY WOMAN

But we've already made plans. I'm meeting him down on the street.

(SHE laughs and exits. SHERRY re-enters)

GUEST

I think you better take a walk with that future husband of yours. Now, before the future walks off with your husband.

SHERRY

Where is he?

(The GUEST points to the balcony. SHE goes, looks around. The GUEST follows her)

Honey? Sweetie? He's not here. There's no one here. Why is everyone staring at me? Why do I feel so funny?

(SHE goes to the railing, leans over)

GUEST

Don't get upset. He's not worth it, Sherry.

SHERRY

There's a crowd gathering in the street.

(SHE gasps)

GUEST

What is it?

SHERRY

Over there. A spider. It frightened me.

(The GUEST moves downstage, inspects)

GUEST

Nothing to be afraid of. No spider. Just this: a handkerchief.

(HE leans down, pulls up a corner of a huge white sheet. A bright flash of lightning. A huge crack of thunder. Then, SOUND: A screaming police siren. TWO POLICEMEN enter. Each takes a corner of the sheet. Another bright flash: A POLICE PHOTOGRAPHER has entered and takes a flash photo of what lies beneath the sheet. The GUEST leads SHERRY over to take a look. SHE buries her head in his shoulder)

[5] "ONE MORE KILLING"

POLICEMEN

ONE MORE SHOT OF THE CORPSE SHOULD DO IT--  
ONE MORE PICTURE TO TAKE AND THEN  
WE'LL GET BACK TO IMPORTANT BUSINESS--  
GET RIGHT BACK TO OUR DRINKS AGAIN--

(MURPHY, a cop, steps forward)

MURPHY

ONE MORE MEASUREMENT FOR THE RECORD--  
HE LOOKS GOOD FOR THE SHAPE HE'S IN--  
ONE MORE FINGERPRINT - BETTER HURRY,  
RIGOR MORTIS WILL SOON BEGIN--

(The MAN FROM THE HOTEL ROOM, a  
DETECTIVE, steps forward)

DETECTIVE

STIFFS--  
GOD, I'M TIRED OF STIFFS--  
WITH NO BUTS AND NO IFS--  
SHOULD HAVE GONE IN ANOTHER BUSINESS--

POLICEMEN, MURPHY &  
DETECTIVE

LOTS OF MURDERS IN THIS OLD CITY--  
HOPE THAT SOMEONE IS KEEPING SCORE--  
ONE MORE KILLING TO GO AND THEN IT'S  
ONE MORE KILLING AND--

POLICEMEN, MURPHY &  
DETECTIVE (Continued)

ONE MORE KILLING AND--  
ONE MORE KILLING AND  
THEN  
ONE  
MORE!

MURPHY  
Can you think, ma'am? Any reason why?

SHERRY  
Why what? I'm sorry...

MURPHY  
Why he did it?

SHERRY  
Did what? You can't mean... it was our engagement party,  
for God's sake! This time next week I was to be his bride.  
I'll still be walking down the aisle of the chapel, but not  
in white... in black...  
(SHE spins around, in tears, into the  
arms of the DETECTIVE)

DETECTIVE  
What the hell are you trying to do, Murphy? Talk her into  
doing the same?

MURPHY  
No choice, Sarge. No relatives.

DETECTIVE  
He had friends, didn't he? Use your head.

MURPHY  
What's eating you?

DETECTIVE  
Some guy's stock drops a point, and he decides to off  
himself all over Park Avenue. A woman on the West Side shot  
herself and her six kids at the breakfast table this  
morning. All I could think was, how's the husband gonna  
afford all those funerals? Nothing gets to me anymore,  
Murphy.

(A POLICEMAN comes over to them)

POLICEMAN  
We got some kind of a lead, Sarge. Probably nothing. Seems  
some dame was the last to see him. Came late. Left early.  
Left a calling card, too.  
(HE gives the DETECTIVE a black lace  
handkerchief. The DETECTIVE sniffs)

I-1-14

DETECTIVE

Hmmmm. Perfume. Recognize it?

MURPHY

Not me. My wife uses the stuff from the vending machine in the ladies room at the 96th Street I.R.T.

SHERRY

Nemesis. Fifty dollars an ounce.

DETECTIVE

Nemesis... You know who we're talking about.

SHERRY

The blonde. She was at the party.

DETECTIVE

What was her name?

SHERRY

I'd never seen her before. Neither had he. She hadn't been invited. That's all I know.

DETECTIVE

Nemesis...

(HE steps downstage. ALL exit)

[6] "CLUE NO. 1"

(Sings)

A HANDKERCHIEF--LACE--  
A HANDKERCHIEF--BLACK--  
A NAME AND A FACE  
ARE ALL THAT I LACK--  
A CERTAIN PERFUME--  
A SCENT IN THE AIR--  
A GIRL IN A ROOM,  
AND NOW SHE IS--WHERE?

(Spoken)

The case went in the books: Possible murder. Witnesses: none. Motive: unknown. Case unsolved. Period.

(A WOMAN, JOAN BLAINE, enters. Lights fade on the DETECTIVE. SHE picks the white sheet up off the stage floor. The BODY is gone. SHE shakes it out, wraps it around the edges of a bed)

ACT ONE  
Scene 2

A residence hotel room, third-rate. The most noticeable feature in the room is an entire wall of framed resume pictures, all of them women. Also evident is a large coin-operated gas meter, with a wide pipe that runs along the ceiling. JOAN mutters under her breath as SHE straightens up the room.

JOAN

A pig in a sty. Kicks the sheets off the bed. Leaves everything every which way. Leaves it all to me, the bum.

(SHE finishes making the bed, picks up some papers lying on the floor, stuffs them into a wastebasket. SHE circles the room, tossing things into the basket, emptying ashtrays, etc. SHE opens the door to the room to get rid of the basket. The MYSTERY WOMAN stands there, a scarf around her hair, sunglasses over her eyes. JOAN jumps)

You trying to kill me?!

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry. Is this...? Is Mr. Mitchell here?

JOAN

Who are you?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry, this is the address I was given. I thought this was... Is this his office?

JOAN

As close to an office as he'll ever get. What's this about?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Are you his secretary?

JOAN

No.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Well, is his secretary in? I'd rather not leave a message with the maid.

JOAN

Look at this joint. Does this look like the type of place offers daily maid service? I'll set you straight. This is his office, his town residence, his board rooms, his country estate. And I am his maid, his secretary, his accountant, his mother, his... You fill in the blank.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I see. You're his... You're Mrs. Mitchell?

JOAN

All of the above, except. I'm his G. F. Girl Friend. Girl Friday. And Monday. And Wednesday. So, what's the score? You come for Tuesday and Thursday?

MYSTERY WOMAN

No, Mr. Mitchell and I haven't even met. Would it be all right if I came in?

JOAN

Sure. I'm warning you, though. There's some kind of dangerous gas in the air makes you want to stay. That's the only reason I can think of for my being here. Go ahead, scrape off a chair and sit down.

MYSTERY WOMAN

If you don't mind... I like to get the feel of a place.

JOAN

Sure. Feel all you want. Let me know when your skin starts to crawl.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I want a job.

JOAN

So does the girl with the matches you passed on your way in.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry. If I've come at a bad time...

JOAN

Honey, if you wanna wait for a good time, you'll be out in the hallway till they tear the building down. I'm sorry, too. Got a cigarette?

(MYSTERY WOMAN gives her one)

Got a quarter? Seventeen degrees outside, the bum didn't even leave me a quarter for the gas meter.

(MYSTERY WOMAN gives her one)

Go ahead, just drop it in the slot.

(MYSTERY WOMAN moves to the gas meter)

So, what's your story?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Well, I'm from out of town...

JOAN

No kidding.

MYSTERY WOMAN

And I saw Mr. Mitchell's name in the trade papers. I thought we could meet... I need representation.

JOAN

Does this look like the room of an established theatrical agent? I'll tell you what happens. He'll come back, promise to make you an overnight sensation, and in a month you'll be picking up his laundry. I know whereof I speak. I am also under Mr. Mitchell's representation. And I live better than he does. In fact, I'm thinking right now I'd be better off with you as my agent. At least you got me a quarter and a cigarette.

MYSTERY WOMAN

All these pictures! Does Mr. Mitchell represent all of these woman as well?

JOAN

Maybe one. The rest are just pretend. For the benefit of yourself. Some he handled way back when in the good old day. Times got rough, he couldn't do nothing for them, they moved on. Or moved out.

MYSTERY WOMAN

There's a certain feeling in this room, though. A good feeling; don't get me wrong. That's a lovely painting.

JOAN

Yeah? It's been there so long, I don't even notice it.

MYSTERY WOMAN

It's an original Maldonado. Expensive.

JOAN

Baloney. If it was worth anything at all, it woulda been hocked by now.

MYSTERY WOMAN

It's so mysterious. So full of romance. Is Mr. Mitchell very romantic?

JOAN

Mitch? Oh, sure. He's as romantic as the world is square.

MYSTERY WOMAN

He's fond of opera, I see. Another sign of the romantic.

JOAN

Romance? He sits in that chair, listening to a beat-up record of a woman with a thyroid condition scream her lungs out while I sit on the window-sill watching the traffic from the Chinese restaurant across the way, trying to figure where my life went wrong. Two cigarettes in the dark.

(MYSTERY WOMAN brings a stepladder over to the wall of pictures)

What are you doing?

MYSTERY WOMAN

This picture. Top row. Looks just like a friend of mine from back home.

(SHE climbs the ladder to get a better view)

JOAN

Judy James, professional name. She dumped Mitch a few years ago for some hot-shot youngster. He used her up faster than a book of matches in a windstorm. She dime-a-danced it for a bit to make ends meet. Then she waited for a green light and walked out into the rush hour traffic. Poor Judy. How good a friend was she?

MYSTERY WOMAN

No, I'm mistaken.

(SHE comes down off the stepladder)

JOAN

So, what is it you do, honey? Singer?

MYSTERY WOMAN

No.

JOAN

Actress?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I can do several things. Sort of a specialty act, really.

JOAN

I'm telling you, he can't do nothing for you. Couldn't do nothing for me, couldn't do nothing for them. Take off those sunglasses, honey, so I can get a look at you.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'd rather wait for Mr. Mitchell, if you don't mind.

[7] "GET BACK ON THE BUS"

JOAN

YOU'RE HER TO FIND AN AGENT  
WHO WILL HELP YOU WIN SOME FAME--  
THIS AGENT OR ANOTHER, KID,  
THEY'RE REALLY ALL THE SAME--



JOAN (Continued)

THEY'LL GIVE YOU SOME ADVICE  
FOR THAT OLD TEN PERCENTAGE FEE,  
BUT NONE OF IT WILL BE AS GOOD AS MINE--  
AND MINE IS FREE!

(SHE rips off the MYSTERY WOMAN's  
sunglasses. MYSTERY WOMAN turns away  
from her)

GET BACK ON THE BUS--  
GET BACK ON THE TRAIN--  
WHEREVER YOU'RE FROM, MY FRIEND,  
IS WHERE YOU OUGHTA REMAIN--

GET BACK TO THAT TOWN--  
THAT TOWN YOU WON'T MISS--  
IT MAY BE DULL AS HELL,  
BUT DULL IS BETTER THAN THIS!

GO BACK TO THE BOY NEXT DOOR  
WHERE EVERY NICE GIRL BELONGS--  
IT'S BETTER WITH MISTER HALF-WAY RIGHT  
THAN ALL OF THESE MISTER WRONGS--

GO HOME AND HAVE KIDS--  
GO HOME AND GET FAT--  
IT BEATS ANY FAIRYTALE CAREER,  
I PROMISE YOU THAT--

SO JUST AS QUICKLY AS YOU CAN,  
WITHOUT A FUSS,  
BE SMARTER THAN I EVER WAS--  
GET BACK ON THE BUS!

YOU WANTED TO SING--  
YOU WANTED TO ACT--  
YOU'D LIKE TO BE LYNN FONTANNE  
OR ETHEL MERMAN, IN FACT--

YOU'LL CONQUER NEW YORK--  
YOU'LL MEET EVERY TEST--  
THIS TOWN'S GONNA CHEW YOU UP  
AND SPIT YOU OUT LIKE THE REST--

SO MARRY THE BOY NEXT DOOR--  
HE MAY NOT BE CARY GRANT,  
BUT HE'LL GIVE YOU THINGS YOU REALLY NEED  
THAT ALL OF THESE BASTARDS CAN'T--

YOU'RE ONLY A FACE--  
ONE FACE IN THE CROWD--  
IS THAT WHAT YOU REALLY WANNA BE,  
FOR CRYING OUT LOUD?

JOAN (Continued)

TAKE THIS ADVICE BEFORE YOU JOIN  
THE LIKES OF US--

(SHE indicates the pictures on the wall)

WE'RE WHISP'RING SWEETLY IN YOUR EAR--  
LISTEN HARD AND YOU WILL HEAR  
WORDS SO SOFT, YET OH SO CLEAR:  
GET BACK ON THE BUS!

MYSTERY WOMAN

They all have red hair, you ever notice that?

JOAN

Huh?

MYSTERY WOMAN

All in soft focus, too. All in costume. Look. This one:  
peering from behind a fan. This: looking over her shoulder.  
This one: a silhouette. They're all... women of mystery.

JOAN

Have you got a hearing impairment?

MYSTERY WOMAN

These tell me more about Mr. Mitchell than anything else.

JOAN

And what's that?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Well, they show who he's looking for. And I don't mean  
professionally. He obviously hasn't found her yet, or there  
wouldn't be so many pictures. In fact, there wouldn't be  
one. This is his dream...his ideal.

JOAN

And who's that?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Well, I said: Red hair...

JOAN

I'm a blonde.

(A pause)

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry... I didn't mean...

JOAN

Look. He's gonna walk through that door in a minute. Take  
my advice. Or don't. I don't give a damn.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No. No, I'll go. I'm sorry if I said anything...

JOAN

Nothing I didn't know already.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'll give him a call and arrange a meeting. I'll need to... put myself together first. I'd like to bring him something. What sort of wine does he like?

JOAN

Scotch. He doesn't drink wine.

MYSTERY WOMAN

He doesn't like wine?

JOAN

I don't know if he likes it or not. He won't drink it. Bring scotch.

(MYSTERY WOMAN exits)

And maybe a little cyanide in it. Then he and me can drink a toast to our future.

(JOAN sits on the bed, looks at the pictures)

So that's who you want, is it?

(A pause)

Who is she?

(Lights fade on JOAN. Lights up on the DETECTIVE, seated at a bar, his GIRLFRIEND from the first scene on the stool next to him, her back to the audience)

DETECTIVE

Who is she? But who cared anymore? Nine months had gone by. The case was still unsolved, but nobody was wearing himself out trying to solve it. Not even me. I was mailing away for brochures: "How To Repair an Automobile," "How To Raise Livestock," "How To Do Anything But Be a Cop Anymore." This is the bar Mitchell was in. Same bar. He was seated over there, at that end.

(Lights up on MITCHELL, seated at the other end of the bar)

BARTENDER

Another?

MITCHELL

Why the hell not?

BARTENDER

None of my business, but you been here three hours now.

I-2-22

MITCHELL

Look, you find something better for me to do, and I'll do it.

BARTENDER

Sorry, Mr. Mitchell.

DETECTIVE

She must've tailed him. Knew his routine. Every night he had a Rob Roy at five-thirty on the nose. She made her move. She met him here.

(The MYSTERY WOMAN enters. A spotlight hits only her eyes. SHE has long red hair and a scarf wrapped around the bottom half of her face)

The bartender remembered.

