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SF PERUSALS

Noir Suspicions

Book by
David Landau

Music and Lyrics by
Nikki Stern

A Samuel French Acting Edition

SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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AUTHOR'S NOTES

I invented the interactive mystery play back in the early 1980s as an attempt to mix environmental theater with audience involvement. My goal was to allow the audience to experience the story as if they were extras in a movie. The entire production, from script to props, direction to surroundings, was oriented towards encompassing the audience in the world of the mystery and not merely with the game of solving it. Mystery parlor games existed since the turn of the century. As theater, it is the story of the characters which must always take center stage - a story of people who find themselves in desperate situations and are compelled to perform desperate acts. The comedy must come from the characters and not at their expense or that of the story.

It can become tempting for cast members to play for a laugh, but this seldom works. The audience laughs the most at things that are played straight - discovering the humor for themselves. Audiences identify and sympathize with characters that are real and seldom with caricatures. An actor's approach to an interactive mystery should be no different than that taken to Shakespeare or any other theatrical work. Why is the character there, what are they thinking, why are they doing what they do and what do they want? The more real, the more the audience becomes involved in this new reality and the more both they and the performers will enjoy the experience. The audience itself is utilized by the performer, as a prop, a confident, another cast member. The audience is on stage with them.

In a true mystery there can be only one logical culprit, pointed out not only by the clues, but by the motivation, personality and situa-

tion that character finds himself/herself in. While there are a number of other likely suspects, this character is the inevitable guilty party. The mystery has been sewn well when the average of correct guesses is 10 - 20%. By the end of the play, when all is revealed, the audience should sigh a collective "Of course, I should have thought of that!"

The interactive mystery play offers theater patrons, performers and producers many unique opportunities. The audience can be taken to the edge with suspense and then suddenly dropped into a humorous release of tension. The characters can become so real that they can reach out and touch the audience, literally. The theatrical fourth wall is placed behind the audience. If done correctly, the interactive play can be one of the most involving forms of theater possible.

David Landau
Creator of the first interactive mystery play, "The Mystery Express", Dec. 1982
Member of The Dramatists Guild and Mystery Writers of America

PRODUCTION NOTES

PERFORMANCE SPACE

The following play was designed to be performed in a dining room, dinner theater, night club, theater-in-the-round, or a thrust stage where the acting area is level with the first row. The intention is to make the audience feel like they are actually in the location of the story. The performance is a sort of reverse theater in the round, with action performed around the circumference of the seating area, as well as down the aisles and in the center. The audience should be seated at tables, either dinner or cocktail. Tables could be added in font of the first row in the case of thrust or arena stages. Audience members can also be seated on stage.

SCENES & BREAKS

The script is formatted into four or five scenes running in length from 12 to 20 minutes. Between each scene is time to serve a course of a meal, serve drinks, or play music as desired. During these breaks characters mingle, helping to establish character and reveal information to the audience in a one on one manner. The script can easily be adapted to eliminate some of these breaks. If this is the desire, black-outs should take place between scenes, with an intermission between either scenes 2 and 3 (if four scenes) or 3 and 4 (if five scenes). There should be some kind of break just before the finale scene to allow audience members to hand in their guesses as to "whodunit".

MUSICAL NUMBERS

The musical numbers in the show have been designed to be performed to a taped play back. Once a license has been signed, an

audio tape with recordings of both the instrumentals and the composer singing the lyrics can be obtained from MTG. Lead sheets will be provided when available. Also in the tape is the opening theme music which is to be used at the beginning of each scene. There is a minor fee for the copying and shipping fee of the tape. For more information contact MTG Inc. via email at murdertogo@att.net or at (973) 301-0121

AWARDING PRIZES

The "Sleuth Sheets" are handed out with the programs at the beginning of the night and collected by the characters before the finale scene. They should be handed to the stage manager, who will sort out the correct answers. After the curtain call, the correct answers are handed to the main character, who reads out the names of the successful sleuths. Generally, all correct answers are placed in a hat and a character draws one name. A prize is then awarded to that patron by a cast member. The prize can be a bottle of wine, a T-shirt, almost anything. It's the thought that counts.

