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SF PERUSALS

# A Shot in the Dark

## A Comedy in Three Acts

Adapted by
Harry Kurnitz

From the play "L'Idiote" by
Marcel Achard

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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A SHOT IN THE DARK was first presented by Leland Hayward at the Booth Theatre, New York City, on October 18, 1961, with the following cast:

(*In Order of Appearance*)

PAUL SEVIGNE ..... *William Shatner*
MORESTAN ..... *Gene Saks*
LABLACHE ..... *Hugh Franklin*
ANTOINETTE SEVIGNE ..... *Diana van der Vlis*
JOSEFA LANTENAY ..... *Julie Harris*
DOMINIQUE BEAUREVERS ..... *Louise Troy*
BENJAMIN BEAUREVERS ..... *Walter Matthau*
GUARD ..... *Pierre Epstein*

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I: The chamber of an examining magistrate. (Juge d' Instruction) in Paris. The present.

ACT II: The same. Two days later; morning.

ACT III: The same day, between five and six P. M.

# A Shot in the Dark

## ACT ONE

SCENE: *Chamber of an Examining Magistrate (Juge d'Instruction) in Paris. It is a fairly large room, picturesque rather than squalid, but in no way judicially impressive except for the large double-doors at Back Center, which are leather-covered, brass-studded, as courtroom doors are everywhere. These doors open into a corridor, and the bench on which waiting witnesses and accused persons sit is visible to the audience. Two large desks, piled high with files and other papers, face each other Left and Right. The desk at Left is that of the Magistrate, the one at Right is the desk of the Clerk. A chair between the two desks, facing Left, is for the witness. There are files everywhere, dominating the room. On the walls there are some travel posters, one of which represents Holy Week in Spain, with penitents in black and red cloaks. A small bookcase behind the Magistrate's desk holds a small law library, works in various bindings and sizes readily accessible to him. This is topped by a large Empire clock with a figure representing Justice.*

AT RISE: *The Magistrate,* PAUL SEVIGNE, *is alone. He is about 35. Horn-rimmed glasses which he wears for reading make him look older and give him a scholarly air which tends to recede when he takes them off. He is attractive and well-dressed, though the effect which he strives for (and achieves) is sobriety rather than chic. He is standing, leaning against his own desk and studying an empty chair between him and his clerk's desk. The Clerk,* MORESTAN, *en-*

*ters. He is young—about Sevigne's age, in fact—but already hardened and cynical by his years in the service.*

MORESTAN. (*Crosses to* L. *desk.*) What a lunch! Believe me, you were wise to stay here and work. (*Hanging up his coat, etc.*) Restaurants in Paris these days! The odds are worse than in the National Lottery. (*As* SEVIGNE *immerses himself in the books again,* MORESTAN *shakes his head, pityingly.*) *Still* at the lawbooks?

SEVIGNE. (*Apologetically, defensively.*) It's my first case—a murder.

MORESTAN. Murder! *That's* not the point. A case is a case. The police have handed you a suspect, haven't they?

SEVIGNE. Yes—the maid.

MORESTAN. All right. Fire a few questions at her, get her to sign a statement, then you clap her into prison and get on to something else.

SEVIGNE. (*Drily.*) Is that how it's done?

MORESTAN. Sure! I've worked on dozens of these. Believe me, it's the best way.

SEVIGNE. What about this? (*Picks up one of the open lawbooks, reads.*) "An accused person must be protected from any infringement of his or her rights under the law . . . from the police or from the law itself . . . this is the first and the most sacred obligation of an examining magistrate." (*Glances up at* MORESTAN, *replacing the book.*)

MORESTAN. (*With a sigh.*) Well, if you believe everything you read— (*With a helpless gesture; crosses to* SEVIGNE.) Let's have a look at the summary of the evidence from the police.