[8] "BEAUTIFUL"

BARTENDER

SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL--  
I MEAN BEAUTIFUL--  
NOT GOOD LOOKING OR CLASSY,  
OR HAS A NICE CHASSIS,  
OR ONE OF THOSE WORDS THAT WE USE  
WHEN WE REALLY MEAN BEAUTIFUL--

INSTEAD, WE MIGHT SAY  
THAT SHE'D REALLY STOP TRAFFIC--  
SOME GUYS THAT I KNOW  
WOULD BE EVEN MORE GRAPHIC--  
I ONCE HEARD A WORD  
THAT WOULD SUIT HER--"SERAPHIC"--  
BUT ME--  
I SAY BEAUTIFUL!

(Spoken)

What else could you wanna know? You work in a dump like this for any length of time, you remember someone like that.

DETECTIVE

How tall?

BARTENDER

I dunno. Five-eight. Five-ten. With an entrance like that, she looked to be seven-foot-five.

DETECTIVE

Hair?

BARTENDER

Red. God, red. It was like... heat. Long, flowing warmth down her shoulders. Like the embers of a fire just dying out. Like a ruby looked at through candlelight.

DETECTIVE

You're a damn poet.

BARTENDER

Hell, man. She was the kind of woman poems are written about.

(Sings)

SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL--  
AS IN "BEAUTIFUL"--  
I'VE SEEN DAMES, EACH A KNOCKOUT,  
THAT I'D NEVER LOCK OUT,  
BUT NONE OF 'EM EVEN CAME CLOSE  
TO WHAT I WOULD CALL BEAUTIFUL--

I GUESS EVERY GUY HAS  
A SORT OF A VISION--  
SOME FANTASY HE CAN DESCRIBE  
WITH PRECISION--  
THE KIND THAT MAKES LEAVING YOUR WIFE  
NO DECISION  
AT ALL--  
NOW, THAT'S BEAUTIFUL!

(The MYSTERY WOMAN approaches the BARTENDER)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Would you give this to Mr. Mitchell, please?

BARTENDER

Excuse me? (To the DETECTIVE:) I'd caught a whiff of her. That perfume! I thought I was gonna wet my pants. Or propose. Or both.

(The DETECTIVE gives him the black lace handkerchief)

DETECTIVE

This refresh your memory?

(The BARTENDER sniffs it)

BARTENDER

My God. You know her? Listen, just her number, that's all...

MYSTERY WOMAN

Well, would you?

BARTENDER

I'm sorry, ma'am?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Would you give him this for me, please?  
(SHE hands the BARTENDER an envelope)

BARTENDER

Whatever you say, lady.

MYSTERY WOMAN

And this is for you. You've been very kind.  
(SHE turns and exits)

BARTENDER

A twenty dollar bill. She knew how to leave an impression.  
(Sings)

I'M TELLING YOU TRUE,  
OR MY NAME ISN'T SWEENEY,  
THIS RED-HEADED GIRL  
WAS AS LOVELY AS SIN--  
AS LOVELY AS DRINKING  
AN ICE-COLD MARTINI  
THAT'S ONE PART VERMOUTH  
AND FIFTEEN PARTS GIN--

I'VE SEEN BEAUTIFUL--  
I KNOW BEAUTIFUL--  
BUT AN ITEMIZED RUNDOWN  
WOULD TAKE UNTIL SUNDOWN--  
SUFFICIENT TO SAY THAT SHE GIVES  
A NEW MEANING TO "BEAUTIFUL"--

IF I EVER THOUGHT  
SHE AND I COULD BE PALLY,  
I'D ROB MY BOSS BLIND  
AND SAIL WITH HER TO BALI,  
AND THINK IT WAS WORTH IT  
WHEN GOD CAME TO TALLY  
THE SCORE--  
CAUSE (FOR)  
SHE--  
WAS--  
BEAUTIFUL!

DETECTIVE

What was it she gave you?

BARTENDER

How should I know? She gimme an envelope. I'm no snoop.  
She give it to me, and I gave it to him.  
(HE moves to MITCHELL)

Mr. Mitchell?

MITCHELL

What's this?

BARTENDER

For you.

MITCHELL

I told you, I'll pay you at the end of the week.

BARTENDER

No, sir. It's not a bill. The lady left it for you.

MITCHELL

What lady?

BARTENDER

Geez, you must really be drunk. Blind drunk.

(MITCHELL leaves the bar. Lights out on the BARTENDER. MITCHELL goes back to his room. HE opens the envelope, takes out a ticket)

DETECTIVE

A ticket to the opera. And a box seat, no less.

MITCHELL

Who was she?

DETECTIVE

He puzzled it out. Couldn't be his girlfriend, playing a trick...

MITCHELL

She wouldn't know an opera if she fell over it.

DETECTIVE

For that night's performance.

MITCHELL

She wouldn't know "Fledermaus" if it bit her in the neck.  
(HE laughs)

DETECTIVE

Opening night of Caccini's rarely performed "La Sposa Vedova."

MITCHELL

She thinks Flagstad is a town in Arizona!  
(HE laughs)

DETECTIVE

He'd been thinking about it all week, and couldn't expect to afford to go. But now...

MITCHELL & DETECTIVE

Who was she?

(Lights out on the DETECTIVE. MITCHELL moves to the pictures on the wall)

MITCHELL

Is it you? Finally, after all these years? Will you be there for me, waiting, tonight at eight o'clock?

[9] "THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE"

(Sings)

THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE  
WERE NEVER IN MY LIFE,  
IN EVERY DREAM I'VE EVER HAD,  
BUT NEVER IN MY LIFE--

I KNEW EACH ONE SO WELL,  
AND EACH ONE HAD A CLAIM--  
ALL VERY DIFF'RENT,  
YET SO VERY MUCH THE SAME--

THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE  
WERE NEVER REALLY HERE--  
THEY CAME TO ME SO EASILY,  
AND THEN WOULD DISAPPEAR--

THEY OVERWHELMED ME  
WITH THEIR MULTITUDE, THAT'S TRUE--  
BUT NOW I KNOW  
THAT EVERY WOMAN IN MY LIFE  
WAS YOU.

[10] "IL LAMENTO DELLA SPOSA" - (SFX: Pre-recorded)

(HE turns on the Victrola. A faded recording of a soprano singing a Baroque recitative and aria begins. The doorbell rings. HE runs to it, stops before throwing it open)

MITCHELL

Who is it?

JOAN

It's me. Who the hell else would it be?

MITCHELL

Joan?

JOAN

No, Judge Crater. Open the damn door, Come on, it's Wednesday night. We go to "China Song" on Wednesday night.

MITCHELL

I can't tonight.

JOAN

Why not? Come on, lemme in. I'll pay.



MITCHELL

I'm sick. I've got that thing that's going around. I don't want you to get it.

JOAN

Oh hell, Mitch. I had my heart set on fried rice. Well, come on, lemme in anyways. I'll fix you up.

MITCHELL

Go on home, Joan. I'll take you to "China Song" tomorrow.

JOAN

Come on, you know how you are when you're sick. You need somebody to whine to.

MITCHELL

What does it take to get through to you? Go home. I don't want you here.

JOAN

Son of a bitch. You don't deserve me, you know that?

(A pause)

Well, I'll be home if you need me.

MITCHELL

(Looking at his watch)

Quarter to eight! I'll never make it.

(HE rips at his clothes.)

Blackout.

The thin sounds of the Victrola transform into the rich sounds of a live performance. A HAND, holding a flashlight, pokes through a curtain. It illuminates a chair in the opera box. MITCHELL comes through the curtain. HE sits in the illuminated chair. The flashlight disappears.

MITCHELL is seated next to the MYSTERY WOMAN, visible in the light from the stage. HE gasps. SHE looks at him, smiles, looks back at the performance in progress.

Lights up on the DETECTIVE, seated behind them in the box. His GIRLFRIEND pushes the curtain aside, leans against the entrance to the box)

DETECTIVE

The meeting. It happened here.

(MYSTERY WOMAN takes out a cigarette.  
MITCHELL lights it for her. His hand  
shakes. SHE holds it steady)

He thought he was lighting a cigarette. He lit the fuse.  
His favorite opera was being performed that night, and I'll  
bet he didn't hear a note.

MITCHELL

I don't think you can smoke...

MYSTERY WOMAN

I do what I want.

(SHE leans forward in her chair, starts  
to take off her stole. HE helps her out  
of it. Obviously, the perfume is  
strong. HE closes his eyes, his head  
rolls back)

DETECTIVE

No one really knows what went on here. The usherette didn't  
remember seating her. They were in a private box, no one  
around them. The usherette returned to the theatre after  
the second intermission, and the box was empty. Only one  
thing was sure: in less than four hours, me and Mr. Mitchell  
were finally gonna be face to face. Only his eyes wouldn't  
see. Wouldn't even blink.

(Lights focus on MYSTERY WOMAN's eyes.  
SHE blinks. MITCHELL takes a deep  
breath. Looks at her)

MITCHELL

There's something I must ask you...

(A long pause)

DETECTIVE

Slowly, she turned.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Your place?

(HE beams.

Blackout.

The music of the opera fades. Lights up  
on MITCHELL's room. MITCHELL enters,  
looks around. HE drops a quarter in the  
gas meter, turns it up full. A hiss of  
steam, and MYSTERY WOMAN appears in the  
doorway. SHE holds a brown paper bag)

MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't like to be kept waiting.

MITCHELL

I'm sorry. It's cold in here. I wanted to get a little heat going.

MYSTERY WOMAN

But I'm here. I'll keep you warm.

(SHE takes off her scarf, knots it around his neck)

Better?

(SHE smiles at him. Takes out a cigarette. HE takes it out of her mouth, takes one for himself. HE lights them both with one match, hands hers back)

MITCHELL

I'm sorry about the looks of the place...

MYSTERY WOMAN

A bed. A door. What more do we need?

(HE moves to a table, turns on a lamp. SHE moves to the window, pulls down the shade. SHE goes to the table, turns off the lamp.)

Slowly, SHE takes off her gloves, leaves them on the back of a chair. HE takes off his jacket, removes his tie, leaves her scarf around his neck. SHE takes the pins out of her hair, shakes her head, letting her hair fall around her shoulders)

MITCHELL

Tell me about you.

MYSTERY WOMAN

There's nothing you need to know, really.

MITCHELL

I need to know everything!

MYSTERY WOMAN

Such as?

MITCHELL

Oh... I don't know. Where are you from?

MYSTERY WOMAN

It's unimportant.

MITCHELL

How long have you been in the city?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Too long.

MITCHELL

What does that mean?

MYSTERY WOMAN

The city hasn't treated me well at all.

MITCHELL

Nor me. But that seems to be changing now. Somebody up there is watching out for me. I've found my guardian angel.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Or something like that.

MITCHELL

What brought you here?

(A pause)

A fella?

(A long silence)

I see. What happened? He leave you at the altar?

(SHE turns her back on him. A long pause. HE moves to the sideboard, takes two glasses. HE reaches for the paper bag. SHE holds it away from him, takes the glasses out of his hand. SHE turns her back on him as SHE opens the bottle and pours. HE lights two candles. SHE returns with the glasses)

MYSTERY WOMAN

A toast?

MITCHELL

Oh. Yes. To the beginning.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No. To the end. I've found what I'm looking for.

MITCHELL

Oh, yes.

(THEY clink glasses and drink. SHE watches him. HE smiles at her. SHE moves away from him, goes to the wall of pictures. HE takes another sip from his glass, comes up behind her, puts his arms around her. HE upsets her glass, it spills down the front of her dress.

HE takes a handkerchief out of his pocket, starts to wipe off the spill. SHE takes the handkerchief away from him, swats his hand)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Don't rush me.

MITCHELL

It's the wine. It's gotten me in more trouble than I care to go into. I almost got married once, thanks to a woman in a low-cut dress and a bottle of wine. I lost my driver's license one night after a binge. I didn't want to drive, but none of us were in any shape...

(SHE stares at him)

Sorry. Nerves. Whenever you're ready, so am I. My life is in your hands.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Just give me some time. I need to work myself up first.

(SHE gets the wine bottle, pours him another glass)

MITCHELL

You're asking for trouble.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I just want to enjoy myself.

(SHE moves around the room. SHE goes to a shelf, looks at the bric-a-brac. SHE picks something up. Smiles at him. SHE moves slowly to the bed, picks up a note from the night table. HE snatches it out of her hands)

Who's Joan?

MITCHELL

No one.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No one left you a note.

MITCHELL

She... she comes in to clean. Like a maid.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You maid signs her notes "Love"?

MITCHELL

She's nobody. Not anymore. From now on, there's only you. When they write my life story, you'll be the most important thing in it.

(SHE sits on the bed. Puts her feet up. Lies down. HE sits beside her. Strokes her hair. SHE reaches over, clicks off the lamp on the night table. SHE fingers his shirt, starts to undo the buttons)

MYSTERY WOMAN

I've brought you something.

MITCHELL

What more can you bring me? You've given me everything.

MYSTERY WOMAN

A present. This night is important to me.

(SHE gets up, goes to her purse. SHE takes out a small framed photograph)

I want to be here. Always. I want to be on your wall with all those other women.

MITCHELL

Tonight, they all come down. I told you: only you, just you. It's all I'll ever need.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No, they can stay. But I want to be on top.

(SHE pulls the stepladder over, climbs up)

Here, above them all, looking down.

(The stepladder wobbles. SHE gasps)

MITCHELL

Careful!

(HE runs over to the stepladder, holds it steady. HE climbs up on the stepladder with her)

Let me do that.

[11] REPRISE: "THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE"

(Sings)

I KNEW EACH ONE SO WELL  
AND EACH ONE HAD A CLAIM--  
ALL VERY DIFF'RENT,  
YET SO VERY MUCH THE SAME--

(SHE hands him the picture. THEY hold each other. As HE sings, SHE takes the ends of the scarf, ties them in a knot around the gas pipe that runs along the ceiling. Then, SHE slowly moves down off the stepladder onto the floor.

SHE turns on the Victrola. The familiar aria once again plays in counterpoint)

## MITCHELL (Continued)

THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE  
WERE NEVER IN MY LIFE--  
A FANTASY NOT MEANT TO BE,  
NOT EVER IN MY LIFE--

A THOUSAND FACES  
THAT HAVE BLENDED INTO ONE--  
AND NOW MY SEARCH  
FOR ALL THE WOMEN IN MY LIFE  
IS DONE.

(HE feels the scarf around his neck. HE looks up, sees it tied around the gas pipe. HE looks back at her. SHE kicks the stepladder out from underneath him. HE swings around wildly, kicking his legs. HE kicks some of the pictures off the wall.)

The aria ends, but the Victrola pops and hisses as the needle reaches the last grooves and the record continues to spin. There is a furious pounding at the door. The MYSTERY WOMAN jumps)

## JOAN

(Off)

Come on, Mitch, it's me. Open up.

(MITCHELL's eyes widen. HE stretches his arms out towards the door. MYSTERY WOMAN grabs the picture out of his hands.)

Mitch, I know you're there. Don't be a baby.

(MITCHELL kicks his legs into the wall. MYSTERY WOMAN moves around the apartment, gathering her things)

What the hell are you doing in there? Come on, come on, open up.

(MYSTERY WOMAN opens the door. MITCHELL stops swinging, hangs motionless)

## MYSTERY WOMAN

What are you doing here?

## JOAN

Well, I'll be. As if I shouldn't ask you the same question. You work fast, sweetie. I'll give you that.

## MYSTERY WOMAN

Listen to me.

JOAN

He told me he was sick, so I came over with some chicken soup. I didn't know that all he needed to feel better was a tomato.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Shut up and listen to what I have to tell you.

JOAN

Not until I've given Mr. Mitchell some general idea of what I think of him and where he can go.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You're too late. He just arrived.

JOAN

Get outta my way.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm doing this for your own good. I have nothing against you.

JOAN

I don't get you, Sister. But I'm coming in.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Mitchell's dead and I killed him.