CAST

RICHARD ARCHER — ex-private detective, now half owner of the Cafe Noir. His partner and girlfriend is -

SHEILA WONDERLY— ex-call girl, now the other half owner of the Cafe Noir.

ANTHONY CAIRO — a dealer in the black market, and hiding out from some smugglers he double-crossed.

DEPUTY INSPECTOR RIGFIELD — of the St. Vincent Police. He hates the Cafe Noir and has longed to close it down and get himself a promotion to full inspector.

INGRID LASZLO — A desperate woman being blackmailed.

SIDNEY FERRARI — the British owner of the Blue Parrot Resort and Condos on Tobago Cay and one of the Carribean=s wealthiest developers.

CLAUDETTE PONTE — A French blackmailer, known as Nurse Nightshade because of her expertise with poisons.

JUDGE KOCH — (same actress as Claudette) A Magistrate from St. Vincent and regular at the Cafe Noir.

RENAULT — a taxi driver and member of the radical French Liberte party (same actor as Rigfield).

SETTING

The Cafe Noir on the island of Mustique, where everything and everyone is in black, white or grey. Everyone dresses and talks like a character from a 1940s film noir movie. The time, however, is the present. The program looks like a passport to Mustique. Inside is a Sleuth Sheet asking "Whodunit? Whydunit? How many references to the classic movie Casablanca are mentioned during the show?"

As guests enter they are seated by Rick, Sheila and Cairo. Rigfield lurks outside or in the lobby.

A newspaper on every table reads:

"The international French banker, Louis Ugarte was found shot dead on the Kingstown docks last night, a possible robbery victim, as both his wallet and passport were missing. Police are investigating the matter. Mr. Ugarte was staying at the new Blue Parrot Resort on Tobago Cay, which he represented foreign interest in. Tourism fell last year to an all-time low, proving a bust for the new hotel and casinos that recently opened on Tobago Cay. The significant drop in crime last year was looked on as an encouraging sign by the developers, who have said that they're in the Grenadines for the long haul. While some are over-extended, all are competing with each other to develop or at least purchase more property, anticipating the Grenadines as the new vacation center for the international elite. It better come soon, as all the new resort developments have filed for chapter 11."

PRE-SHOW

Rick introduces himself as the manager and owner - co-owner actually, of the Cafe Noir - formerly a Private Investigator from Atlantic City. He invites guests to join the blackjack game in the back room and warns them to stay away from the Blue Parrot resort and Casino, which is a high class rip-off joint. The tables are rigged.

Sheila introduces herself as the manager and owner of the Cafe Noir - co-owner actually. She welcomes them to "her" island and explains that she can help them find anything they may want on the island, from private escorted tours to the best nude beaches. She flirts with the men.

Cairo hands out his business card, which is totally black. He explains that he's a dealer in the blackmarket and has lots of bargains for them. He reveals an arm-full of watches and offers handcuffs and handcuff keys for sale "You never know when they'll come in handy." He tries to sell all sorts of other things (anything the actor wishes to bring in).

Sidney Ferrari introduces himself as a businessman and entrepreneur, handing out business cards. He flirts with the women and tells the men he has some wonderful investment opportunities. Most recently, he is looking to expand his resort properties holdings.

Constable Rigfield walks around, basically accusing people of being criminals and warning them that he is going to close this place down and arrest them all.

Ingrid moves about, wearing sunglasses. She approaches guests, but seems too nervous to say anything and quickly leaves.

Scene 1

(Music plays. A spotlight comes up on RICK as he lights a match. He has a cigarette in his mouth. He lights two candles on a small table as he talks to the audience, with the cigarette still in his mouth.)

RICK. Have you ever wondered if there is any truth to those stupid superstitions? You know, like Friday the thirteenth, breaking a mirror or three on a match?

(He holds up the match ready to light the cigarette, but blows it out instead. He shows that he is wearing handcuffs.)