SEVIGNE. Sure—right here— (*He fumbles in his file for the appropriate paper.*)

MORESTAN. (*Pained.*) In an interrogation, don't fumble for papers like that. The witness may get the idea that you're not sure of yourself. Here—let me show you. (SEVIGNE *surrenders the file,* MORESTAN *demonstrates.*)

Locate the document in advance, keep your finger on it, then *whip* it out! (*Which he does with a flourish.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Intrigued.*) That's not bad—let me try that— (*He takes the file from* MORESTAN.)

MORESTAN. I'm the witness— (*Seating himself in the chair.*) Go on—give me the works. Don't spare me! (SEVIGNE, *holding the file, is already circling the chair with a panther tread.* MORESTAN *nods approvingly.*) Very nice!

SEVIGNE. Did you know that a loaded revolver was kept in the Rolls-Royce?

MORESTAN. (*Cringing.*) No—I didn't know that.

SEVIGNE. Ah! I intend to refresh your memory. (*He has located the document, now whips it out with such a flourish that he spills a half-dozen papers on the floor.*) Oh, Hell!

MORESTAN. Don't worry; it takes a bit of practice, that's all. (*He stoops to pick up the papers, one at a time. He doesn't crawl.*)

SEVIGNE. I'd better stick to my books, and what I know.

MORESTAN. No, you'll be fine—say, the girl was found naked?

SEVIGNE. Yes—she fainted after the shooting, still holding the weapon. The chauffeur was her lover, they quarreled violently, she shot him. (*Thoughtfully.*) There seems to be quite a bit of that in Paris.

MORESTAN. Only in the winter—people are cooped up together. Ah, he beat her up now and then, eh?

SEVIGNE. Yes, once too often, apparently.

MORESTAN. Well, there you are—a snap—nothing to it—practically tied up in blue ribbons for you.

(LABLACHE *enters.* SEVIGNE *rises respectfully to greet him, as does* MORESTAN, *who crosses to his desk and sits.*)

LABLACHE. (*Cheerfully.*) Good afternoon, Morestan. . . . (*Crosses to* SEVIGNE, *shakes hands.*)

MORESTAN. Good afternoon, Monsieur Lablache.

LABLACHE. Sevigne—I thought I'd stop by to see how you were getting on. Your first interrogation today, isn't it?

SEVIGNE. Yes—in a few minutes, in fact.

LABLACHE. It's that shooting in the rue de la Faisanderie, isn't it? The maid and the chauffeur making love in her room—outbursts of jealousy, and—bang! (*Shrugs philosophically.*) Well, can't expect them to watch television forever. (*Reaches for the file.*) Is this it? (*As* SEVIGNE *nods.*) May I? (*Takes the file, seats himself, glancing though it.*) Ah! Splendid! (*He beams with obvious and great pleasure.*) The maid was found on the scene of the crime—the murder weapon in her hand—*very* nice! (*Drops the file casually on Sevigne's desk.*) Congratulations, Sevigne! It's an open-and-shut case!

SEVIGNE. (*Uncomfortably.*) Well, *her* story is that the door opened behind them, a shot was fired in the dark, and she promptly fainted.

LABLACHE. (*Pained.*) *That's* her story? Well, warn her that if she sticks to that, she'll be guilty of murder *and* contempt of court! Really! (*Rises; meaningfully.*) By the way, that's not just my opinion—that's how the Chief Prosecutor sees it, too.

SEVIGNE. (*Surprised.*) The Chief Prosecutor? (*Indicating the file.*) Has *he* followed the investigation?

LABLACHE. Are you mad? Certainly not! (*Then, patiently; crosses to* C.) Do you honestly expect the Chief Prosecutor to concern himself with the case of a parlormaid and a chauffeur bouncing from bed to bed until one of them died from it?

SEVIGNE. I just don't see how the Chief could form this opinion unless he—

LABLACHE. (*Slowly, pointedly.*) The girl and her victim both worked in the household of Benjamin Beaurevers.

SEVIGNE. That's bank, isn't it?

LABLACHE. Yes, a bank. Tell him, Morestan.

MORESTAN. In Paris, *the* bank. Beaurevers Freres! Billions!