(SHE goes out the door, pushing JOAN out of the way. SHE slams the door behind her)

(Off)

Now no one can get in.

(The door is kicked open and an army comes in. POLICEMEN, PHOTOGRAPHERS, A CORONER. A MAN dusts for fingerprints. JOAN re-enters, sits on the bed, is questioned by MURPHY, the cop. The DETECTIVE enters, slowly looks around the room. Stares at the body for a moment. Goes up to MURPHY)

DETECTIVE

One question. Why'd you call me all the way down here? This isn't my precinct.

MURPHY

Just a hunch, I guess. It reminded me of that case you were working on a few months back. That high society murder thing. Now I'm not so sure...

DETECTIVE

It was her. She was here. I can smell her in the room. Good instincts, Murphy.



MURPHY

On the surface, maybe. No motive, a mysterious woman, the whole bit. But why him?

DETECTIVE

Who was he?

MURPHY

Nobody. That's just it. With that penthouse guy, you could think she had a thing about money. You know, maybe she resented the rich. But this guy... well, just look at this dump. It tells you everything you need to know about him. And look at him. He's got newspaper stuffed in the holes in his shoes. And this time she left a witness. This is Joan Blaine. The deceased's... uh...

JOAN

Yeah, I was the lucky winner. Widow-ette, I guess you would call me. At least I won't have to fight any more about making our relationship legal.

DETECTIVE

Had you ever seen this woman before?

JOAN

Well, actually, I had. She was here a couple of days ago. Asking questions.

MURPHY

And yet you said he had never met her.

JOAN

That's right.

DETECTIVE

How can you be so sure?

JOAN

Honey, look at me. If he knew this dame, would he be hanging around with me?

(A pause. SHE looks at the corpse)

Bad choice of words.

DETECTIVE

Can you describe her?

JOAN

Cute, I'd call her. You'd call her gorgeous.

DETECTIVE

Eyes?

JOAN

Green.

Yeah, that fits.

MURPHY

Go on.

DETECTIVE

Red hair. Long.

JOAN

Well, I guess that rules you out. Your dame was blonde, wasn't she?

MURPHY

Murphy, what color is your wife's hair?

DETECTIVE

My wife? Blonde.

MURPHY

Yeah, every two weeks your wife is blonde.

DETECTIVE

Oh, I gotcha.

MURPHY

Any idea how tall?

DETECTIVE

Oh, five-ten at the least.

JOAN

How do you know?

DETECTIVE

Well, I'm five-eight, and she was at least two inches taller than me.

JOAN

Sorry, Strike Two. Your girl was described as five-six, wasn't she?

MURPHY

I'm sorry, Miss Blaine. Would you mind standing up?

DETECTIVE

(SHE stands)

Well, now, you can't be five-eight. I'm five-nine, and you're taller than me.

MURPHY

Miss Blaine, would you mind taking off your shoes?

DETECTIVE

(SHE does)

MURPHY

Oh, I get it...

DETECTIVE

God, Murphy, you must need directions to take a leak.

(A POLICEMAN unties MITCHELL from the pipe. THEY lay him on the floor. MURPHY and the DETECTIVE go over and stare down at him)

MURPHY

So what's the connection? I don't get it.

DETECTIVE

Neither do I.

MURPHY

Wait a minute. What was the name of your uptown guy?

DETECTIVE

Manning.

MURPHY

This guy was Mitchell. Maybe she's going through the phone book.

DETECTIVE

Good deduction, Murphy. Maybe you're next. Did she leave anything behind?

MURPHY

Well, the murder weapon.

(HE points to the scarf. The DETECTIVE bends down, unties it. HE puts it to his nose, inhales deeply)

DETECTIVE

It was her. She was here.

MURPHY

And this. She must've left in a hurry.

(HE hands the DETECTIVE a pair of arm-length black gloves. The DETECTIVE steps forward. Lights fade in MITCHELL's room)

DETECTIVE

The case went in the books as unsolved. If only we could dig up a motive, anything that made sense. Robbery? She bought out an entire box at the Met just to get him alone. Revenge? She'd never seen either of these men before.

DETECTIVE (Continued)

Killing just for the fun of it, maybe? She had the perfect opportunity to murder the girlfriend, too. She passed it by.

(HE holds one of the gloves against his hand. Entwines his fingers with the fingers of the glove)

Such small, delicate hands. Capable of so much.

[12] "CLUE NO. 2"

(Sings)

A HANDKERCHIEF--LACE--  
A HANDKERCHIEF--BLACK--  
A NAME AND A FACE  
ARE ALL THAT I LACK--  
A CERTAIN PERFUME--  
A SCENT IN THE AIR--  
A GIRL IN A ROOM,  
AND NOW SHE IS--WHERE?

A SCARF THAT SHE TIES  
AROUND HER SLIM THROAT--  
BLACK GLOVES AND GREEN EYES--  
DETECTIVE, TAKE NOTE--  
YOU DON'T KNOW THE WHO,  
THE WHERE OR THE WHEN--  
BUT THIS GIRL'S NOT THROUGH--  
SHE'LL DO IT AGAIN!

(Spoken)

In the meantime, I tried to follow up leads. Leads that turned up nothing. Leads that led me around in a circle. Around and around in a circle.

(Lights out on the DETECTIVE)

ACT ONE  
Scene 3

Lights up on a LITTLE BOY. HE sits on a tricycle, and HE pedals around and around in a circle. HE stops. HE turns around, pedals in a circle in the other direction. HE gets off the tricycle, picks up a large rubber ball. Bounces it a few times, kicks it offstage. A pause, and it rolls back on. HE turns his back and walks away. Turns around, kicks the ball offstage again. A pause, and it bounces back on again. HE kicks it again. A pause, and the MYSTERY WOMAN enters, holding the ball. SHE wears dark glasses and has a scarf over her hair.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Is this yours, little boy?

LITTLE BOY

What do you think?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I think it is.

(A pause)

You shouldn't kick it out into the middle of the street like that. That's how accidents happen. What's your name?

LITTLE BOY

Cookie.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't have any cookies. Would you like some candy?

LITTLE BOY

Cookie is my name. Stupid.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I'm sorry, Cookie. Would you like some candy?  
(SHE holds out a handful)

COOKIE

No.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Did your Mommy tell you not to take candy from strangers?

COOKIE

Don't you have any chocolate kind?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I think so.

(SHE takes a chocolate bar out of her  
purse, gives it to him. HE eats it)

What's your last name, Cookie?

COOKIE

Mead.

MYSTERY WOMAN

And I'll bet that's your house over there.

COOKIE

No, it's that one over there, smartie-pants.

MYSTERY WOMAN

And you live there with all your brothers and sisters?

COOKIE

Just with my Mommy.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Just you and Mommy? What about Daddy?

COOKIE

Oh, yeah. Him too.

MYSTERY WOMAN

And Grandma?

COOKIE

No, silly. We don't have room for Grandma. She lives in  
Skineckity.

MYSTERY WOMAN

All the way up there?

COOKIE

Uh-huh.

(HE holds out his hand for another  
chocolate bar. SHE gives him one)

MYSTERY WOMAN

All alone, all the way up there?

COOKIE

Aunt Helen lives there too, of course.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I see. Aunt Helen takes care of Grandma.

COOKIE

No, dum-dum. Dr. Willis takes care of Grandma. Aunt Helen just sits there.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Shouldn't you be at school today?

COOKIE

No.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Don't you go to school yet?

COOKIE

Course I do. Whaddya think? I'm in Grade One already. But Miss Watt said we could stay home, 'cause somebody discovered America.

MYSTERY WOMAN

How nice.

MRS. MEAD

(Off)

Cookie!

COOKIE

I guess I hafta go.

MRS. MEAD

(Off)

Cookie, where are you? Time to come in.

COOKIE

I'm comin'!

MYSTERY WOMAN

Nice talking to you, Cookie.

COOKIE

If you got more chocolate bars, I could talk some more tomorrow.

(SHE exits. HE gets back on his tricycle, speeds offstage, making car noises. HE makes a screeching skid around a corner.

Lights come up in the Mead house. We see the living room, the kitchen, and stairs going up. Upstairs, we see COOKIE's bedroom, and the bathroom. The wall to the bathroom is a scrim, so that when occupied, we see only silhouettes. At the moment, we see the silhouette of

a man and hear the buzz of an electric razor. There is a doorway from the kitchen to the living room, as well as a swinging door into the unseen dining room. There is a door to a closet in the upstairs hallway, and a door to the basement in the downstairs hallway. There is a large pumpkin on the kitchen window-sill. MRS. MEAD is in the kitchen, standing at the door, shouting outside)

MRS. MEAD

Cookie? Time to come in.

(SHE closes the door, goes back to making breakfast. There is a note-pad on the kitchen table, upon which SHE jots things from time to time. SHE mutters to herself)

Dinner...pumpkin...garage...

(SHE checks her watch, looks at the clock above the stove. SHE goes to the telephone, picks it up. Listens, clicks the receiver a few times. Frustrated, SHE slams it down)

George? George, can you hear me?

MR. MEAD

Yes, dear.

MRS. MEAD

George, the telephone is broken again. Didn't you just have the repairman in last week? George?

MR. MEAD

Yes, dear?

MRS. MEAD

Well, I don't know what he did, but he didn't fix it. Did you hear me?

(A pause. COOKIE enters)

COOKIE

Are we gonna cut up the pumpkin now?

(HE takes the pumpkin off the window-sill)

MRS. MEAD

Not now, sweetie. See how busy Mommy is?

COOKIE

You said.



MRS. MEAD

I'll tell you what. You take a crayon and draw on the face, and then later Daddy will help you, like he promised. No dear, not in here, you're in Mommy's way. Go in the dining room.

(SHE pushes him through the swinging door)

Good boy.

(SHE shouts upstairs:)

Come on George, breakfast is ready. Oh, here you are.

(MR. MEAD enters. THEY kiss. SHE ties his necktie during the following)

Oh George, look at you. How in the world could you manage to cut yourself with an electric razor?

MEAD

I haven't gotten the hang of that thing yet. It's got a mind of its own. So what's the matter with the telephone?

MRS. MEAD

Well, it's broken. What did the man do when he was here?

MEAD

I forgot to call him.

MRS. MEAD

Oh, George! Well then, no wonder. You promised me you would.

MEAD

It's just a short. I've got some wire in the garage. All I have to do is figure out why... You still going to see your mother?

MRS. MEAD

Of course, George. Don't be silly. I have to go, I told you.

[13] "NOTHING AT ALL"

MEAD

SHE'S GOING AWAY--  
SHE'S GOING AWAY--  
THE HOUSE WILL BE MINE,  
AND EVERYTHING IN IT...

(Spoken)

What time's your bus?

MRS. MEAD

Eight-o-five.

MEAD

SHE'S GOING AWAY--  
SHE'S LEAVING TODAY--  
I'D WELCOME A WEEK,  
BUT BE GLAD FOR A MINUTE--

(Spoken)

We should leave for the station.

MRS. MEAD

I'm taking a taxi, George. I know you. You get behind the wheel of that car, something squeaks or something clanks, and you have to open the hood and stare at the engine for an hour. Now, I have some instructions...

MEAD

THEIR WIVES BEING GONE  
MIGHT MAKE SOME HUSBANDS ILL AT EASE--  
I SEE IT PROMISING RARE POSSIBILITIES--

MRS. MEAD

Listen to me, George. Don't sit there mooning.

(Sings)

WHILE I'M GONE, HERE'S A LIST  
OF THE THINGS TO BE DONE--  
LOOK, I'LL PUT IT RIGHT HERE  
ON THE TABLE--

MEAD

WHILE SHE'S GONE, I'VE A MIND  
TO CUT LOOSE AND HAVE FUN,  
THOUGH I WONDER  
IF I AM STILL ABLE--

MRS. MEAD

COOKIE'S DINNER IS READY,  
YOU JUST HAVE TO HEAT IT--

MEAD

I MAY GET DEAD DRUNK,  
OR I SIMPLY MIGHT BEAT IT--

MRS. MEAD

BE SURE TO CUT UP ALL HIS FOOD  
NICE AND SMALL--

MEAD

OR I MAY JUST DO NOTHING AT ALL--

MRS. MEAD

Oh, isn't it just like Helen to send me a telegram at four in the morning, so I can't make any arrangements? She just expects me to drop everything and come running all the way up to Schenectady. And Mr. Fix-it breaks the telephone, so I can't find out what's really going on up there.

(Sings)

WHILE I'M GONE, DON'T TRY FIXING  
THE PHONE BY YOURSELF--  
OF ALL TIMES FOR THAT THING  
TO BE BROKEN--

MEAD

TAKE MY OLD UKULELE  
DOWN OFF OF THE SHELF,  
AND DROWN OUT EVERY WORD  
THAT SHE'S SPOKEN--

MRS. MEAD

COOKIE'S BATH WATER MUST BE JUST RIGHT  
TO PUT HIM IN--

MEAD

SEND OUT FOR COLD BEER  
AND SOME VERY WARM WOMEN--

MRS. MEAD

DON'T LET HIM RUN INTO THE STREET  
FOR HIS BALL--

MEAD

OR I MAY JUST DO NOTHING AT ALL--

MRS. MEAD

You don't think Mother's really sick, do you?

MEAD

I don't know why you're going in the first place.

MRS. MEAD

Well, it does sound sort of urgent, George. If it was just Helen, I'd think twice. But she says Dr. Willis suggested I come, too. Now, if she's called in Dr. Willis, it must be something.

MEAD

(To himself)

She calls in Dr. Willis if she has a hangnail.

MRS. MEAD

On top of everything else, I feel like I'm coming down with something myself. Would you be a sweetheart and get my little liver pills out of the medicine chest?

(HE exits. SHE continues, in increased volume)

MRS. MEAD (Continued)

(Sings)

THE MINUTE I'M OUT OF THE DOOR,  
I KNOW I'LL COME DOWN WITH A COLD--

MEAD

(From upstairs)

THE MINUTE SHE'S OUT OF THE DOOR--  
BLESSED SILENCE--PUREST GOLD--

MRS. MEAD

NOW IF COOKIE GETS SICK  
AND THAT PHONE ISN'T ON,  
THERE'S NO WAY IN THE WORLD  
TO ALERT ME--

YOU COULD SEND ME A WIRE--

MEAD

AS LONG AS SHE'S GONE,  
ONE EROTIC ADVENTURE WON'T HURT ME--

MRS. MEAD

I JUST KNOW THAT MY BUS  
WILL BE TIED UP IN TRAFFIC--

MEAD

FIND SOMETHING TO READ  
OUT-AND-OUT PORNOGRAPHIC--

IT ISN'T SO OFTEN  
THAT FATE COMES TO CALL  
FOR A MAN TO DO NOTHING AT ALL--  
(HE nuzzles her from behind)

MRS. MEAD

You're silly, George. Now stop. Cookie's right in the next room.

(Sings)

I'LL BE BACK BY TOMORROW  
AS SOON AS I CAN  
LONG BEFORE THERE'S A CHANCE  
THAT YOU'LL MISS ME--

MEAD

LOVELY LADIES, I'VE GOT  
A REMARKABLE PLAN  
THAT STARTS OUT WHEN YOU LINE UP  
TO KISS ME--

MRS. MEAD

IF I SEE SOMETHING USEFUL FOR COOKIE  
I'LL BUY IT--

MEAD

OR JUST FOR THE HELL OF IT,  
START A SMALL RIOT--

GO FIND ME A BAR  
AND GET INTO A BRAWL--

BLOODY NOSES ARE NOTHING--  
WELL, MAYBE NOT NOTHING--  
I'D BETTER DO NOTHING AT ALL--

MRS. MEAD

Make yourself useful, George, and go get my suitcase.

MEAD

Where is it?