RICK. The cold steel bracelets of the law. I ended up wearing these because I never believed in superstition. I'm not saying that if I had things would have been different. Although it sure couldn't have been worse. Right know you're probably asking yourself - who the hell is this guy and why on earth is he talking to us. Well, I'm going to tell you, with all the sordid details. My handle is Richard Archer, but you can call me just plain Rick. I'm the

manager of a dark and seedy cafe on the forgotten Caribbean island of Mustique in the Grenadines. It's a gathering place of sorts, where all walks of life come together. And that's not always a good thing. It's a supper club really, called the Cafe Noir.

(The lights come up over the audience. RICK begins to walk among them, pointing people out as he sings. In the shadows are the others who sing the chorus.)

RICK.
HUSTLERS ON HIATUS
TOUGH GUYS OFF THE TAKE
DAMES WHO PAY FOREVER
FOR AN INNOCENT MISTAKE
LIVING IN THE SHADOWS
IT'S THE ONLY LIFE THEY KNOW
DENIZEN OR DROP-OUT
THEY'VE GOT NOWHERE ELSE TO GO

WELCOME TO CAFE NOIR
A CHEAP DOCK-SIDE BAR
POSSESSED OF A QUAINT SEEDY CHARM
MOST OF YOU
WILL BE PASSING ON THROUGH
BUT IF YOU'D LIKE TO STAY
WHAT'S THE HARM
YOU'RE IN CAFE NOIR
AN ALL PURPOSE BAR
WE DON'T CARE WHERE YOU'VE HUNG OUT BEFORE
IF YOUR MONEY'S OKAY
THEN YOU'RE WELCOME TO STAY

WE CAN ALWAYS FIND ROOM FOR ONE MORE.

RICK. My partner in this venture was a an ex-call girl by the name of Sheila Wonderly - a woman who had seen more of the underside of life than _____*(Whoever is topical.)*

SHEILA. *(Walking about, then joining RICK.)*
EVERY NOW AND THEN
A GROUP OF TOURISTS COME TO CALL
MY, THE PLACE GETS LIVELIER
WITH PARTYING AND ALL
CRAZY FOLKS, THEY DANCE AND DRINK
UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAY
THEN THEY GO
BUT DON'T YOU KNOW, THAT ONE OR TWO MIGHT STAY

RICK & SHEILA.
BECAUSE AT CAFE NOIR
THIS FINE ISLAND BAR
WE SERVE PREMIUM CARIBBEAN BOOZE
TOP DRAWER RUM
IS A DIET FOR SOME
BUT THEN THAT'S THE LIFESTYLE
THEY CHOOSE
YOU SEE, AT CAFE NOIR
YOUR TYPICAL BAR

CHORUS.
HERE ON THE
ISLAND
FINE BOOZE
THIS FINE OLD
ISLAND
YOU CHOOSE
OUT ON THE
ISLAND
OOH

WE'RE DESIGNED TO HELP PATRONS FORGET
IF THE LIQUOR IS SMOOTH
IT MIGHT HELP TO SOOTH
ANY LINGERING TRACE OF REGRET

RICK. You won't find it listed in any of the tourist guides. Our clientele range from the lowest two-bit criminal dining on his last stolen dime to high society dames slumming it with some sap with a seeping wallet. It's a safe haven for people in high-risk professions, where every shadow is a place of business and every transaction is non-refundable. It's the kind of place the British minority government is not really fond of - they say its bad for the island's image. But I run a strictly honest joint and don't take a cut from any of the merchants that use my place to hang their shingle. That's why the bobbies here haven't been able to clamp down and nail this place shut. That is, until - But I'm getting ahead of myself.