LABLACHE. And a fine old family! (*Respectfully.*) Before her marriage, *she* was a St. Maur de Pignarolles!

MORESTAN. A member of the Beaurevers family rode beside the King in the First Crusade!

LABLACHE. (*Approvingly.*) Just so. He was, in fact, the treasurer.

SEVIGNE. (*Uncomfortably, fingering the file.*) I see what you mean—

LABLACHE. Of course you do! Get a confession from the girl—a short one, if possible, and you'll be home in time for an early dinner. Good luck, Sevigne. Call me the moment you've disposed of the case and I'll pass the good news along to the top. (*With a nod to* MORESTAN, *he goes.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Angrily.*) You know, Morestan, the Beaurevers family must be very nice, kind people. After all, they could have tried the girl themselves, found her guilty and guillotined her in the kitchen without consulting *anybody!*

MORESTAN. The rich like things done their way. Otherwise, what would be the point of having all that money?

SEVIGNE. (*Slamming a book.*) Damn!

MORESTAN. (*To appease him.*) I know how you feel. But what's the harm? The girl is guilty, isn't she?

SEVIGNE. What if she is? She should be tried by a judge and a jury; not by the social register and a bank!

MORESTAN. You're taking it too seriously. This is a business, and it's the Chief Prosecutor who runs it—now, just think along those lines— (*The door opens and* ANTOINETTE *enters.*) Oh, good afternoon, Madame Sevigne.

ANTOINETTE. Hello, Monsieur Morestan.

SEVIGNE. Hello, Antoinette—come on in. (*She looks at him anxiously. He is unsmiling, apparently pent-up.*)

ANTOINETTE. You don't mind? I'm not interrupting something important?

SEVIGNE. No—I've just been having a law lesson—from the Chief Prosecutor.

MORESTAN. Er—why don't I slip out and get a notebook for you. (*He exits.*)

ANTOINETTE. Darling, what's wrong?

SEVIGNE. Nothing—now. (*He gives her a big smile.*)

ANTOINETTE. You're not angry with me for coming here?

SEVIGNE. You arrived in the nick of time.

ANTOINETTE. Your first case—I wanted to wish you good luck. (*She embraces him—warmly.*)

SEVIGNE. Antoinette!

ANTOINETTE. (*Holding on.*) Well, I need *something* to take my mind off apartment-hunting.

SEVIGNE. Read a good book, or take a cold shower.

ANTOINETTE. If you knew the kind of places I've seen. Dark, dirty halls; dingy little rooms—and we can't even afford those.

SEVIGNE. Paris is for tourists. In Lyons we had a beautiful flat. Modern, sunny, all conveniences—

ANTOINETTE. *What* conveniences? It was three hundred miles from Christian Dior.

SEVIGNE. There was that drawback.

ANTOINETTE. Darling, the best possible incentive to success for any young magistrate is an extravagant young wife.

SEVIGNE. That's not a law—only a rumor.

ANTOINETTE. I've been right so far, haven't I? Didn't I tell you that within a year we would be out of Lyons, and in Paris?

SEVIGNE. Homeless, but closer to Christian Dior. (*And then.*) Antoinette, what if I were no good here—and they shipped me back to the law library and my old job?

ANTOINETTE. Oh, Paul—no!

SEVIGNE. They might.

ANTOINETTE. Paul, what's wrong? What's worrying you?

SEVIGNE. I don't know. I'm not sure that I fit in here. They seem to do things differently in Paris.

ANTOINETTE. Oh, darling! (*She embraces him.*)

SEVIGNE. Well, not *those* things.

ANTOINETTE. It's just that you're new here—but you won't be for long. And you're a brilliant lawyer.

SEVIGNE. I'm not sure that's enough—

ANTOINETTE. It is for me.

SEVIGNE. I'm glad you dropped in. I needed you. (*He kisses her. They are separated by a knock.*) Come in! (MORESTAN *enters, the file reassembled, puts it on Sevigne's desk.*) Morestan, this is your office just as much as it is mine. There is no need for you to knock before entering.