MRS. MEAD

Hall closet, dear. On the left.

(HE goes upstairs to the hallway)

I should be back in time to take Cookie trick-or-treating.  
But if not, there's a big bag of candy...

(MEAD is struggling with the closet door)

George, what are you doing, trying to open the door to the closet?

MEAD

Yes, dear. That's what I'm doing.

MRS. MEAD

It's your own fault, dear. How long ago was it that I told you about that closet?

MEAD

(To himself)

Years and years. Since before we were married, even. At your high school graduation, you were probably complaining about it then.

(The doorknob comes off in MEAD'S hand)

Gosh darn it, anyway!

(MRS. MEAD joins him in the hallway, takes out a hairpin, sticks it in the hole left by the doorknob, opens the closet)

MRS. MEAD

Thank you for all your help, George.

(SHE takes the suitcase)

Can you manage to carry the bag down to the living room, or will I have to call in a professional?

MEAD

I can manage, dear.

MRS. MEAD

See if the taxi's here, George.

(HE exits into the living room. A horn honks from outside)

MEAD

He's here.

(MRS. MEAD runs into the living room)

MRS. MEAD

Ooooh! Have I got everything? Probably not. Where's Cookie? Maybe I should take him with me.

MEAD

We'll be fine. Hey, where's my little dum-dum? Mommy wants to say good-bye.

MRS. MEAD

YOU MIGHT WANT TO CLEAN THE GARAGE--  
YOU'VE NOT GOT AROUND TO IT YET--

MEAD

I MIGHT WANT TO CLEAN THE GARAGE--  
ANYBODY WANNA BET?

(COOKIE enters)

MRS. MEAD

Bye, sweetie. Gimme a kiss. Oh, and listen, Daddy

(Sings)

DON'T FORGET COOKIE'S PUMPKIN  
YOU PROMISED TO CARVE--  
AND YOU MUST MAKE  
THAT MORTGAGE DEPOSIT--

I'VE PLENTY OF FOOD,  
SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO STARVE--

MEAD

IS THAT ADDRESS BOOK STILL IN MY CLOSET?

ONLY ONE STOLEN MOMENT,  
SO PRECIOUS AND FLEETING--

MRS. MEAD

HE MUSTN'T GO OUT BY HIMSELF  
TRICK-OR-TREATING--

I'VE OTHER INSTRUCTIONS  
I JUST CAN'T RECALL--

MEAD

OR I MAY JUST DO NOTHING AT ALL--

COOKIE

I'm gonna put on my costume.

MEAD

Give Mommy her kiss, so she can leave.

(COOKIE, making a face, goes over to  
kiss her)

MRS. MEAD

And one for Grandma.

(HE kisses her again)

And Aunt Helen.

(COOKIE breaks away, runs upstairs)

MEAD

Dear, by the time you get to the postman, the taxi will be gone.

(During the next segment, MEAD goes to the window, waves to the driver, helps MRS. MEAD into her coat, hands her her valise and her purse, puts her hat on her head, and shoves her out the front door)

MRS. MEAD

WHILE I'M GONE, TRY TO KEEP THE PLACE  
NEAT--HEAVEN KNOWS  
COMING BACK TO A MESS  
ISN'T PLEASANT--

MEAD

EAT WHATEVER I LIKE,  
THROW AROUND ALL MY CLOTHES,  
AS I BELCH AND I SCRATCH  
LIKE A PEASANT--

MRS. MEAD

CLOSE THE CURTAINS AT NIGHT  
SO THE NEIGHBORS CAN'T SEE IN

MEAD

I'LL CURSE ALL I WANT--  
JUST AS LOUD AS CAN BE--

MRS. MEAD

IN A DAY, MY POOR DEAR  
WILL BE CLIMBING THE WALL--

MEAD

OR I MAY JUST DO NOTHING--  
HOW SWEET TO DO NOTHING--  
THAT'S IT, I'LL DO NOTHING AT ALL!  
(HE slams the door on her. A pause)

(Spoken)

The house is mine. And I make the rules. First: this list.

(HE takes MRS. MEAD's list, tears it up into small pieces, tosses it into the air like confetti)

I'll make my own. Number one: Have a cigar, you've earned it.

(HE takes a cigar out of the humidor, makes an elaborate show out of clipping the ends, drying the length of it with a match. HE sits in his reclining chair, leans all the way back. HE puts the cigar in his mouth. As HE touches a match to the tip, COOKIE, dressed as a policeman, jumps into the room, blowing a police whistle and holding a gun. MEAD and the recliner tip all the way over; MEAD somersaults onto the floor)

COOKIE

Hands up!

(MEAD drops the cigar and the match)

MEAD

Cookie!

COOKIE

You're under arrest.

MEAD

Young man, I've told you a hundred times, Mommy's gun is not a toy. Give that to me.

(COOKIE hands him the gun, which HE puts in a desk drawer)

COOKIE

You're still gonna have to come with me.

MEAD

Where are we going?

COOKIE

Jail, stupid. Whaddya think?

(HE makes a noise like a siren, takes MEAD by the hand)

And don't try any funny business: I got ya covered.  
(HE drags MEAD upstairs)

MEAD

I won't do it again, I promise.

COOKIE

Don't give me any lip.

(HE opens the door to the closet)

In ya go.

MEAD

Oh, good. At least I'll have a chocolate bar in jail.



Where?  
 COOKIE

Right there.  
 MEAD  
 (HE points to the floor of the closet)

Oh, boy!  
 COOKIE  
 (COOKIE runs into the closet. MEAD slams the door shut)

Number two: I want pure, absolute silence.  
 MEAD  
 (A pause. MEAD tiptoes toward the living room. The doorbell rings. COOKIE pounds furiously on the closet door)

Daddy!  
 COOKIE

Just a minute, there's someone...  
 MEAD  
 (The doorbell rings again. COOKIE bangs on the door)

There ain't no chocolate in here! Lemme out!  
 COOKIE

Be quiet, Cookie, there's someone...  
 MEAD

Daddy, hurry up!  
 COOKIE

What's this? She probably forgot her heart pills, or her corn plasters, or her gosh darned hot water bottle.  
 MEAD  
 (HE opens the door. The MYSTERY WOMAN is there. SHE has shoulder-length brown hair, wears glasses and a woman's day suit)

Mr. Mead?  
 MYSTERY WOMAN

Yes?  
 MEAD

I'm Miss Watt.  
 MYSTERY WOMAN

Daddy! COOKIE

Miss Who? MEAD

Miss Watt. Cookie's First Grade teacher. MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh. Yes? MEAD

May I come in? MYSTERY WOMAN

Well You see... MEAD

DADDY!! COOKIE

Excuse me a moment. MEAD  
(HE turns and runs up the stairs)  
Cookie, what the hell is the matter with you?  
(Silence. SHE comes into the house.  
SHE looks around the living room. SHE  
draws all the curtains closed. SHE  
turns on a lamp to compensate for the  
darkness. SHE tiptoes into the kitchen  
and looks around. Goes out the swinging  
door into the dining room. Re-appears  
in the living room. MEAD, meanwhile,  
opens the closet door, and COOKIE falls  
out. HE drags him downstairs)  
Now, Cookie. Don't be a bad boy. I told you not to go in  
there. You could suffocate. I have a surprise, Cookie.  
There's someone... Where'd she go?

Here I am. MYSTERY WOMAN

The chocolate lady! Got any more? COOKIE

Oh, now. You know how that works, Cookie. You have to be a  
good boy first. MYSTERY WOMAN

Chocolate lady? MEAD

MYSTERY WOMAN

You see, Mr. Mead, at school, if the children accomplish something, they get a small piece of chocolate as a reward. Right, Cookie?

COOKIE

Huh?

MEAD

What is it, Cookie? Don't you say hello?

COOKIE

Hello.

MEAD

Now, Cookie. That's not how we taught you. "Good afternoon, Miss Watt."

COOKIE

That's not Miss Watt.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Why, Cookie. You'll hurt my feelings.

COOKIE

You're not Miss Watt.

MEAD

What's going on?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Come here, Cookie.

(SHE slips him a piece of chocolate during the following:)

You know, Mr. Mead, it's funny. Child psychologists have noted that children see only two environments: Home and School. Now, for some children, if you bring a parent into the classroom, the child refuses to recognize them. The parent is not in the environment the child is used to seeing them in. I guess it's now been proven that it works in reverse as well. Isn't that interesting?

MEAD

I guess.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Now, Cookie. Do you remember yesterday when I had to stop you from pulling that little girl's hair on the playground?

(COOKIE giggles)

I thought you would. Now, who am I?

COOKIE

I dunno.

I-3-54

(SHE slips him a piece of chocolate;  
holds it in his hand so MEAD can't see it)

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm Miss Watt, aren't I?

COOKIE

Sure, you're Miss Watt.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Good boy.

(SHE lets him go. HE eats the chocolate)

COOKIE

Pumpkin-time, Daddy!

(HE exits into the kitchen)

MEAD

I don't know how in the world you manage a roomful of them.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I love a challenge.

(SHE laughs)

Well! I'll tell you why I'm here.

COOKIE

(Off)

Daddy, Daddy!

MEAD

Just a minute, Daddy's busy.

(COOKIE enters, holding the pumpkin and  
a huge carving knife)

COOKIE

Daddy! Daddy!

MEAD

Cookie, be careful with that thing!

COOKIE

Ach. Come on Daddy.

MEAD

Later, Cookie. Give me the knife.

COOKIE

Now!

MEAD

Cookie...

COOKIE

Now!!!

(HE starts to cry, jumps up and down  
holding the knife)

MEAD

Can you get it away from him?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Cookie.

(SHE opens her purse, puts her hand in)  
Give me that knife.

COOKIE

Okay.

(HE gives it to her. Stands waiting for  
chocolate)

MYSTERY WOMAN

You just have to know how. Come on, Cookie. Let's put this  
where it belongs.

(SHE stares at MEAD, holding the knife.  
COOKIE runs off to the kitchen. A  
pause)

MEAD

I thought you said you were Miss Watt.

MYSTERY WOMAN

(Taken aback)  
What do you mean?

MEAD

Well, you've got a wedding ring.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, this. It was my mother's. I wear it for sentimental  
reasons.

MEAD

Listen, thank you so much. You really couldn't have come at  
a better time.

(HE moves closer to her)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Yes, it's something I try to teach my students. Timing is  
everything.

MEAD

I'm sure I could learn a lot from you.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I'll teach you a lesson.

(SHE exits.)

Lights fade on all but MEAD. Music suggests time is passing. Lights come up on the bathroom scrim. We see silhouettes of MYSTERY WOMAN giving COOKIE a bath. In the living room, lights come up on a lit Jack O'Lantern in the front window)

[14] "FUN AND GAMES"

MEAD

FUN AND GAMES--  
THOSE ARE WHAT I HAD IN MIND--  
HERE'S THE WAY THEY'D BE DEFINED:  
MILD ADULTERY--  
NOT TOO SULTERY--

THOSE ARE AIMS  
THAT A LOVING WIFE FORGIVES--  
IN A MONTH OR TWO HE LIVES  
'EM DOWN--

AND I KNOW  
MORE FUN AND GAMES  
THAN ANY CLOWN!

MYSTERY WOMAN

My, my, what a dirty little boy you are!

MEAD

I'M NOT SUGGESTING ANYTHING AMBITIOUS,  
LIKE RUNNING OFF TOGETHER HAND IN HAND--  
I WOULDN'T DO A THING THAT CRUEL OR VICIOUS--  
BUT WHAT'S THE HARM, WHEN DONE RIGHT,  
IN A ONE-NIGHT STAND?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Okay, before you turn into a prune... No, don't pull the plug, Cookie.

COOKIE

Mommy always does.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Come on, now. Out of the tub.

MEAD

FUN AND GAMES--  
NEVER HAVE TO TELL A SOUL--  
KEEP IT UNDER STRICT CONTROL--  
LET'S BE PRACTICAL--  
FAST CLIMACTICAL--

MEAD (Continued)

NO ONE CLAIMS  
 THAT A QUICK ONE`S GONNA BE  
 VERY LONG ON DIGNITY  
 OR STYLE--

NONETHELESS,  
 FOR FUN AND GAMES  
 I'D WALK A MILE!

(MYSTERY WOMAN enters the living room)

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm almost ready for you.

MEAD

Huh?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Dinner. Almost ready.

MEAD

Sure smells good!

(SHE goes back to the bathroom. COOKIE  
 turns on his father's electric razor)

COOKIE

Look, I'm shaving!

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I don't think you need worry about that for at least  
 another year. Pajamas, Cookie.

(SHE returns to the living room)

MEAD

Listen, I can't thank you enough; I'm afraid when they gave  
 out talent for being a father, I came up short.

(COOKIE comes bounding down the stairs,  
 dressed in pajamas, still with his  
 policeman's cap and belt on)

COOKIE

Time for Hide Go Seek!

MYSTERY WOMAN

No, Cookie. Time for dinner.

COOKIE

I wanna play now!

MEAD

Now, Cookie. You mind Miss Watt.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Perhaps it's time for B-E-D.

COOKIE

Not time for bed. I know how to spell, stupid.

MYSTERY WOMAN

(Taken aback)

Well, good. You've been practicing.

COOKIE

And you play a game with me, or I'll tell.

MEAD

Tell? Tell what?

MYSTERY WOMAN

All right, Cookie. One game before dinner.

COOKIE

Okay. Me first. You have to turn out all the lights, and close your eyes and count to a million.

MEAD

Now, Cookie.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Humor him. This'll wear him out.

(SHE goes to the light-switch, turns out the lights. A spotlight hits MEAD)

MEAD

FUN AND GAMES  
HELP TO KEEP A LADY YOUNG  
'TIL HER FINAL FLING IS FLUNG--  
YOU LOOK RIPE FOR 'EM--  
JUST THE TYPE FOR 'EM--

I'VE KNOWN DAMES  
WHO COULD MAKE MY NIGHTS COMPLETE--  
LOOKS TO ME LIKE YOU COULD BEAT  
'EM ALL--

LEAD ME TO  
THOSE FUN AND GAMES--  
I HEAR THEIR CALL!

MYSTERY WOMAN

I think that was a million. Did you see where he went?

MEAD

Haven't a clue.



(As THEY look around, COOKIE sneaks back in and takes the revolver out of the desk drawer)

COOKIE

(Pointing the gun at the MYSTERY WOMAN)

BANG!

MYSTERY WOMAN

Dear God! Mr. Mead!

MEAD

Oh, it's my wife's. I'm sometimes...out late.

MYSTERY WOMAN

This is how tragedies happen!

MEAD

I'll tell you what could happen: nothing. It isn't even loaded.

MYSTERY WOMAN

It's not?

(SHE takes the revolver from COOKIE, swings around, points it directly at MEAD's heart. Pulls the trigger. MEAD throws himself on the floor. The chamber clicks)

You're right.

(A bell rings in the kitchen)

Dinner's ready.

(SHE takes COOKIE off to the kitchen. MEAD picks himself up, staring after her. SHE turns on the lights)

(To Cookie)

Now you sit right there and behave.

(SHE takes the dinner out of the oven, and fixes two plates, her back to the audience.

MEAD, still a little shaken, pours himself a good stiff drink, sits in his recliner. MYSTERY WOMAN gives one plate to COOKIE, takes one into the living room. Puts it on the coffee table. MEAD sits bolt upright in his chair)

MEAD

Oh, I can eat in the kitchen like always.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Nonsense. You don't want to put up with all of that noise and mess. Oh, I'm sorry, this one is Cookie's.

MEAD

What's the difference?

(A pause)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Bigger portions.

(SHE exits into the kitchen)

Cookie, don't! That one's meant for your father. This is yours.

(SHE switches plates. Returns to the living room)

Now, I want you to eat every last morsel. Oh, I'm sorry. I thought I was talking to Cookie. Enjoy.