RICK & SHEILA.
ANSWERING TO NO ONE
MAKING OUR OWN RULES
FREE TO CUT OUR LOSSES
AND TO WALK AWAY FROM FOOLS
DON'T MEAN TO SOUND CYNICAL
BUT HEY, THAT'S HOW WE SOUND
THE SETUP'S WORKING WELL FOR US
AND THIS IS WHAT WE'VE FOUND

CHORUS.
AT CAFE NOIR
JUST A CHEAP DOCKSIDE BAR
NO ONE CARES WHAT YOU'VE DONE
OR WHO YOU ARE
YOU CAN COME YOU CAN GO
AND THERE'S ALWAYS THE SHOW
THAT PLAY'S OUT EVERY NIGHT AT THE BAR
YOU CAN DISAPPEAR
YOU CAN TOSS BACK YOUR BEER

LIFE ON THE
DOCKSIDE
SO FAR
CAFE
NOIR

IT'S WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE OOH
CAUSE WE OWN THIS SPACE
AND IN THIS KIND OF PLACE
THERE'S AN ODD SENSE OF BEING FREE WE'RE FREE

ALL.
THAT'S WHY CAFE NOIR
IS THE PERFECT HOME FOR ME.

(Lights dim to only spotlight on RICK. CLAUDETTE, INGRID, SIDNEY and RIGFIELD exit.)

RICK. The reason I'm bending your ear is because I'm going to ask for your help to get me out of these (holds up handcuffed wrists). But let's start off at an easy place, at a time earlier tonight when I was wearing the same accessories as I'm wearing now, only under different circumstances.

(Lights up. CAIRO approaches, dangling a handcuff key.)

CAIRO. These are the exact same model that the St. Vincent Police department are issued. Now you might see why owning your very own key could be a possession one finds handy.

RICK. For you, certainly, Mr. Cairo. But I'm strictly on the up and up and they know it. That's why they hate me so much. I'm afraid I'm not buying, so if you don't mind?

(RICK holds forward his handcuffed hands for CAIRO to unlock. CAIRO reluctantly starts to, but SHEILA swipes the key and hides it behind her back.)

SHEILA. What's your hurry, big boy? Maybe we should go into the back room and try some new interrogation procedures.

(SHEILA starts to back up as RICK moves after her for the key.)

CAIRO. Of course, if it's the complete set you wish to procure, I could see fit to let you have it for a reasonable sum. Like I did for this couple over here. *(To couple in audience.)* That leather strapped chair and whip will be in by the end of the week.

(RICK loops his arms over SHEILA and kisses her. When he lifts his arms back again, he has the key swiped from her hand behind her back during the kiss and unlocks himself.)

SHEILA. Cheat.

RICK. *(Handing back handcuffs and key.)* Here you go, Cairo. I don't think I'll be in any need of them.

CAIRO. *(Taking handcuffs and keys.)* One can never be too sure. Look how handy the key came in already.

(An ear-shattering whistle sounds and RIGFIELD enters. CAIRO quickly hides the handcuffs and key and starts to slowly back out.)

SHEILA. *(Putting on British accent.)* Evening Deputy Inspector Rigfield. A spot of tea?

RIGFIELD. I'm on duty in my official capacity, Ms. Wonderly.

RICK. What is it this time, Rigfield? Noise complaint? Someone didn't get the right change?

RIGFIELD. A missing shipment of new handcuffs bound for

the St. Vincent's police department. Seems the shackles got snatched last night while the shoreman were distracted in a shell game. When the constable assigned to escort the shipment did his duty and broke up the scam, the damn darbies disappeared from the dock.

RICK. That still doesn't explain why you're showing your face here. It's bad for business. Ruins our customers' appetites.

RIGFIELD. Think you're funny, don't ya, Yank! Well, I distinctly recall seeing someone resembling a friend of yours lurking about the docks last night and I knew I could corner him here. Mr. Cairo!

(RIGFIELD turns to stare down CAIRO.)

CAIRO. You weren't that unfortunate assigned constable that had such an important shipment stolen from right under his very nose? How humiliating. And I had so much faith in you, Deputy Inspector. *(To audience member.)* Constables aren't what they used to be, are they?

(RIGFIELD approaches the same audience member.)

RIGFIELD. *(To audience member.)* You? Out on bail already? The system isn't what it used to be either if it's letting the likes of you walk so fast.