MORESTAN. Thank you. (*With a smile.*) You've cut yourself?

SEVIGNE. Eh?

ANTOINETTE. (*Sotto voce.*) Lipstick. (ANTOINETTE *smiles unconcernedly at* MORESTAN *as* SEVIGNE, *embarrassed, dabs at his mouth with a pocket handkerchief.*)

MORESTAN. It's just about time for our first witness—

SEVIGNE. (*Briskly.*) Yes. Now, out you go, Antoinette. Find us a nice apartment. Ten rooms, four baths, a terrace—and for very little money. That's an order.

ANTOINETTE. Yes, sir. Goodbye, Monsieur Morestan—goodbye, Paul— (*She blows him a kiss, exits.*)

MORESTAN. (*Shrewdly.*) Feeling better?

SEVIGNE. (*Smiling.*) Yes—quite a bit.

MORESTAN. (*With a shrug.*) *My* wife depresses me. (*Gets up.*) Shall I see if the girl is here?

SEVIGNE. Yes, let's have her in. (*As* MORESTAN *starts for the door. Rises.*) What do you think, Morestan—the friendly, fatherly approach for this one?

MORESTAN. The silent treatment. Let her sweat for a bit. Chances are she'll break down and confess before you ask the first question.

SEVIGNE. Then by all means the silent treatment.

(*He buries himself in writing at his desk, first donning his reading glasses.* MORESTAN *opens the door.* JOSEFA *is seen sitting on a bench.* MORESTAN *beckons, she rises and enters.* JOSEFA *is very pretty, delicate-looking as one would not expect in one who until*

*recently was a farm-girl. Her manner and speech are candid, never common or vulgar, though her voice is not educated or affected.* MORESTAN *points to the chair, and she sits down. She tugs modestly at her skirt, but it is much too short. She glances at* SEVIGNE, *who is bent over his work, utterly ignoring her, then to* MORESTAN, *who is similarly occupied. There is a long silence, while she looks around at the meagre adornments of the office. Whatever the silent treatment is supposed to effect,* JOSEFA *is apparently totally unimpressed. She takes a package of cigarettes from her purse, extracts one, then fumbles about for a packet of matches. She finds it, strikes one, is just about to touch it to her cigarette.*)

MORESTAN. (*A bark.*) No smoking!

(*Startled,* JOSEFA *waves out the match, then with a patient, good-humored shrug, she puts away the cigarette, still holding the burnt-out match. She looks around for some place to get rid of this, still utterly ignored by the* TWO MEN *who are apparently deeply absorbed in their work. Finally she puts the match in her purse too. The silence is heavy, prolonged.*)

JOSEFA. (*To* MORESTAN.) Was it for today? I can easily come back tomorrow— (MORESTAN *looks up at her, a long, pitying look, then goes back to his work. Again the silence. She looks from one to the other, getting no sign of recognition. Chuckling; to* SEVIGNE.) The guard out there told me a funny joke. Two old maids own a drugstore— (*She happens to be looking at* SEVIGNE, *he raises his head and gives her such a long, bleak look that* JOSEFA *stops short.* SEVIGNE *puts his head down over his work again. The silence again. Then* JOSEFA *smiles, as if at last understanding something.*) Oh, we're waiting for the Magistrate, is that it?

(SEVIGNE *heaves a deep sigh. The silent treatment is ap-*

*parently having more effect on him than on its intended "victim" and he abandons the gambit.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Rising.*) I am the Magistrate.

JOSEFA. (*Surprised.*) You? (*She looks at* SEVIGNE *carefully, then just as appraisingly at* MORESTAN, *then shrugs in casual agreement.*) All right. (*And as* SEVIGNE *is about to speak.*) You don't look it. He's more the type. (*Indicating* MORESTAN.)

SEVIGNE. (*Curtly.*) You'll have to take my word for it.