(SHE exits into the kitchen. COOKIE jumps up from the table)

COOKIE

Your turn for Hide Go Seek!

MYSTERY WOMAN

Why, you've hardly touched your dinner! Young man, you sit right back down at that table. And behave. And I want you to eat three more big mouthfuls, and then you can play.

(HE sits at the table. Takes a forkful of food)

More.

(HE puts more food on the fork)

That's good. Three that size.

(COOKIE quickly swallows it, jumps up and runs into the living room. MYSTERY WOMAN follows him and they run back into the kitchen. COOKIE puts the food in his mouth. Chews. Then jumps up and runs into the living room, screaming with laughter and back again into the kitchen)

Okay, same size for number three...Last one.

(COOKIE repeats the process. The fork doesn't quite make it to COOKIE's mouth. HE lets out a huge yawn and falls face first into his plate)

That's three. Very good, Cookie.

(Lights focus on MEAD who is pouring another drink. As HE sings, the MYSTERY WOMAN carries sleeping Cookie to bed)

MEAD

NOW DON'T MISUNDERSTAND--  
THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE  
IS SOMETHING I DON'T WANT  
TO LIVE WITHOUT--

MEAD (Continued)

A LITTLE WEDDING BAND,  
A HOME AND BABY CARRIAGE  
ARE WHAT A HUSBAND'S LIFE  
IS ALL ABOUT--

BUT, GOD, IT ALL GOES BY SO VERY QUICKLY--  
BEFORE WE KNOW WHAT'S HIT US, LIFE IS DONE---  
BEFORE WE TURN AROUND WE'RE OLD AND SICKLY,  
AND, ALL TOO SOON, WE'LL MISS IT,  
THIS ILLICIT FUN

AND GAMES--  
WE CAN PLAY THE ONES WELL-KNOWN,  
OR WE MIGHT MAKE UP OUR OWN  
AS WE GO ALONG--  
WE'LL JUST FLOW ALONG--

PASSION FLAMES,  
AND THERE ISN'T ANY DOUBT  
THAT THE TIME TO PUT IT OUT  
IS NOW--

WITH SOME HELP  
FROM FUN AND GAMES,  
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW!

(HE spins around. The MYSTERY WOMAN is  
there, staring at him)

(Spoken)

You startled me! I'm fixing myself another drink. Can I  
get you something?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't drink.

MEAD

Good luck getting Cookie to bed. He can be a real...

MYSTERY WOMAN

Done. He's already sound asleep.

MEAD

You don't mean...?

MYSTERY WOMAN

So I guess I'll be saying good-bye.

MEAD

Oh, you can't leave yet!

MYSTERY WOMAN

I've accomplished what I came here to do. Almost.

MEAD

But you've spoiled me. I don't know if I can make it through the rest of tonight without you.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, you're just saying that. By the time this night is over, you'll wish I'd never come.

MEAD

So how come you're not married? Still waiting for Mr. Right?

MYSTERY WOMAN

No. I know that Mr. Right isn't out there anymore.

MEAD

Maybe your standards are too high.

MYSTERY WOMAN

The highest.

MEAD

Maybe you shouldn't expect too much.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Only the best for me. The man I'm talking about comes along once in a lifetime.

MEAD

But that day may never come.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, it's come. And gone.

MEAD

I don't understand.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You will. I'm just getting ahead of myself. I'm sorry to have to ruin your Saturday night.

MEAD

Not at all, you haven't ruined it at all.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No bridge party? No poker with the boys?

MEAD

No. Not anymore. You know, I used to. A regular poker game. Friday nights, though. A group of us would get together. In fact, I heard one of the guys passed away not too long ago.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You don't play anymore?

MEAD

No, no. Things change. You know. Marriage. Responsibility. You have a wife, a child to look after, you can't go running around like a schoolboy, playing games, having fun. It's a long story, if you have the time.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No. There's not much time left at all. Will I have to take a cab?

MEAD

That won't be necessary. Let me put myself together first.  
(HE hands her his tie)  
You see: I'm completely defenseless, can't even tie my own tie. My wife usually does it.

(SHE ties his tie)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Maybe a cab would be best. I mean, you have been drinking.

MEAD

Nonsense. It's never stopped me before. Careful! I've got a neck in there!

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, no!

MEAD

What's wrong?

MYSTERY WOMAN

My ring. My ring is gone. I must've dropped it somewhere in the house. Help me. I can't leave until I've found it.

MEAD

Well, let's see. Where'd you go?

MYSTERY WOMAN

The last time I remember seeing it, was right before dinner. Let's try Cookie's room.

MEAD

Maybe it's in my room.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I didn't go in your room.

MEAD

Maybe it's in there anyway. Let's take a peek.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Mr. Mead!

I-3-64

MEAD

I thought you liked to play games.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Remember what I told you about the ring being my mother's?  
I lied. It's mine. I've got to find it.

MEAD

Yours? I thought you said you weren't married?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I lied.

MEAD

So your name isn't Miss Watt?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I lied. Maybe when I gave Cookie his bath.

MEAD

If there's one thing you shouldn't lie about, it's that.  
I've been perfectly honest with you.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Yes. I'm sorry if I haven't made my intentions clear.  
(SHE goes into the bathroom. HE follows)  
I'm surprised you didn't know I was married. You were a  
guest at the wedding.

MEAD

I was?

MYSTERY WOMAN

An uninvited guest.

MEAD

Why did you leave water in the tub?

MYSTERY WOMAN

No. Don't pull the plug. Look: there's my ring. If you  
pull the plug, it'll go down the drain.

MEAD

I'll get it.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You surely will.  
(SHE shoves him into the bathtub. There  
is a splash)

MEAD

Hey! What the hell?

(SHE clicks on the electric razor and tosses it into the tub with him. There is a sizzling bright flash of light. Then, all the lights go out, save for the Jack O'Lantern, grinning in the dark. Then, this goes out, too. In the dark, MURPHY's voice is heard)

MURPHY

Now, we're gonna go through it again. And this time, I want the truth out of you. You hear me? We got ways of getting the truth out of people like you. Now, what time did you go to sleep that night?

(Lights come up on COOKIE, in a hardwood chair, a desk lamp shoved in his face. MURPHY stands by his side, grilling him)

COOKIE

The big hand was on the two and the little hand was on the eight.

MURPHY

What was the last thing you remember?

COOKIE

We was playing Hide Go Seek.

MURPHY

Who was?

COOKIE

Me and the lady. And I was taking three big mouthfuls, and the next thing was Mommy waking me up.

MURPHY

You sure you'd never seen this lady before?

COOKIE

Sure, I'd seen her before. She's a nice lady. How come you're asking me all these questions? Why don't you ask Miss Watt?

MURPHY

Who's Miss Watt?

COOKIE

Miss Watt is my teacher, dummy. And Miss Watt came over last night to see Daddy.

MURPHY

That's it. Thanks, kid. We got her.

COOKIE

Well? (A pause) You promised.

MURPHY

Oh, for crying out loud. Give the kid his goddamned chocolate bar.

(Lights out on COOKIE. Lights up on the DETECTIVE)

MURPHY (Continued)

Sorry I called you all the way out here. It's another one. Fits the pattern to a tee. If there's any pattern at all. Difference is, this time we got her.

DETECTIVE

What?

MURPHY

Under lock and key. Picked her up a couple of hours ago. Denies it, of course. But this time, we got an eyewitness. Saw her with the deceased a few minutes before it happened. Unfortunately, he's five years old, but a witness is a witness.

DETECTIVE

May I meet the suspect?

MURPHY

Why not? It's the least I can do for all your footwork, even if it didn't pay off. You can see her before she hits the front page. Bring her in. This is Miss Watt, the kid's teacher.

(A shaft of light, as if a door's been opened. A WOMAN steps into it. A fairly buxom brunette, dressed in the same clothes as the MYSTERY WOMAN. The DETECTIVE goes up to her. Looks her in the eyes. A pause)

DETECTIVE

This isn't her.

MURPHY

What are you talking about? I got a witness.

DETECTIVE

I don't care. This isn't her.

MURPHY

A few more hours of grilling, and we'll have her.



DETECTIVE

I don't care if you put a signed confession in front of me, you're wasting your time. Let this woman go.

MURPHY

I will not. We're gonna close the books on this case once and for all.

DETECTIVE

What did she leave behind this time?

MURPHY

We found this.

(HE holds up a black jacket, similar to the one the WOMAN is wearing. The DETECTIVE holds it. Caresses it. Smells it)

DETECTIVE

Yes, this belonged to the killer. Excuse me, ma'am. Would you put this on?

(SHE does. It's a tight fit. The material puckers when SHE buttons it. The sleeves come up to her elbows)

She's one clever dame, isn't she, Murphy? She committed the murder in clothes two sizes too small, so that no one would suspect her. Let her go. She's innocent.

(The WOMAN exits, in tears)

MURPHY

Get lost. I don't need you coming in here and lousing up everything.

DETECTIVE

I just saved two necks, Murphy. Hers and yours. You might thank me.

MURPHY

I might sock you in the nose.

DETECTIVE

This woman is smarter than you. Smarter than me. She's making fun of us. She's daring us to figure this thing out. And if she counts on the fact that all cops are like you, Murphy, she's gonna win. True: I may not know who she is. But I sure as hell know who she isn't. I can't sleep at night. I can't wait to get up in the morning. She's taken three lives, and given mine back to me. I spend every waking minute thinking about her. Thinking about her case.

MURPHY

Sounds like you got a case, all right. Don't get in too deep. This lady's a killer, friend. And she's gonna fry.

DETECTIVE

You gotta find her first.

MURPHY

Sounds like maybe you don't want to.

DETECTIVE

Oh, I want to. I want to see the face that went behind this scarf. I want to hold the hands that went in these gloves. The body that was wrapped in this jacket

MURPHY

Only to have her taken away from you.

[15] "CLUE NO. 3"

DETECTIVE

A HANDKERCHIEF--LACE--  
A HANDKERCHIEF--BLACK--  
A NAME AND A FACE  
ARE ALL THAT I LACK--  
A CERTAIN PERFUME--  
A SCENT IN THE AIR--  
A GIRL IN A ROOM  
AND NOW SHE IS WHERE?

A SCARF THAT SHE TIES  
AROUND HER SLIM THROAT--  
BLACK GLOVES AND GREEN EYES--  
DETECTIVE, TAKE NOTE--  
YOU DON'T KNOW THE WHO,  
THE WHERE OR THE WHEN--  
BUT THIS GIRL'S NOT THROUGH--  
SHE'LL DO IT AGAIN!

MURPHY

I trust you, friend. With you on the case, she's as good as dead.

(Lights out on MURPHY. The DETECTIVE comes forward)

DETECTIVE

A FORM-FITTING JACKET,  
SO SOFT AND SO BLACK--  
A DOOR HAS BEEN OPENED,  
IF ONLY A CRACK--  
A DOOR HAS BEEN OPENED,  
BEHIND IT I'LL SEE  
THAT SOMEONE IS SMILING  
AND WAITING FOR ME--

DETECTIVE (Continued)

I SEE IT SO CLEAR--  
THE END OF THE CHASE--  
I SEE HER RIGHT HERE--  
WE TWO FACE TO FACE--  
HER SCENT--AND HER HAIR--  
SO SWEET TO THE TOUCH--  
THIS KILLER SO FAIR--  
I WANT HER SO MUCH!

END OF ACT ONE



[16] ENTR'ACTE - (Orchestra)

ACT TWO

Scene 1

Curtain up.

A pure white stage. Nothing.

The MYSTERY WOMAN enters. SHE wears a raincoat. Sunglasses. A scarf to hide her hair. SHE walks downstage center, looks straight out. Takes off her glasses. Takes out a notebook, jots something down. A pause. TWO WOMEN enter, upstage. WOMAN ONE points towards the MYSTERY WOMAN.

WOMAN ONE

There she is!

(MYSTERY WOMAN stiffens, doesn't move)

I told you she'd be here. Don't you recognize her?

WOMAN TWO

Where?

WOMAN ONE

Right there! You must be blind.

(SHE pulls WOMAN TWO downstage. THEY stand directly next to the MYSTERY WOMAN, and look front)

Now do you know her?

WOMAN TWO

I'm just trying to remember where it is in your house.

WOMAN ONE

I told you, it's in the garage! Over Charley's workbench. Remember that calendar he got when he bought three hundred pounds of feed at Golding's? Well, she's April.

WOMAN TWO

Well, I don't believe it. What would they be doing hanging calendar pictures in a museum?

WOMAN ONE

I don't know, honey. This is New York. I wonder how much it's worth? Where do you think they keep the price tags on these things?

(TWO MEN enter, upstage. MAN ONE points downstage)

That's her. MAN ONE

Who? MAN TWO

Right there. She's the one I was telling you about.  
(HE pulls MAN TWO downstage, to the  
other side of the MYSTERY WOMAN)  
Now take a good look.  
(A pause)

[17] "THE GALLERY SONG"

(Sings) MAN ONE (Continued)  
I THINK IT'S TERRIBLE--

IT'S NOT SO TERRIBLE WOMAN ONE  
WHEN I COMPARE IT WITH OTHERS I'VE SEEN--

I THINK IT'S TERRIBLE-- WOMAN TWO

IT'S NOT SO TERRIBLE-- MAN TWO  
GRANTED IT'S TRASHY, BUT LET'S NOT BE MEAN--

HIS PAINTING TECHNIQUE HAS NO HEART-- MAN ONE  
AN ORANGUTAN WIELDING A PIKE--

I MAY NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT ART, WOMAN TWO  
BUT I CERTAINLY KNOW WHAT I LIKE--

SHE'S KINDA BEAUTIFUL-- WOMAN ONE

YOU CALL THAT BEAUTIFUL? WOMAN TWO  
NOWADAYS ANYTHING HANGS ON A WALL--

SHE'S ALMOST BEAUTIFUL-- MAN TWO

TELL YOU WHAT'S BEAUTIFUL-- MAN ONE  
THIS GUY'S PROFOUND AND UNQUALIFIED GALL!

HE MAY BE BOTH VULGAR AND BAD, MAN TWO  
BUT HE LAUGHS ALL THE WAY TO THE BANK--

WOMAN ONE

A PRIZE I DID NOT KNOW I HAD,  
AND I'VE GOT GOLDING'S FEED STORE TO THANK!

ALL

LOOKING AT PAINTINGS--  
PEERING AT PAINTINGS--  
EVERYONE HAS AN OPINION, THAT'S SURE--

LOVING THE PAINTINGS--  
HATING THE PAINTINGS--  
FOR EVERYBODY'S A CONNOISSEUR!

(As THEY sing, they slowly circle the  
gallery, looking at the paintings,  
looking at each other. MYSTERY WOMAN  
follows them on their tour, jotting  
things down from time to time)

MAN ONE

TACKY AND TERRIBLE--

WOMAN TWO

WHAT ISN'T TERRIBLE?  
TAKE THAT PICASSO--HE PAINTS PEOPLE FLAT--

MAN ONE

I COULD UP-CHUCK FROM IT--

MAN TWO

HE MAKES A BUCK FROM IT--

WOMAN TWO

MY LITTLE NEPHEW PAINTS BETTER THAN THAT--

WOMAN ONE

TO LOOK LIKE THOSE GIRLS WOULD BE BLISS,  
FOR THERE ISN'T A THING THAT THEY LACK--

MAN TWO

HE'S CLEARLY A GENIUS AT THIS--

MAN ONE

HE'S A GENIUS AT BEING A HACK--

WOMAN ONE

HE'S IN THESE GALLERIES--  
FOLKS WHO RUN GALLERIES  
KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING OR WOULDN'T BE HERE--

MAN ONE

THOSE WHO RUN GALLERIES  
COULDN'T EARN SALARIES  
CLEANING MY BRUSHES--

MAN TWO  
YOU'VE MADE THAT QUITE CLEAR--

WOMAN TWO  
I BET THAT HE'S HANDSOME AND RICH--

MAN TWO  
HE DOES NOT HAVE THE BRILLIANCE YOU'VE GOT--

MAN ONE  
(BUT) THAT TALENTLESS SON-OF-A-BITCH  
IS UP THERE ON THOSE WALLS AND I'M NOT!