(CAIRO has taken the opportunity to drop the handcuffs into his pocket.)

CAIRO. Perhaps the system didn't let him/her out. Perhaps he/she let him/herself out and it would be your sworn duty to put him back in.

RIGFIELD. Oh, you'd like that, wouldn't you, Mr. Cairo? Run this bloke in while you take a run yourself, aye? Dream on. I'm running you both in.

(RIGFIELD handcuffs CAIRO and then handcuffs him to the audience member.)

RICK. You'd better have an arrest warrant, Rigfield. Otherwise the only uniform you'll be wearing will be as a doorman for the new casino hotel over on Tobago Cay.

RIGFIELD. *(Turning back on CAIRO.)* Think you're smart, aye, peeper? We'll see who's smart when I put you away for aiding and abetting a gunsel.

RICK & SHEILA. Gunsel?

(SHEILA and RICK look at each other, confused. Meanwhile, CAIRO has been removing the handcuffs with his key. CAIRO seats the guests and follows RIGFIELD as he walks towards RICK.)

RIGFIELD. Murderer! That shipment of handcuffs wasn't the only thing that got swiped dockside last night. *(Walking towards RICK, with CAIRO directly behind him.)* Some wealthy off-islander had his life swiped from him as well. Seems the poor bloke was just out for a night stroll and got walked all over. The odd thing was, he had his wallet and everything still on him. What's the matter, peeper? Forgot to read today's paper?

RICK. I haven't had time. And you should know by now, Rigfield, I'm no longer a private detective.

RIGFIELD. That's a laugh - ha, ha. A guy like you can't help it. It's in your blood. Once a dick, always a dick.

SHEILA. Can I quote you on that one, Deputy Inspector?

RIGFIELD. What? *(Realizing what he just said.)* Oh - er - certainly not.

RICK. And what in that confused mind of yours brings me into this little picture?

RIGFIELD. This!

(RIGFIELD pulls out a "Cafe Noir" matchbook.)

RIGFIELD. "Cafe Noir - exquisite island ambiance". It was found at the scene of the crime.

CAIRO. *(Taking matchbook from RIGFIELD.)* I'm disappointed in you, Mr. Rick. After all the business we've done together, to find that you've gone to someone else for something as simple as matchbooks - *(Feels the cover.)* - And even a lower quality than I would have gotten you. I'm sure I could have gotten this for you at half the price you paid. What price did you pay?

RIGFIELD. *(Swiping back the matchbook.)* That's police property - possible evidence at a probable homicide.

SHEILA. It's just a matchbook with "Cafe Noir" printed on it. Anyone could have picked one up.

RIGFIELD. But I don't see any on the tables, Miss Wonderly. Do you?

(She and CAIRO look around. There are no matchbooks out.)

RICK. Rest assured, Cairo, if ever I had matchbooks for this place printed up, I'd do them through you. But that's one thing I've never gotten around to.

CAIRO. Then how do you explain that?

RIGFIELD. Precisely!

RICK. I'm afraid I can't.

RIGFIELD. Right! Keep a lid on it as long as you can, peeper. But I'll have it all out. And when I do, I'll have you right where I want you, in St. Vincent's prison.

(RIGFIELD turns and starts to leave. CAIRO hands him his handcuffs as he passes. RIGFIELD just nods in thanks, then finally stops by the door.)

RIGFIELD. Wait one bloody second. How did you get out of these here darbies?

CAIRO. I didn't.

RIGFIELD. You can't play me for a sap, sharpie. I don't see your wrists still in them, do I?

CAIRO. Very funny, Deputy Inspector. You let me out, when Mr. Rick asked if you had an arrest warrant. *(To audience member he was handcuffed to.)* He's always one for a good gag, isn't he, the deputy inspector here? *(To RIGFIELD.)* You're a sharp one, sir, there's no denying that.

RIGFIELD. You can bet your cards on it. *(To RICK.)* I'm watching you, Archer. You're going to feel my eyes pressing in on your back so hard you're not going to be able to sleep at night.