JOSEFA. I didn't say it to hurt your feelings. I only—

SEVIGNE. Be still! (JOSEFA *clams up. Behind her back* MORESTAN *makes a cautionary gesture.* SEVIGNE *gets a good grip on himself, proceeds quietly.*) Your name, please.

JOSEFA. Josefa Lantenay.

SEVIGNE. Where were you born?

JOSEFA. Espoletto—in the province of Drome.

SEVIGNE. Your age?

JOSEFA. Twenty-four. As a rule, I don't look it, but these last two days—

SEVIGNE. (*Abruptly, interrupting her.*) Your occupation?

JOSEFA. Parlormaid. (*Glancing around.*) Incidentally, your office is filthy. (*As* SEVIGNE *exhales sharply in exasperation.*) It is. You should speak to the charwoman. I'm a parlormaid myself, so I know how easy it is to sweep under the rug or—

SEVIGNE. (*Barking.*) Don't wander from the question!

JOSEFA. Oh—sorry! (*But she is irrepressible.*) It's not healthy to work where there's a lot of dust flying around— (SEVIGNE'S *stare quiets her.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Rises.*) Josefa Lantenay, I am charged by law, as an Examining Magistrate, for the Higher Court, to conduct an inquiry into the death by shooting of one Miguel Ostos.

JOSEFA. (*Before he can breathe and continue. Sincerely.*) Poor Miguel! I can hardly believe it. He was so alive and—

SEVIGNE. (*Cutting her off.*) *Furthermore—* (*And as she subsides, crossing* U. *in front of desk.*) Furthermore, I am empowered to examine witnesses and accused persons in this affair, to interrogate them, and, if necessary to confront them with each other. My findings may be a basis for the arrest and imprisonment of any person or persons sufficiently implicated, and my recommendations will guide the presiding judge of any subsequent trial. Do you understand?

JOSEFA. (*Cheerfully.*) I am innocent.

SEVIGNE. (*Barking again.*) I didn't ask you that!

JOSEFA. I thought I'd tell you—to save you the trouble of questioning me.

SEVIGNE. It's no trouble, I assure you.

JOSEFA. All right. Shall I tell you what happened, in my own words?

SEVIGNE. Certainly not! (JOSEFA *shrugs as if it was all too much for her but she is willing to go along.* SEVIGNE *has a momentary struggle to maintain his judicial calm.*) Above all, Josefa Lantenay, be absolutely truthful in replying to my questions. If you tell even the slightest lie—

JOSEFA. Why should I lie? I have nothing to fear. (*Chattily, confidentially.*) As my father used to say, if you're poor, there are two worries you *don't* have—pickpockets, and lawyers. (MORESTAN *chokes back a laugh,* SEVIGNE *looks at him grimly, then at* JOSEFA. *Contrite, timidly.*) I'm sorry. You're a lawyer, aren't you?

SEVIGNE. (*Crosses behind desk.*) Don't you also want to know if I'm a pickpocket?

JOSEFA. I'm sorry. (SEVIGNE *circles back to the desk, sits, glancing at one of the law books open there, refreshing his grip on the technique, also giving himself an opportunity to get the questioning under control. Then he turns back to* JOSEFA, *more composed now. Before he can speak.*) I'm sorry about what I said—

SEVIGNE. All right!

JOSEFA. I didn't mean to be fresh, or—

SEVIGNE. All right! (*She quiets down. Then he faces*

JOSEFA *again. He hesitates, in case she is going to blurt out something, but she waits quietly, smiles at him. The coast is clear.*) Are your parents living?

JOSEFA. My father, yes. My mother—? (*She shrugs.*) I don't know. I never knew her, or anything about her. (*Wistfully.*) Strange, isn't it? Generally it is the father one can't identify. (*She is serenely unaware of* SEVIGNE'S *impatience.*) Four days after I was born, my mother ran away with a railroad conductor. (*Wistfully.*) I guess I didn't make a very good impression.

SEVIGNE. Your father is a farmer—correct?