ALL  
LOOKING AT PAINTINGS--  
STARING AT PAINTINGS--  
I PREFER THIS ONE, NO, THAT ONE BY FAR--

JUDGING THE PAINTINGS--  
DAMNING THE PAINTINGS--  
THEY'RE ALL AS GOOD AS WE SAY THEY ARE!

(THEY split; MAN ONE pairs off with  
WOMAN TWO, stage right, MAN TWO and  
WOMAN ONE are stage left. THEY voice  
their opinions to each other across the  
gallery. MYSTERY WOMAN stays center,  
eavesdropping)

MAN ONE  
ALL ARE IDENTICAL--  
WHY SO IDENTICAL?  
LIPS DEEPLY CRIMSON  
AND CHEEKS VIVID RED--

MAN TWO  
PALE SKIN IDENTICAL--  
YES, THEY'RE IDENTICAL--  
DOWN TO THE WAY  
EACH IS HOLDING HER HEAD--

WOMAN TWO  
THEY ALL HAVE SUCH BEAUTIFUL SKIN,  
EVEN THOUGH QUITE A LOT OF IT SHOWS--

WOMAN ONE  
IF I HAD SUCH BEAUTIFUL SKIN,  
I'D PROBABLY NOT WEAR ANY CLOTHES!

(MYSTERY WOMAN takes out a compact,  
applies powder, paling her skin. SHE  
applies bright red lipstick, rouges her  
cheeks)



MAN ONE  
HAIR BLACK AS ANTHRACITE--  
ALL OF THEM ANTHRACITE--

WOMAN ONE  
HOW WOULD I LOOK  
WITH MY HAIR CUT LIKE THAT?

BOTH MEN  
ALL THE SAME WOMAN,  
THEY'RE ALL THE SAME WOMAN--

WOMAN ONE  
EACH ONE OF THEM GORGEOUS--

WOMAN TWO  
THEY MAKE ME FEEL FAT!

(MYSTERY WOMAN takes the scarf off her head. Her hair is black and cut short. During the next segment, SHE begins a slow strip, revealing herself in the most revealing of costumes)

MAN ONE  
AND ALL OF THEM COSTUMED THE SAME--

MAN ONE  
IN A LEOTARD BLACK AS THE NIGHT--

WOMAN ONE  
WE'LL BUY TWO OF THOSE IF YOU'RE GAME--

BOTH  
AND WE'LL BOTH BE ARRESTED ON SIGHT!

(As THEY sing, several huge Vargas-like mural drop from the flies. MYSTERY WOMAN strikes a pose, the mirror-image of the painting that flies in center)

ALL  
WONDERFUL PAINTINGS--  
TERRIBLE PAINTINGS--  
ALL KINDS OF PAINTINGS  
ARE MAGIC INDEED--

GLORIOUS PAINTINGS--  
BARBAROUS PAINTINGS--  
WE GAIN FROM PAINTINGS--  
OBTAIN FROM PAINTINGS--  
AND DRAIN FROM PAINTINGS  
THE THINGS WE NEED!

WOMAN TWO

All right, dear? You can tell all your friends back home you were in a real New York art gallery. Now can we go to Chinatown?

MAN TWO

Is it out of your system, so we can leave?

MAN ONE

I spend thirteen years studying human anguish, trying to capture the essence of someone's soul on canvas, and this brassiere artist gets a showing at one of the finest galleries in the city.

MAN TWO

Drop a note in the suggestion box.

MAN ONE

My suggestion would be to replace the suggestion box with a spittoon.

(THEY exit)

WOMAN ONE

I'm taking that treasure out of the garage the minute I get home. Wait'll I tell everyone I have a genuine... What was that fellow's name?

(A pause)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Maldonado.

WOMAN ONE

Maldonado.

(THEY exit. As THEY do, MALDONADO enters)

MALDONADO

Marvin Donaldson, actually. I kinda thought that sounded like a lawyer, so I use Maldonado for the artistic stuff.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I've been studying your work.

MALDONADO

That's nice, kid. So where the hell's Julie? The agency always sends me Julie.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Julie came down with a bad case of food poisoning last night. I warned her, too. She thought he was good for a steak dinner, at least. But where'd they wind up? Chinatown: just like I said.

MALDONADO

Gee, I don't know...

MYSTERY WOMAN

She requested they send me. She thought I'd be...the type you were looking for.

MALDONADO

I guess we could give it a shot.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, gee, that'd be... You don't know what a thrill...

MALDONADO

But if it don't work, I ain't paying for you. And you can tell the agency I said so.

(HE begins to set up his easel, his canvas, his palette)

MYSTERY WOMAN

You know, where I'm from, all of us girls used to dream about coming to New York and being a Maldonado Girl. And to think, it's actually happening to me! I'm really sorry about those bad reviews your last showing got. I don't care what anyone says, I got a lot out of those paintings.

MALDONADO

I don't read reviews. Like any great artist, no one will know if I'm good or bad until after I'm dead, years and years from now.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Oh, I don't think we'll have to wait that long.

MALDONADO

Something's wrong.

MYSTERY WOMAN

What's the matter?

MALDONADO

It's the clothes. What else have you got?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry...

MALDONADO

I need something with lace. And white. Or pink. Something frilly.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry, this is all I've got.

MALDONADO

Well, it won't work, hon. I just don't see it. It's black, first of all. My black period ended three months ago. I'm smack dab in the middle of my white period. I need something vulnerable, toots. It looks like you're doing the hunting, rather than the other way around... Hey.

(Struck by inspiration, HE runs to a steamer trunk, opens it, rummages around. Takes something out)

Here. Put this on.

(SHE looks at it. Tries slipping it over her head)

No, no, sweetie. On bottom.

(SHE steps into it: A leather loincloth.)

Lemme look at you. Yeah. It's good. Hold still.

(HE picks up a pair of scissors, cuts a shoulder strap off her leotard)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Hey!

MALDONADO

Calm down, I know what I'm doing.

(HE pulls out sections of the bodice, cutting holes)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Hey!

MALDONADO

Don't get so excited, I'll pay ya for it. Yeah. This is good.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Isn't this a little... indecent?

MALDONADO

That's art, babe. Now I'm starting to see it. Now... who are you?

MYSTERY WOMAN

Well, I only just came to New York...

MALDONADO

No, babe, no. I mean, like, who are you? You could be... a goddess. Greek? Roman? I was gonna use this for a perfume commission, but this might be too good. Now shut up and lemme think. Who could you be? Aphrodite? I don't think so. Cassandra, maybe. Someone who wanted vengeance. Persephone: Goddess of the Underworld. I like that. Or maybe... What was her name? The huntress... Diana! God, I'm a genius!

(HE starts to paint)

[18] "A MALDONADO GIRL"

MALDONADO (Continued)

(Sings)

GREAT BEAUTIES FILL THE WORLD'S MUSEUMS--  
 FAR LOVELIER THAN MINE, THAT'S VERY TRUE--  
 THE PROBLEM WITH THOSE CHARMERS IS,  
 YOU HAVE TO GO TO THEM--  
 THE LAZY DARLINGS NEVER COME TO YOU--

THE MONA LISA'S BEAUTIFUL,  
 BUT MONA DOESN'T MOVE--  
 YOU WANNA SEE THAT LADY--  
 WELL, SHE'S HANGING IN THE LOUVRE--  
 YOU GOTTA CROSS THE OCEAN,  
 THEN GO ON TO PARIS, FRANCE--  
 SO MONA GETS EXPENSIVE,  
 AND YOU ONLY GET A GLANCE--

BUT A MALDONADO GIRL GOES EVERYWHERE--  
 A MALDONADO GIRL GETS AROUND--  
 SHE'S ALL THE PLACES LIVING, BREATHING MEN  
 ARE FOUND--

IN CORNER BARS AND BARBER SHOPS  
 SHE'S NEVER OUT OF SIGHT--  
 IN LOTS OF COLLEGE DORMITORIES,  
 SHE COMES OUT AT NIGHT--  
 IN BEAUTY SHOPS WHERE WOMEN'S HAIR  
 GETS MALDONADO STYLED--  
 I'VE SEEN HER IN A HEN-HOUSE  
 WHERE SHE DRIVES THE ROOSTERS WILD--

'CAUSE A MALDONADO GIRL'S FOR EVERYONE--  
 A MALDONADO GIRL DOESN'T CHOOSE--  
 SHE'LL DRIVE AWAY THOSE WISH-I-HAD-A-SWEET-  
 HEART BLUES--

HAD A BIT OF TROUBLE AT THE OFFICE?  
 FOUND A DEAD CANARY DOWN THE MINE?  
 SAW A NASTY LOCUST IN YOUR WHEAT FIELD?  
 LOST A TOE ON THAT ASSEMBLY LINE?

NEVER MIND YOUR PROBLEMS--  
 FACE THEM WITH BRAVADO--  
 WAITING FOR YOU THERE AT HOME  
 IS YOUR OWN MALDONADO--

IN FAR OFF TURKEY, CALIPHS  
 PIN THEM UP ABOVE THEIR HASSOCKS--  
 I'VE EVEN HEARD THEIR OFTEN WORN  
 BENEATH SOME PIOUS CASSOCKS--

MALDONADO (Continued)

THEY'RE IN ALL KINDS OF PLACES  
WHERE YOU WOULDN'T THINK THEY'D BE--  
A CERTAIN OVAL OFFICE  
DOWN IN WASHINGTON, D.C.--

FOR A MALDONADO GIRL'S GOT EVERYTHING--  
AND TO KEEP EACH MANLY HEAD IN A WHIRL,  
THERE'S ALWAYS GONNA BE A MALDONA-  
DO GIRL!

LOST YOUR DOUGH INVESTING IN THE MARKET?  
LOST YOUR LOOKS AND GETTING KINDA FAT?  
LOST YOUR LATEST SWEETIE TO A SAILOR?  
LOST YOUR INTEREST, KID, IN DOING THAT?

GAZE UPON THESE BEAUTIES--  
THERE'S YOUR ELDORADO--  
IN THE GORGEOUS FACE AND FORM  
OF YOUR OWN MALDONADO--

(Spoken)

It needs something. Something's missing.

(HE goes to the trunk, rummages around)

Good thing I never throw anything away.

(HE takes out a bow and arrow)

My old archery set. Look how rusty this thing has gotten.  
Point's still sharp, though. Careful. I'll tell you what I  
want here. I want you to look as if you're about to strike.  
I want an expression in the eyes like... My God, that's it!

That's perfect: Ready to kill. Right on the button.  
You're beautiful, babe.

(HE starts to paint)

Wait. I've got something better. Turn it towards me. Look  
at me. Like the person seeing the picture is the intended  
victim. That's it! God, I'm brilliant.

(Sings)

AND WHEN YOU GET TO HEAVEN  
MARCHING THROUGH THOSE PEARLY GATES,  
AND LOOK AROUND AT ALL THOSE ANGELS  
WAITING THERE FOR DATES--

AND GOD SAYS, "CHOOSE, MY SON,  
FOR THEY'RE PERFECTION OF THEIR KIND,"  
YOU'LL SAY, "THANK YOU VERY MUCH,  
BUT, SIR, IF YOU DON'T MIND

I'VE MY MALDONADO GIRL FOR COMPANY--  
WHILE ALL AROUND US UNIVERSES SWIRL,  
I'LL LIVE FOREVER WITH MY MALDONADO GIRL!"

(HE goes behind one of the paintings,  
comes back with a bottle and a glass)

(Spoken)

Gets the juices flowing.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You shouldn't drink. You might lose control. I'm a girl alone in the big city. Things have been known to happen.

MALDONADO

You have nothing to worry about.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You mean you've never lost control?

MALDONADO

Never.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I find it hard to believe it's never gotten the better of you. Even when you get together with your other artistic-type friends?

MALDONADO

When I'm with my friends, that doesn't count. And my friends are not "artistic-types," I'll have you know. One of 'em's a businessman, one's an agent. Was an agent, I should say. He went on to that great gin-mill in the sky.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'll bet you're all just like a bunch of bad little schoolboys.

MALDONADO

Oh, we were. The Fearsome Five. That's what we called ourselves. We'd play some poker, knock down a few.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'll bet. Bad boys. Driving around town, making trouble.

MALDONADO

No...

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'll bet you all got tanked up and piled in the car. Watch out!

MALDONADO

No...

MYSTERY WOMAN

No?

MALDONADO

I don't have a car. No driving. Keep your mind on the...

MYSTERY WOMAN

What about that Buick in the garage in the Bronx, registered in your name?

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MALDONADO

What?

MYSTERY WOMAN

License number CX-582?

MALDONADO

What did you say? How did you know that?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I told you, I've been studying you.

MALDONADO

I don't understand... How did you...?

MYSTERY WOMAN

And I have something to tell you...

(The doorbell rings. SHE lets the arrow fly. HE has dropped his paintbrush, and HE bends to pick it up. The arrow embeds itself in the wall behind him. Slowly, HE gets up. Looks at her. Looks at the arrow. The doorbell rings again, more impatiently. A pause)

Oops. My muscles must be tired.

WOMAN'S VOICE

(Off)

I can hear you in there, Marv. Open the door. Who've you got in there with you?

(HE opens the door. JOAN BLAINE is there. MYSTERY WOMAN sees her, turns her back on them as she moves behind the changing screen)

JOAN

Oh, you're working. Want me to come back?

MALDONADO

No, maybe you better come in.

JOAN

Oh, goodie. Lemme see, lemme see.

(SHE runs to the canvas, looks at it. Lights focus on her and MALDONADO)

My God.

MALDONADO

It's something different.

JOAN

I'll say. It doesn't even look like Julie.



It's not. It's... MALDONADO

Who is she? JOAN

(JOAN squints at the canvas)

[19] "THAT FACE"

JOAN (Continued)

(Sings)

I'VE SEEN THAT FACE--  
BEEN FACE TO FACE--  
I KNOW THAT FACE  
FROM SOMEWHERE--

SHE'S HARD TO PLACE,  
BUT I CAN TRACE  
THAT LADY'S FACE  
IN TIME--

MALDONADO

IT'S QUITE A FACE--  
A LOVELY FACE--  
DIANA'S FACE--  
THE HUNTRESS--

SHE BRINGS SUCH GRACE  
TO EVERY CHASE--  
IN FORM AND FACE,  
SUBLIME--

JOAN

I KNOW THOSE EYES--  
THOSE SEARCHING EYES--  
I'VE SEEN THOSE EYES--  
WHERE WAS IT?

AND SOMETHING LIES--  
SOME GRIM SURPRISE--  
BEHIND THOSE EYES--  
BUT WHAT?

MALDONADO

I LOVE THOSE EYES--  
THOSE HAUNTED EYES--  
THEY'RE PERFECT EYES  
FOR PAINTING--

TO CATCH THOSE EYES,  
UNTIL HE DIES  
AN ARTIST TRIES  
A LOT--

JOAN

JUST GIVE ME HALF A MINUTE,  
AND I'LL GET IT--  
AND THEN I'LL KNOW  
WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT--

MALDONADO

IF I DON'T GET THIS FINISHED  
I'LL REGRET IT,  
SO PLEASE DO ME A FAVOR  
AND GET OUT!