(RIGFIELD exits.)

SHEILA. I knew we shouldn't have stayed open for Friday the 13th.

CAIRO. That's right! This is Friday the 13th. If I were you, Mr. Rick, I'd close up fast.

RICK. Close up? We've got a fine crowd here tonight.

(SHEILA, CAIRO and RICK look about at the crowd. There is disappointment and disgust on their faces.)

ALL THREE. Ugh.

RICK. Okay, maybe not so fine a crowd. But superstition is just that and it doesn't pay the bills.

SHEILA. No? Everyone knows that you knock on wood after mentioning your own good fortune. Right? Just a silly superstition. *(Walking to a man in the audience.)* Well, just the other day this fine gentleman found himself before a St. Vincent Magistrate after being arrested for swindling a couple of vacationing nuns. He played poker with the judge to determine his sentencing. When our friend had three duces in his hand, he knocked on the wooden table the cards were dealt on. The table collapsed and in the confusion he picked up two of a kind from a previous hand. His newly constructed full house easily beat the judge's three jacks - and that's how he ended up here instead of in a St. Vincent's jail cell.

CAIRO. You might say he played his cards right when opportunity knocked. And what of spilled salt? A supposed warning of impending danger that could only be offset by the tossing of some grains over one's left shoulder - to blind the devil lurking there. Superstition, without doubt. *(Walking up to a woman.)* But when this wonderful specimen of womanhood had completed her work at the Grenadine Hyatt last night, she stumbled into a tray of room service in the hall. She might never have been able to be with us tonight, if she had not thrown the spilled salt over her left shoulder, thus blinding the hotel detective about to apprehend her for prostitution. Excellent service at reasonable rates - my personal recommendation.

SHEILA. I gave her all my old clients. You know, Rick, this is one of those rare occasions when I actually agree with Cairo. We

shouldn't have opened tonight and I think we should close up early before any more harm is done.

RICK. This is ludicrous! If I'm not going to close up under threat of the St. Vincent police, I'm certainly not going to close for a silly superstition.

(CAIRO, sensing the tension, backs into the shadows.)

SHEILA. *(Angry)* You? I'm the co-manager of Cafe Noir, aren't I?

RICK. Well -

SHEILA. Well, this 50% says we close and cut our losses before they cut us.

RICK. Alright, I'll keep my half of the place open and you can close your 50%. *(Pointing to a few tables.)* You can have that half. But I'd be pretty careful about how you ask them to leave. Some of them look pretty scary.

(INGRID, wearing sunglasses, enters.)

SHEILA. We're closed.

(She turns and starts to exit.)

RICK. We're open.

(She turns and starts back in.)

SHEILA. *(Angry look to RICK.)* WE'RE CLOSED!

(She turns and starts to exit.)

RICK. This half of the place is open.

(She turns back and starts in again.)

SHEILA. But she's in my half so we're closed.

(INGRID looks totally confused.)

INGRID. Well, it doesn't really matter much to me either way. I didn't come here for dinner or a drink. I was looking for a gentleman by the name of Richard Archer.

RICK. You just found him.

SHEILA. And you can keep him.

(SHEILA storms out. RICK starts after her.)

INGRID. I hope this isn't an awkward moment.

RICK. *(Giving up on SHEILA.)* No more awkward than any other. My life seems to be just one awkward moment after another. What can I do for you, Ms.?

INGRID. *(Covers her left hand with her right.)* Ingrid. I've heard you are a man who can be trusted.

RICK. It's nice to hear someone disagrees with the loan officer at my bank. Go on.

INGRID. Well, it's a delicate matter, one that requires a certain amount of discretion.

RICK. In other words, you don't want your husband to find out.

INGRID. What makes you think I have a husband to find out?

RICK. The way you hid your left hand when I asked your

name. You should have taken the wedding ring off before you came in the door. I'm sure whoever gave you my name told you I used to be a private detective.

INGRID. Yes, of course. That is why I came here.