JOSEFA. And a wine-grower. I worked for him until Madame Beaurevers hired me. My father's vineyard was only two kilometers from their chateau. I was their parlormaid for two summers before I came to Paris.

SEVIGNE. The deceased, Miguel Ostos, was already in their employ?

JOSEFA. Yes—chauffeur. (*Warmly, at the memory.*) In his uniform, *he* was something. (*Then adding, sincerely.*) Poor Miguel! (*In her confiding manner.*) You know something—at first he didn't appeal to me at all.

SEVIGNE. Judging from what you were wearing at the time of the shooting, I'd say that feeling wore off.

JOSEFA. (*She tugs modestly at her short skirt, an instinctive gesture, looks reproachfully at* SEVIGNE.) If you think I *liked* being found that way!

SEVIGNE. How long before you changed your mind about Ostos?

JOSEFA. Not long—I didn't even know it was happening, suddenly I was in love.

SEVIGNE. In love? With the man who raped you?

JOSEFA. (*Startled.*) Who—WHAT?

(SEVIGNE *has flicked a paper out of the file deftly.* MORESTAN *gives him an applauding look.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Reading, crisply.*) Testimony of Emile Bremontier, Janitor. Referring to Ostos, you described him as

—and I quote: "That crazy Spaniard who raped me in my father's fields."

JOSEFA. (*Thinking.*) Actually, it was on the way home from there— (*And then, plaintively.*) Say, what have you got in that book?

SEVIGNE. On the way home from there? Then he did rape you?

JOSEFA. Well—rape—I wouldn't want to make any trouble for Miguel *now*—

SEVIGNE. Is the witness lying? (*Rattling the paper.*) Did you say that?

JOSEFA. I might have been mad at Miguel that day.

SEVIGNE. Will you please answer—yes or no?

JOSEFA. (*Troubled, uncertain.*) Is it important?

SEVIGNE. Surely you're the best judge of that. But since it seems to confuse you, let it pass. This should be simpler: when you met Ostos, were you a virgin?

JOSEFA. (*Startled.*) What's being investigated here? (*Looks suspiciously at* SEVIGNE.) I mean, Justice is one thing, but—

SEVIGNE. Answer!

JOSEFA. My father never even asked me such a question!

SEVIGNE. A few days in jail will make you more cooperative. Morestan, get the guard—

JOSEFA. (*As* MORESTAN *is about to rise.*) No. Don't. (*Sulking, though.*) Some questions! (*Then plaintively.*) You're sure you're the judge? (*Turning to* MORESTAN.) Is he really—

SEVIGNE. Morestan—the guard—

JOSEFA. No, no—please—I'll tell you. (*She takes a breath.*) Well— (*And then.*) This is all confidential, isn't it? (*And at* SEVIGNE's *mounting impatience.*) All right, all right. What was it again—did he rape me, or—?

SEVIGNE. Read the question, Morestan, please.

MORESTAN. (*Reading.*) When you met Ostos, were you a virgin?

JOSEFA. Ah, yes, of course.

SEVIGNE. You mean, you were?

JOSEFA. I mean, I remember the question.

SEVIGNE. Once and for all, will you answer it?

JOSEFA. All right. You're in such a hurry to know, you'd think we were engaged. (*And then.*) You know how it is in the provinces—boys and girls working side by side in the fields or the vineyards all summer—cooling off with a swim now and then—getting warm from the work—nobody wears very much— (*Her fear and antagonism forgotten, she gives* SEVIGNE *her warm, sunny smile.*) You'd like Espoletto!

SEVIGNE. (*Drily.*) I don't doubt it.

JOSEFA. (*Very friendly.*) Don't go in July—it rains quite a lot.

SEVIGNE. Now, then, you and the deceased, Ostos.

JOSEFA. (*Pained.*) You make him sound so very *dead!*

SEVIGNE. (*Elaborately.*) Correction. You and Miguel Ostos. When? Why? How?