(Lights come back up. MYSTERY WOMAN is  
heading for the door, dressed in her hat  
and coat, sunglasses over her eyes)

MALDONADO (Continued)

(Spoken)

Hey, where do you think you're going? Your work isn't  
finished here.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm sorry. I'm feeling a little faint. I just want to step  
out for something to eat.

JOAN

Hi, I'm Joan. Haven't we met?

MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't think so...

JOAN

I saw the painting, and I couldn't help feeling... God, you  
even smell familiar.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I only just came to the city. If you'll excuse me...

(MALDONADO takes some money out of his  
pocket, gives it to JOAN)

MALDONADO

Joan, get her a sandwich from the Jew on the corner. And,  
by the way, you can tell the agency that's thirty-five cents  
less I'm paying 'em.

JOAN

Take off those glasses, lemme get a look at you.

MALDONADO

Come on, this is business hours. We had an agreement.  
(HE goes back to his canvas)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Perhaps I can be more persuasive.

(SHE takes a revolver out of her purse,  
points it at JOAN away from MALDONADO's  
view)

Please, Joan.

JOAN

(Sotto voce:) Oh, honey, I don't love him that much. Just  
give him back to me when you're finished.

MYSTERY WOMAN

This has nothing to do with you. But you're in my way. Go  
home.

(SHE shoves JOAN out the door)

MALDONADO

Listen, Joanie, maybe you should...

MYSTERY WOMAN

I'm not hungry anymore. Let's finish what we started.

(Blackout.)

Lights up on JOAN in a phone booth.  
Lights up on the DETECTIVE, at his desk)

JOAN

I don't know if you remember me. My name is Joan Blaine.

DETECTIVE

Mitchell's girlfriend.

JOAN

It's nice to know I left an impression.

DETECTIVE

I'm in the business, Miss Blaine. I'm supposed to remember  
everything, no matter how unimportant.

JOAN

You sure know how to flatter a girl.

DETECTIVE

What can I do for you, Miss Blaine?

JOAN

You remember that woman I saw leaving Mitch's apartment?  
The one who told me she killed him?

DETECTIVE

Yeah, I remember that little detail as well.

JOAN

I saw her again.

DETECTIVE

When was this?

JOAN

Oh, must be three whole minutes by now.

DETECTIVE

Where were you? Just walking the street?

JOAN

I'm not a professional, sweetie. They get paid for their services. She was in a friend's apartment. She's still there. And I'd put a little grease in it, if I were you. Last time I saw her, she had a piece of metal in her hand, and it wasn't a nail-file.

(Blackout.)

A pin-spot hits the canvas MALDONADO was working on. MYSTERY WOMAN is posed, as described, holding a bow and arrow, facing directly out. A caption on the painting: "NEMESIS - She'll Get You." MYSTERY WOMAN's hand appears, rips the face off the painting.

Lights come up full in the studio. MALDONADO is stuck to the wall, dead, an arrow through his heart. JOAN, the DETECTIVE, and MURPHY, the Cop, stand looking at him)

MURPHY

Right through the heart. What a way to go...

JOAN

Poor guy. I warned him he was going to give Cupid the tease once too often.

(The DETECTIVE turns front. Lights fade on JOAN and MURPHY, circle in on him)

[20] "THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE"

DETECTIVE

I KNOW OF A LAKE  
IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE--  
IT'S WATERS ARE COOL AND CLEAR--

A LAKE FULL OF FISH  
IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE,  
SO WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

DETECTIVE (Continued)

A CABIN'S FOR SALE  
 IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE--  
 A BUY...AND I'VE GOT THE DOUGH--

IT SITS ALL ALONE  
 IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE  
 SO WHY DON'T I UP AND GO?

HAVEN'T I HAD ENOUGH?  
 AND WHAT HAVE I GOT TO GAIN?  
 THIS CAN'T BE ALL THAT THERE IS--  
 ALL IT'S ABOUT--

I'M REALLY NOT THAT TOUGH--  
 I'M STARTING TO FEEL THE PAIN--  
 WHY DON'T I, ONCE AND FOR ALL,  
 GET THE HELL OUT?

(Lights come up faintly in the studio.  
 TWO ATTENDANTS carry the sheet-covered  
 body of MALDONADO out on a stretcher)

GET OUT TO THAT LAKE  
 IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE--  
 I'LL LIVE THERE AND NEVER STIR--

(Lights come up slowly on the faceless  
 painting)

INSTEAD OF THIS LIFE  
 IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE  
 WITH NOTHING--  
 AND NO ONE--  
 EXCEPT FOR HER.

MURPHY

Poor guy. He was a good egg, too.  
 (Lights come back up in the studio.  
 JOAN and MURPHY are seated at a table)  
 I don't know why she'd pick him.

(The DETECTIVE snaps out of his reverie,  
 moves to them)

DETECTIVE

You knew him?

MURPHY

Haven't seen him in a good many years, but yeah, I knew him.  
 P.S. 162. Class of '15. He helped me out of a bad scrape  
 senior year. Got caught cheating on a final exam. He took  
 the rap. Otherwise, I'd never have graduated. He was  
 teacher's pet; got off with a slap on the hand. You don't  
 forget a favor like that.

DETECTIVE

Gee, I'm sorry. You ever return the favor?

JOAN

You guys want me to break open a bottle, pour shots all around, and we'll sing "Auld Lang Syne"? The guy's dead, you're having a nostalgia party.

DETECTIVE

You're taking this awfully well.

JOAN

Hell. After Mitch, I guess I'm getting used to this. I wish I'd met this lady a little sooner; she could've saved me a lot of trouble.

DETECTIVE

Were you engaged to him?

JOAN

Oh, sure. We'd even set the date: next February the thirtieth.

DETECTIVE

Now you knew him. And you knew Mitchell. Yet you didn't know her. How is that?

JOAN

If I knew the answer, you wouldn't have to ask that stupid question.

DETECTIVE

Did this guy know Mitchell?

JOAN

Sure.

DETECTIVE

At last. A connection. How did they know each other?

JOAN

The Fearsome Five.

DETECTIVE

Huh?

JOAN

They had a poker game. That's how I got to know 'em as well. I had a thing with one of the guys. Sometimes, I'd sit in. They'd tell a few stories, have a few drinks... you know. Why would she wanna bump 'em off? It was just a bunch of guys having a few laughs. What's her angle?

DETECTIVE

That's why I'm here. You said five. Who were the others?

JOAN

A creep named Mead. He lives in the suburbs with a wife and a brat.

DETECTIVE

Lived. She got to him already.

JOAN

Then there is a God. Like I said, I should've only met her sooner.

DETECTIVE

Who else?

JOAN

Manning: the baby of the group. He moved around a lot; I don't know where he is now.

DETECTIVE

Maple Grove Cemetery. He was the first. Now, the last. Who was he?

JOAN

I can see his face. Oh, and he's kinda famous, too. Now what the hell was his name?

DETECTIVE

Starting right now, you have exactly nine months to remember.

(Blackout)

ACT TWO  
Scene 2

Lights up on the DETECTIVE, and the silhouette of his GIRLFRIEND. SHE is seated in a hardwood chair, her legs up on a desk.

DETECTIVE

She'd left the best clue of all that time: her body. Something I'd not easily forget. I'd never even seen the woman's face, but I could find her in the room blindfolded, if I had to. Now I just had to get her in the room. But the missing piece of the puzzle had been found. I knew where she was going to strike next. I knew when. I knew who. Me. I was the next victim. My name is Walter Montgomery.

(HE moves to the desk. His GIRLFRIEND stands and exits)

I'm a writer. I write novels. The kind you read once, then stick under the leg of the coffee table to keep it from wobbling. Face down, so you don't see the cover with the broad in her underwear sticking a gun in her garter. I live far away from the city. My nearest neighbor is five miles down a dirt road. I like my privacy. What gets me is how she's going to finagle her way up here. I mean, she's not going to be a neighbor asking for a cup of sugar. The real Walter Montgomery we sent to his house in Cuba to watch the bullfights. But just because she's gotten to know her victims before, doesn't mean she's going to this time. For all I know, she might be on that hill out there, with a rifle trained on this window. And it's starting to snow. April already, and still it snows. I'm following my instincts in this case, and my instincts told me to do it this way. Alone.

[21] "WAIT"

(Sings)

NOW--  
NOW I SIMPLY WAIT--  
IT'S SO UNREAL,  
BUT ALL I FEEL IS GREAT!

(An ACTOR, dressed as the MYSTERY WOMAN from Scene 1, dances on)

I'M READY--  
WITH EVERY TICK OF THE CLOCK,  
I CAN FEEL HER NEAR  
AS I'M STANDING HERE  
WHERE I MEET MY FATE--

(Another ACTOR, dressed as MANNING, joins her)



DETECTIVE (Continued)

NOW  
 WE CAN END IT CLEAN--  
 JUST SHE AND I  
 TO PLAY OUR FINAL SCENE--

(SHE spins MANNING offstage, turns to  
 the DETECTIVE, her arms open)

WE ARE ABOUT TO BEGIN IT  
 AT ANY MINUTE,  
 BUT NOW--  
 HERE AND NOW--  
 I JUST WAIT!

(The doorbell rings. A pause. HE goes  
 to the door. It rings again. HE throws  
 it open. A WOMAN with grey hair and  
 spectacles stands there, bundled up in  
 an imitation fur coat. There is snow on  
 her shoulders and hat)

WOMAN

Mr. Montgomery?

DETECTIVE

Yes?

WOMAN

I'm Miss Black. The agency sent me.

DETECTIVE

Yes?

WOMAN

May I come in, please? It's snowing, if you've noticed.

DETECTIVE

Sure, sure. How'd you get here?

WOMAN

The taxi dropped me off, as you requested.

DETECTIVE

I requested?

WOMAN

You seem as if I've taken you by surprise. You called the  
 agency four weeks ago and said you'd be needing someone for  
 secretarial duties. You were supposed to call them to  
 confirm, and you didn't. But they sent me anyway, since  
 they assured me you were a good client of theirs. Am I now  
 to assume that I won't be needed?

II-2-92

DETECTIVE

Not at all. I've been expecting you. Miss...?

WOMAN

Black.

DETECTIVE

Of course. Miss Black.

WOMAN

Is there someone to help me with my luggage?

DETECTIVE

Only me, I'm afraid. We're completely alone up here.

WOMAN

Alone? That wasn't explained to me by the agency.

DETECTIVE

I would think you would find that preferable. No one to interfere...with the work each of us has to do.

WOMAN

I wasn't told. May I use your telephone?

DETECTIVE

There isn't one.

WOMAN

No telephone? What if...something happens?

DETECTIVE

Then it happens.

WOMAN

My dear. No household staff, no telephone. Is there running water, or will I be expected to use an outhouse?

DETECTIVE

All the modern conveniences. Just no telephone. Let me help you with your things.

WOMAN

I've been doing very nicely all by myself up 'til now; I can handle this as well.

(SHE takes her suitcase and exits  
upstairs)

DETECTIVE

NOW

IT'S AT LAST BEGUN--

THE LADY CAME--

BUT STILL THE GAME'S NOT DONE--

(An ACTOR, dressed as the MYSTERY WOMAN from Scene Two dances on with an ACTOR dressed as MITCHELL)

DETECTIVE (Continued)

WHATEVER  
THE TRICK SHE HAS UP HER SLEEVE,  
LET HER DO HER BEST--  
I WILL DO THE REST,  
'CAUSE I KNOW I'VE WON--

(Another ACTOR, dressed as the MYSTERY WOMAN as "Miss Watt" dances on with an ACTOR dressed as MEAD)

NOW--  
NOW WE'RE ALL ALONE--  
THE WORLD IS GONE,  
AND WE ARE ON OUR OWN--

(The WOMEN ditch their partners and turn to the DETECTIVE)

SHE'LL MAKE HER MOVE AND I'LL MATCH IT--  
PITCH, AND I'LL CATCH IT--  
BUT NOW--  
HERE AND NOW--  
I JUST WAIT!

(The doorbell rings)

What the hell...?

(HE opens the door. A YOUNG MAN is there, covered in snow)

YOUNG MAN

I'm sorry to bother you.

DETECTIVE

Yes? I'm very busy.

YOUNG MAN

I just dropped a woman off here a few minutes ago. I'm a driver. That's my cab.

DETECTIVE

What about her?

YOUNG MAN

They closed the road behind me. May I come in? I'm sorry; it's because of the snow.

DETECTIVE

It's really... Couldn't you...?

II-2-94

YOUNG MAN

I can't get back to town. I'm stuck out here.

DETECTIVE

Oh, for crying out loud. All right then, come in, come in.

YOUNG MAN

If I can just use your telephone, my father has a tractor that can make it through.

DETECTIVE

No phone.

YOUNG MAN

You're kidding. This may be the country, but at least we all have telephones.

DETECTIVE

He... I like my privacy.

YOUNG MAN

You're Mr. Montgomery, aren't you?

DETECTIVE

You know me?

YOUNG MAN

I know of you. This is the first time I've gotten to see you. Face to face. I've read all your books, Sir. But I have to keep 'em in the barn where my Mom won't find 'em.

(The WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN

Oh. You.

YOUNG MAN

Hello again.

WOMAN

Did I leave something in the car?

YOUNG MAN

No, ma'am.

DETECTIVE

No, the snow. He's stuck up here with us.

WOMAN

Oh, dear.

DETECTIVE

Complicates things, doesn't it?

WOMAN

Then I'd like to begin work as soon as possible. I hope you don't mind frankness, but the sooner I finish what I came here to do, the happier I'll be.

DETECTIVE

I'm sure. Yes, we might as well begin.

YOUNG MAN

Can I do something for you? I mean, I might as well make myself useful, as long as I'm stuck here. And it would be an honor to help you in any way I can.

DETECTIVE

There's really nothing to do.

WOMAN

Well, there's an awful drip in my bathroom sink. You can take a look at that so that it doesn't keep me up all night.

YOUNG MAN

Sure thing. Upstairs?

WOMAN

To the right.

(HE exits)

I'm sorry, but he was getting on my nerves. So nosy on the drive up here. Had to know every little thing, but I guess that's called conversation in this fly-by-night town. Still, I wouldn't be surprised to find out he's the sensitive type. Can we begin?

DETECTIVE

Ready when you are.

WOMAN

What kind of work did you have in mind? Typing?

DETECTIVE

What? Oh, yes, some of that.

WOMAN

Dictation?

DETECTIVE

Of course, that too...

(HE turns front. SHE begins typing and filing during the following)

I found things for her to do. Luckily, Montgomery thought he was good enough to keep copies of his stuff all over the house. Luckily, he was bad enough that she hadn't read him. I stayed up half the night copying the junk down in longhand, and then in the morning, she'd type it up.

WOMAN

Excuse me. This sentence: "She said, 'Keep your filthy hands off my tight.'" Is that supposed to be throat? Thigh?

DETECTIVE

What's it look like?

WOMAN

How do I know? You wrote it.

DETECTIVE

Um, I'll get back to you on that.

WOMAN

Well, she is a ballet dancer. Maybe it is "tight."  
(SHE goes back to typing)

DETECTIVE

That driver turned out to be a blessing in disguise. I knew she wouldn't have the nerve to pull something with him in the house. I could plan the murder better than she could. I just had to make sure his whereabouts were always known to both of us. And that it was always somewhere nearby. You see, I realized that the minute she got him out of the house, that was when she would make her move. And I was getting a little anxious for it to be over with myself. I tried opening her up. So, tell me about yourself. You've been here two days, I don't know anything about you.

WOMAN

I type fifty words per minute. I graduated from the Cross Secretarial School. That's all you need to know, I think.

DETECTIVE

Are you married?

WOMAN

I was.

(A pause)

DETECTIVE

Yes?

(A pause)

What's that perfume you're wearing?

WOMAN

Just good old Ivory Soap. The snow is beginning to melt. It shouldn't be too much longer now.