RICK. But they forgot to tell you that I quit that occupation. I didn't like the hours or the working conditions and most of the time they didn't like me. I'm the manager, co-manager actually, of this little supper club now. Don't take this the wrong way, Ms. Ingrid, I'm flattered that you would come to me for help. But unless it's a drink or something to eat, I'm afraid the only way I can help you out is the same way you came in.

INGRID. *(Holding back the upset in her voice.)* I see. Well, I'm sorry if I've wasted any of your time. Good evening then, Mr. Archer.

(She turns to leave and suddenly breaks down crying. RICK turns to the audience. Ingrid freezes.)

RICK. Okay folks, if you were in my shoes, what would you have done? I could hear her sob story or just help her get a taxi back to her hotel. With a show of hands, how many for taking it on the chin and helping Ingrid with her problem?

(RICK counts the votes.)

RICK. Okay, and how many for keeping my nose clean and helping her out - the door, that is?

(RICK counts the votes. Scene continues with version A or B.)

VERSION - A "To Help"

If the majority voted to help her out, Rick replies;

RICK. A bunch of saps here tonight, falling for the old waterworks routine, huh! Alright, majority rules.

(RICK comforts her and hands her his hanky.)

RICK. That's alright, Sister. Have a good cry and then tell me all about it. I've always had a weakness for Niagra Falls. Let me get you a drink on the house while we wait for the flood gates to close.

(RICK turns to leave for the bar. Skip to "Both Versions Continue.")

VERSION - B "Not to Help"

If the majority voted to send her back to her hotel, RICK replies:

RICK. Heartless bunch here tonight, not even touched by the old waterworks routine, huh? Alright, majority rules.

(RICK comforts her and hands her his hanky.)

RICK. That's alright, Sister. Have a good cry and you'll discover that things aren't really all that bad. Go back to your hotel and then, if you still feel desperate come morning, you can give me a call. Let me get you a drink on the house and I'll put in a call for a taxi.

(RICK hands her his card. He turns to leave for the bar.)

BOTH VERSIONS CONTINUE

INGRID. Thank you, Mr. Archer.

RICK. That's just plain Rick.

INGRID. Very well then. Thank you Mr. just plain Rick.

(CAIRO steps forward intercepting RICK.)

CAIRO. There is something very familiar about that woman, Mr. Rick. Something that gives me a very uneasy feeling.

RICK. Well, she's a new face to me, Cairo.

CAIRO. *(Feeling scars on his face.)* Just because a face is new, it doesn't mean it's innocent.

RICK. Speaking as one who knows?

CAIRO. In more ways than one, Mr. Rick. Yes, in more ways than one. The sooner you have her out of here the better for us all.

RICK. And what superstition is it this time?

CAIRO. The seven years bad luck one.

(CAIRO points to INGRID, who has opened a compact mirror to adjust her make-up. The mirror is cracked.)

RICK. Maybe she's had that cracked make-up mirror for seven years already. Maybe you could sell her a new one?

(RICK goes to the bar and gets a drink. As INGRID adjusts her make-up, she notices in the mirror CLAUDETTE, wearing sunglasses and a dark hat, enter. She becomes nervous and closes the compact quickly. CAIRO approaches INGRID as CLAUDETTE fades back into the shadows, watching INGRID.)

CAIRO. Pardon me, Madam. But I couldn't help noticing that your make-up mirror is in a damaged condition.

INGRID. Yes, it seems to have broken on my way over here this evening. Bad luck, aye?

(RICK has returned with her drink in time to hear this. CAIRO shoots him an "I told you so" glance.)

CAIRO. Perhaps your luck can be changed.

(CAIRO opens his jacket to display a variety of compacts. INGRID laughs. CAIRO looks offended and starts away.)

RICK. Thank you, Mr. Cairo. You've changed her from tears to laughter. And such a beautiful laugh it is.

(RICK hands her the drink. Continue with either Version A or skip to Version B as marked.)

VERSION - A "To Help"

RICK. Okay, Sister, let's have it. What problem is it you'd like me to help you with that you can't go to the police about?