JOSEFA. When? Why? How? (*Ruefully.*) I guess I'm lucky you don't want *pictures.* (*Then quickly, at his impatient look.*) All right, I'm telling. It was in August, the second or third Wednesday. I'm sure it was Wednesday, because we both had the day off. (*Reminiscently.*) The heat was awful that day but at sundown it was better. We walked to the vineyard to say hello to my father, then back along the river. The animals were being driven in from the fields—there was a sort of haze over everything along the riverbank—

SEVIGNE. Please! I see the scene very clearly.

JOSEFA. I want you to understand how it happened.

SEVIGNE. I'll understand. Just tell me what happened.

JOSEFA. I tripped over a root. I grabbed Miguel to keep from falling and somehow we *both* fell.

SEVIGNE. (*Waits for more, but there isn't any more.*) As simply as that?

JOSEFA. It was our day off. (*And then delicately.*) The heat, you know, and to tell you the truth, I wasn't wearing very much. I mean, underneath. (MORESTAN, *intrigued, has stopped writing altogether. A look from* SEVIGNE *sends him back to his notes.*) Anyway, there we

were, Miguel and I— (*Plaintively, as* SEVIGNE *seems to be waiting.*) Doesn't that give you the general idea?

SEVIGNE. You didn't fight him off? You put up no resistance?

JOSEFA. In that heat? (*Then warmly, tenderly.*) I cried a little bit afterwards, but that wasn't because I was sorry it happened. It was something Miguel said that broke me up. He lit a cigarette, took a long puff, and then he said: "Long live the mother who made you!"

SEVIGNE. (*Formally.*) I should point out to you—if Miguel Ostos did overpower you and force his attentions on you, that might appear as an extenuating circumstance in your favor.

JOSEFA. Forced his attentions on me. I like that. (*Admiringly.*) That's a nice way to put it. I'll remember that. (*And then, suddenly, suspicious.*) Say, why do I need extenuating circumstances?

SEVIGNE. One never knows—they come in handy.

JOSEFA. You don't think I did it, do you?

SEVIGNE. I have not formed an opinion.

JOSEFA. (*Relieved.*) Oh.

SEVIGNE. However, if you're found with a gun in your hand, and there's a body on the floor— (*Shrugs, letting her form her own conclusions.*)

JOSEFA. (*Earnestly.*) But I *liked* Miguel. You believe that, don't you? *Please* believe that much.

SEVIGNE. All right.

JOSEFA. (*Earnestly.*) Thank you. (SEVIGNE *turns to his desk, darting a quick look at one of the lawbooks.* JOSEFA, *meanwhile, addresses* MORESTAN.) He's nice. (MORESTAN *gives her a stern look.* SEVIGNE *moves to front. She turns back to* SEVIGNE, *who is facing her, file in hand. She makes a face.*) Oh-oh! That book again!

SEVIGNE. Ostos talked of suicide, didn't he?

JOSEFA. (*Unimpressed.*) Spaniards. They talk.

SEVIGNE. You didn't think he meant it?

JOSEFA. Him—suicide? A man who used to cross himself before he made love? (*In her candid, confiding manner.*) Oh, I never mentioned it to him. I mean, who knows

what people are really thinking at a time like that. Me for instance, I always pretend I'm on the deck of a big sailboat, with seagulls flapping all around. Or sometimes that I'm on top of a big mountain, above the clouds—(MORESTAN, *fascinated, has stopped writing, altogether.* JOSEFA, *rambling on contentedly, becomes aware of* SEVIGNE'S *grim look. She dries up.*) Oh—you're not interested?

SEVIGNE. If you go on like this, we'll be here all night.

JOSEFA. Just *us?*

SEVIGNE. Just *you.* Answer the questions. Don't keep wandering from the point.

JOSEFA. Yes, sir.

SEVIGNE. (*He has had a chance for a quick look at the books. Turns to* JOSEFA *again with the file, sits.*) He beat you, didn't he?

JOSEFA. Well—you know—we were in love.

SEVIGNE. That's why he beat you?

JOSEFA. (*Proudly.*) Never when he was drinking!