(SHE exits. The YOUNG MAN enters)

DETECTIVE

You finished already?

YOUNG MAN

Wasn't as tough as it looked. I've probably seen parts of this house you didn't even know about. I feel like I live here. Boy, I've had a day. Got anything to drink?

DETECTIVE

I guess so...

YOUNG MAN

I figured. I've heard about you writer types. Hemingway, Fitzgerald. You like to put it away. So, this is the famous typewriter, huh?

DETECTIVE

The liquor's here. Help yourself.

(The YOUNG MAN plays with the typewriter)

YOUNG MAN

The quick brown fox...

DETECTIVE

I meant help yourself and scam. I have work to do tonight.

YOUNG MAN

Wouldn't you like some company?

DETECTIVE

Not for my work. I have to be alone.

YOUNG MAN

Just for a minute...?

DETECTIVE

Out!

(The YOUNG MAN exits. The DETECTIVE sits at his desk. Lights only on him)

The ice was melting. But not the ice between me and Miss Black. I stayed up 'til three or four o'clock most mornings, alone in the study, giving her all the opportunity she could need. I couldn't get used to the country. I was used to the city, where a man's screams could be drowned out by a police siren. Footsteps on the stairs would never be heard over the din from the dance-hall across the street. Up here, every noise takes on a life of its own.

(SOUND: A ticking clock)

I tell myself that isn't a bomb, set to go off at any minute. It's just the clock in the hallway.

(SOUND: An insistent scratching)

I tell myself there's no need to turn around. There isn't someone trying to get in through the window. It's just... an animal...looking for food.

II-2-98

(SOUND: A creaking floorboard. A pause.  
It creaks again)

DETECTIVE (Continued)

I tell myself it isn't someone coming down the stairs. It isn't. But then, I tell myself, what the hell else could it be?

(The light on his desk goes out.)

SOUND: Footsteps on the stairs.

One by one, all FOUR ACTORS dressed as each incarnation of the MYSTERY WOMAN enter. THEY entreat the DETECTIVE to dance with them)

MALE ENSEMBLE

NOW  
WAITING TIME IS PAST--  
THAT TOUCH OF FEAR  
HAS COME SO NEAR SO FAST--

ADMIT IT--  
THAT THING YOU FEEL IN YOUR GUT  
IS A STRANGE NEW PAIN--  
AND THE TRUTH IS PLAIN--  
YOU ARE SCARED AT LAST--

NOW  
YOU ARE NUMBER FIVE--  
THERE'S JUST ONE WAY  
FOR YOU TO STAY ALIVE--

JUST ONE MORE CARD YOU CAN THROW DOWN--  
HERE COMES THE SHOWDOWN--  
BUT NOW--  
HERE AND NOW

DETECTIVE

I JUST...

(The WOMAN appears, holding a candle)

WOMAN

Blown a fuse, I guess.

DETECTIVE

At least it looks that way. You're up awfully late.

WOMAN

I read at night. I have trouble sleeping.

(A pause)

Shouldn't we do something about it?



DETECTIVE

Later. We haven't had time to talk.

WOMAN

Talk? About what?

DETECTIVE

That boy's always hanging around. Now it's just the two of us.

WOMAN

That sounded almost romantic.

DETECTIVE

Isn't there something you'd like to get off your chest?

WOMAN

Not with you. The agency will be hearing from me, of course.

DETECTIVE

Like a drink?

WOMAN

Mr. Montgomery, you have really made this as difficult for me as possible. Of course, I realize not everything is in your control; the weather, that boy. But I mean to tell you...

DETECTIVE

But now I'm making it easy for you.

WOMAN

I don't understand.

DETECTIVE

It's just the two of us. Alone.

(A pause. SHE looks at him)

WOMAN

Mr. Montgomery, I would like you to find the fuse box immediately, and repair the lights. I will be in my room.

DETECTIVE

No, don't run away again.  
(HE takes her by the arms)

WOMAN

Take your hands off me at once. I can wake the boy, you know. He's a very light sleeper. His room is right next to mine, and I hear him pacing.

DETECTIVE

All right, don't get excited.

WOMAN

Then remove your hands.

(HE does)

DETECTIVE

I'm sorry. It's just... we haven't had a moment alone.  
I'd like to get to know you better.

WOMAN

I'd... I'd like some coffee. As long as I'm up.

DETECTIVE

Let's just sit.

WOMAN

I'll be right back.  
(SHE exits)

DETECTIVE

Wait, let me find some matches... No! Don't take the  
light!

(The front door slams. A car motor  
starts. Headlights sweep through the  
windows, illuminating his search for  
matches. The car drives away)

(In the dark:) Damn! I guess she couldn't figure out a way  
to do it, after all. Not with that idiot cab driver here.  
But she'll be back; nothing's stopped her yet. She'll be  
back, I know she will. I'll just have to wait.

(HE finds a match. The YOUNG MAN is  
seated in his chair. The DETECTIVE  
lights a lamp. Sees the YOUNG MAN.  
Jumps)

Geez! Where'd you come from?

YOUNG MAN

Me to know and you to find out.

DETECTIVE

What's that mean? You drunk? Well, this'll sober you up.  
Miss Black just ran off with your car.

YOUNG MAN

Not really my car, anyway.

DETECTIVE

Say, listen. In your travels around the house, did you ever  
happen to find the fuse box? We must've blown one. I mean,  
in all the years I've lived here, I've never had to look for  
the fuse box before.

YOUNG MAN

I found it.

DETECTIVE

Would you mind taking a look?

YOUNG MAN

It can wait 'til morning. Pour us a drink.

DETECTIVE

Huh? Oh sure, what the hell, I can relax now.

(HE pours for them)

Cheers.

YOUNG MAN

I've been looking at your work. I hope you don't mind.

DETECTIVE

Not at all. Glad to have a fan.

YOUNG MAN

You don't mind some criticism?

DETECTIVE

As long as it's not too severe.

YOUNG MAN

That new thing you're working on. You've written it already. I checked it with a copy from your library. It's "The Killer Wore Lipstick." Exactly, word for word.

DETECTIVE

I'm doing some revisions... for an anthology kind of thing...

YOUNG MAN

Your glass is empty.  
(HE takes the DETECTIVE'S glass)

DETECTIVE

You'll get me drunk.  
(HE grabs the BOY'S hand)  
You have such small hands.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, I'll bet you know how to hold it. From the old days.

DETECTIVE

Old days?

YOUNG MAN

When you and your buddies would knock back a few.

DETECTIVE

Where'd you hear this?

YOUNG MAN

An old interview.

DETECTIVE

I don't give interviews. No, no...don't pour anymore. It's going straight to my head.

YOUNG MAN

Oh, why not? What have you got to lose? Let's make it a boy's night out.

(HE puts his arm around the DETECTIVE's shoulder)

DETECTIVE

No...

(The DETECTIVE slowly pulls back)

Oh, God. You... you're wearing perfume.

(Lights focus in on the YOUNG MAN. HE lets down his hair, removes his jacket, revealing himself as the MYSTERY WOMAN)

[22] "CONFESSION" (Lyric to come)

(The MYSTERY WOMAN sings a soliloquy that describes her wedding day. As the ceremony was ending and the bride and groom were leaving the church, a black sedan came out of nowhere, swerving onto the steps and killing her husband, the love of her life, Frankie. The car sped away, but the license plate number was etched in her memory forever. The police did nothing to find the killers. She vowed she would. There were five men in and the car, driving drunk. She tracked four of them down and, one by one, executed them. Now there's only one left.

SHE takes out a revolver, slowly begins to load it)

MYSTERY WOMAN

(Spoken)

You're the last. This has to be special.

DETECTIVE

Do your worst. I don't care anymore. You're here, I'm here. Everything is finally as it should be.

MYSTERY WOMAN

No, something's wrong. This doesn't feel right.

DETECTIVE

I feel I know so much about you. And I've never seen you before. For years, you were a ghost to me. Pieces in a puzzle. Something in a manila folder, stored away in a dusty drawer. Now you're here, open. The pieces fit. You've come to life at last.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I don't understand. I can't...

DETECTIVE

Go ahead. Let's end this.

MYSTERY WOMAN

I can't... It's not right.

DETECTIVE

Right, wrong. You've never cared about that before. I know what's right and what's wrong. They pay me for it.

MYSTERY WOMAN

Who are you?

(HE takes her and kisses her full on the mouth. HE takes hold of the hand holding the revolver. SHE struggles against him. The revolver points straight up in the air. It shoots. SHE relaxes into the kiss. HE leads her to the desk chair, sits her in it. HE handcuffs her to the arm of the chair)

You're not Montgomery.

(The lights circle in on her)

Give him back to me! I was so close. Just that one more, and it was over. Give him back to me, you son of a bitch, whoever you are. You talk of right and wrong. He was wrong. You are wrong. You, cops, whoever you are. He was the murderer, not me. I was doing your job, because you didn't. They took a life. They took two. His and mine. Our life. Gone in the blink of an eye. So I took theirs. Give me Montgomery. Give me peace. My poor Frankie, let him finally rest.

(JOAN enters)

JOAN

You poor thing. Let it out. Go on, you'll feel better. I don't know, maybe you will. If crying made you feel better, I'd be Bozo the Clown.

(Lights come up on an interrogation room. MYSTERY WOMAN moves to a chair. MURPHY stands nearby. The DETECTIVE stands to one side, his back to THEM)

Yeah, it's her. Like I said, I wish I'd met her sooner.

MURPHY

Confession's all ready. Sign here.

(MYSTERY WOMAN signs the confession)

Easter Sunday. You had three years to catch this dame, and you have to catch her on Easter Sunday. Listen to that crowd at the parade! And I'm missing it. But hell, this is good. I'da probably come in on Christmas Eve for this. Well, as long as we're confessing... I told you I knew Marv Donaldson. Maldonado. He came to me, told me about the...accident. I mean, the guy saved my life. All I was saving him was a measly fine, maybe a month in the slammer. And some unwanted publicity when he was just getting started. I misplaced a few reports, got a few witnesses to forget what they'd seen. I paid him back the favor I owed him. And no one was the wiser, no one cared. Except for her. Come on, we're going downtown for booking.

DETECTIVE

And after that, you can go straight to hell.

MURPHY

You can't fire me. That has to come straight from the chief. Come on, little lady. Let's take a ride.

(HE puts her in handcuffs)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Son of a bitch, can't you make it any tighter?

MURPHY

Oh, she's a delicate thing.

DETECTIVE

Murph...

(HE adjusts the cuffs)

MURPHY

Better, Princess?

DETECTIVE

Give me a minute alone with her.

(MURPHY and JOAN exit. The DETECTIVE unlocks the cuff. SHE rubs her injured wrist)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Thank you, Detective. You're the only friend I've got.

DETECTIVE

I thank you. You gave me something I thought I'd lost. Finding you became my reason to get up in the morning.

MYSTERY WOMAN

You could let me go, couldn't you? You unlocked the cuff, I got away from you. Out the window, anywhere.

DETECTIVE

It has to be this way.

MYSTERY WOMAN

So you got what you wanted. And when they reach a verdict, I'll be with my Frankie again, so I guess I'm getting what I wanted, as well. This is the way it has to end. I thank you. Thank you for finding me.

(SHE kisses him)

DETECTIVE

Oh, God. Your perfume...

MYSTERY WOMAN

Good-bye...

(MURPHY and JOAN re-enter. The DETECTIVE hands him the open handcuff. MURPHY slips it on. JOAN approaches the MYSTERY WOMAN)

JOAN

I coulda told you you were barking up the wrong tree. Saved a coupla lives in the bargain. Not that I'm saying they were worth saving.

DETECTIVE

What are you saying?

JOAN

I knew three of those guys, how shall I say...? Intimately.

(MURPHY pulls the MYSTERY WOMAN across the stage to the stage apron)

MURPHY

Sorry a classy dame like you has to take her last ride on the subway, but that parade is clogging the streets. It woulda taken us three hours to go five blocks.

MYSTERY WOMAN

This is perfect.

JOAN

(Continuing to address the MYSTERY WOMAN as if SHE is still in the room)

Mead. The married one. He's the one introduced me to the other two. He wined me, dined me, kept promising to leave the wife. I kept believing him. Hell, in those days, if you got a couple of belts in me, I believed in the Tooth Fairy, as long as I got to keep the nickel. So, this one night, they're drinking up a storm, as usual. He's loving me up, and I give him my ultimatum.

MURPHY

(To the MYSTERY WOMAN)

You're very pretty.

(SHE stares at him)

MYSTERY WOMAN

Thanks.

MURPHY

You're gonna sell a lotta newspapers.

(MYSTERY WOMAN laughs)

For a lady who's getting the chair, you got a good sense of humor.

MYSTERY WOMAN

It's funny.

MURPHY

What is?

MYSTERY WOMAN

All those years I spent. Searching for those men. Names, addresses. Hunting them. When all I really needed was one name. Yours.

JOAN

I love ya, honey, he says. But I already got a wife. A kid. Nice house in the suburbs. I start to cry. Mitchell offers to take me home. But it's Maldonado's car. So he says he'll drive. You're too blotto, says Manning, the upstart. So everybody piles in the car. Mead gets behind the wheel, pulls me in, puts me on his lap. Let's show the folks how I'm teaching you to drive, honey. He makes me take hold of the wheel. Now I really can't see. I blink, and the tears drop, and it's better. My personal windshield wipers. He's pressing on the gas. He's pressing on my thigh. We'll turn left at the church, he says.

MURPHY

Train's coming.

MYSTERY WOMAN

If it hadn't been for you, those men would've been found. That woman. She stole my husband more surely than if she'd slept with him.

[23] INCIDENTAL: MUSIC OF "THAT FACE"

JOAN

Before I know it, we're there, and I can't see again. It's blurry, and all I see is white. I blink. It was you. Your white dress.



MYSTERY WOMAN

It was her. Behind the wheel. I couldn't see. The sun in my eyes. She's coming to take Frankie away, and all I can do is squint.

JOAN

Your veil up, your face smiling. I wanted to wipe that smile off her face. I saw that beautiful groom, his arms open, waiting to carry you away. My hands froze on the wheel.

MYSTERY WOMAN

It really is funny. The law. Justice. A cop. Someone had to do the job you didn't.

MURPHY

No lecture, honey. It's over now.

JOAN

It was over. I didn't see very much after that. But I did see that, like me, you weren't smiling anymore.

MYSTERY WOMAN

How nice to be able to laugh again.

MURPHY

Enjoy it. You won't be able to laugh, where you're going.

MYSTERY WOMAN

And neither will you.

(SHE shoves him forward. The handcuff slips off her wrist, and HE falls into the pit. The lights from the train flash by her face. Lights fade on the MYSTERY WOMAN. The DETECTIVE unzips the back of JOAN's dress)

DETECTIVE

We have to stay close to each other. That's the important thing. We can't let each other get away.

JOAN

Oh, honey. Sweet.

EPILOGUE

THEY move into the hotel room  
from the Prologue. The  
DETECTIVE begins to undress.  
JOAN gets into bed.

DETECTIVE

She's coming for you now. She could be anywhere. A blink  
of an eye and it's over.

(The DETECTIVE moves downstage. Lights  
fade on JOAN)

You're all that stands between us now. And that won't be  
for long.

[24] REPRISE: "AGAIN"

(Sings)

SHE'S SOMEWHERE OUT THERE,  
AS SURE AS I'M HERE--  
SHE'S WAITING OUT THERE--  
I KNOW IT--

(Lights come up faintly on the MYSTERY  
WOMAN. SHE wears a raincoat,  
sunglasses, and a scarf over her hair)

I'LL FIND HER OUT THERE--  
I SEE IT SO CLEAR--  
I'LL MEET HER OUT THERE  
AGAIN.

THE END