INGRID. You say you are no longer a private detective, but you still talk like one.

RICK. Hard habits are bad to break. What are you being blackmailed for?

INGRID. *(Surprised)* But - who said anything about blackmail?

RICK. Let's get something straight between us, Ingrid. You came here for my help and against my better judgement I'm throwing in with you. But my help comes with certain conditions - no games, no lies. Neither of us have time for it. What are you being blackmailed over? Photos?

INGRID. A pearl necklace. It was a gift from a certain friend.

RICK. A lover.

(She looks at him, cross.)

RICK. Well, if you can't stick to the rules, there's no sense in playing the game.

(RICK turns and starts away.)

INGRID. Alright, yes, a lover. We met in Paris. When my husband went to Germany on business, we spent the week in Casablanca, where he bought me a set of perfectly shaped pearls from some dealer in the black-market. The pearls were held together by a locket which had a dedication inside.

RICK. Could be from childhood sweetheart days. Not substantial enough for a good ransom.

INGRID. The dedication was dated.

RICK. That's substantial enough. Your husband is a jealous man?

INGRID. Violently. As a boy every time his dog gave the stick to someone else to throw, he beat it.

RICK. So this wouldn't just be to protect your lover, but yourself as well.

INGRID. I suppose that's true.

RICK. And your husband is rich and you're accustomed to being pampered.

INGRID. I'm not sure I like your directness, just plain Rick.

RICK. That's your choice, I guess.

INGRID. *(Handing RICK a stuffed gray envelope.)* I want you to get that necklace and destroy it. There's plenty in there to cover your time and all expenses.

RICK. *(Glancing inside at all $100 bills.)* And where would I find this blackmailer of yours?

INGRID. She's less than twenty feet away. That dangerous looking woman over there.

RICK. *(Pointing to a woman in audience.)* Who, her?

INGRID. No, not her. She's pretty scary, though. But, that woman over there in the black hat and sunglasses.

(INGRID motions towards CLAUDETTE, sipping a drink in the shadows.)

INGRID. I would appreciate it if you would wait until after I've left.

RICK. I have all night.

Skip to "Either Version Continues"

VERSION - B "Not to Help"

RICK. That cab will be a little late. It seems to be a busy night.

Skip to "Either Version Continues"

EITHER VERSION CONTINUES

INGRID. I'm afraid my husband may have followed me. If he caught me here it would put me in a rather awkward position.

RICK. You're more than welcome to wait in the back room.

(RICK motions off to the back room.)

INGRID. Thank you, just plain Rick.

(She gives him a quick kiss, catching RICK off guard, then exits past SHEILA, who has entered and seen this. CAIRO clears his throat as a way to warn RICK.)

CAIRO. Isn't it time for the first course?

(SHEILA claps her hands, glaring at RICK. The first course is served during which SHEILA goes from table to table asking about the strange woman - what's her name, what did she want, how was RICK acting towards her. SHEILA seems jealous. SHEILA tells guests that she can recommend some rather good escorts on the island, if they are so inclined.

CAIRO moves from table to table trying to sell things and reminding people that he certainly didn't have anything to do with that unfortunate man's death last night down by the docks. Yes, he was down in the area, collecting a shipment, and come to think of it, the description of the man does fit a gentleman CAIRO remembers seeing talking in the shadows with a woman in a trenchcoat, sunglasses, and her hair pulled up into a black hat.

INGRID moves around from table to table, making nervous small talk and obviously trying to avoid CLAUDETTE. If asked by guests what she wanted to hire RICK to do for her, she will reveal that she needs to have something she lost retrieved. She will notice the newspaper on each table, read a portion of it and become obviously upset and put it down again. She knew the man killed on the docks.

CLAUDETTE follows one table behind INGRID, saying good evening to guests and asking what Ingrid has told anyone. If questioned, CLAUDETTE reveals that she has some business with Ingrid and it was INGRID who picked the Cafe Noir as the place to meet and settle the business.

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