SEVIGNE. (*From the file.*) Witnesses have testified that in September and October you exhibited bruises on your face, arms and body—marks of beatings given you by Miguel Ostos.

JOSEFA. (*Comfortably.*) It was just in a conversation —one brags a little.

SEVIGNE. You quarreled bitterly. (*As she is about to speak.*) Don't deny it! (*Tapping the file.*) Here is the testimony of neighbors who swear that your fighting disturbed their sleep.

JOSEFA. Ha!

SEVIGNE. What sort of answer is that?

JOSEFA. Neighbors! Our fighting didn't bother them. (*Chuckling.*) What disturbed their sleep was when we made up. (*A tender memory.*) Ah, Miguel, Miguel!—he had a terrible temper but he certainly didn't hold a grudge.

SEVIGNE. (*Keeping after her.*) In any event, your relationship was continuously violent—do you deny that?

JOSEFA. What else could it be? He was a Spaniard.

He'd sit half the night at the window, sometimes, without speaking a single word, then throw himself on me, tearing at my clothes. It was a great nuisance, I promise you, because sometimes he'd just tear and rip every which way, and I hate sewing. (*Chattily, confidingly.*) Strange, isn't it?—housework, cooking, I love all that, but for some reason, I detest sewing. (*Sensing his impatience.*) Oh, I'm sorry. You're getting annoyed with me.

SEVIGNE. If you would just avoid wandering from the facts, please.

JOSEFA. I knew it. I could tell from the look on your face. How often I'd see that same expression on Miguel, and the next minute, he'd clout me one.

SEVIGNE. It's a temptation.

JOSEFA. (*After looking at him appraisingly.*) No—you're not the type.

SEVIGNE. You're very perceptive.

JOSEFA. (*Simply.*) One learns about men—from men. (*And then, with a deep sigh.*) Poor Miguel! He had only two passions in his life— (*After a pause.*) the other was bullfights.

SEVIGNE. From time to time he seems to have gotten the two confused.

JOSEFA. Poor Miguel! You should have seen his room —bullfight posters and souvenirs all over the place. He even took a Spanish paper, for the reviews. Poor Miguel! Just last week he was all worked up about a corrida in Mexico City. (*She leans forward excitedly, one* aficionado *to another.*) Luis Miguel Dominguin, with Rodrigo bulls —the most dangerous breed—horns like sabers! Dominguin made the first few passes kneeling in front of the barrera, and he himself planted the banderillas. Then a great *faena,* and what a kill! A single thrust of the sword —to the hilt. The crowd went mad and the judges gave him both ears, the tail, and one hoof. Even in Mexico, that's a lot. (*In a small voice, cheering.*) Ole! Dominguin! Ole!

(*Then to* SEVIGNE'S *amazement, she bursts into tears.*

MORESTAN *looks up from his writing, then the* TWO MEN *regard each other helplessly.*)

SEVIGNE. Oh, God! (*As* JOSEFA *sobs on,* SEVIGNE *rises.*) How did we get to *this?*

MORESTAN. The silent treatment!

SEVIGNE. (*Roughly.*) Blow your nose! (*He is touched though.*)

JOSEFA. (*Sniffling.*) I haven't got a handkerchief.

SEVIGNE. (*Crosses to her, giving her one.*) Here.

JOSEFA. Thank you. (*She blows her nose quite vigorously.*) I hate to cry. Excuse me.

SEVIGNE. Go right ahead. (*He uses the interlude to turn back to his desk for a refresher course in criminal law, shaking his head, apparently discouraged. Then he turns back.*) Better now?

JOSEFA. Yes. I'm sorry. It was just—thinking about Miguel— (*Wistfully.*) Do you think—wherever he is *now*—there are bullfights?

SEVIGNE. (*Startled, then kindly.*) Bullfights? I don't know—maybe.

JOSEFA. Well—maybe at least a Spanish paper, with reviews. (*Offering* SEVIGNE *the handkerchief.*) I'm fine now. I won't do it again.

SEVIGNE. Keep it—you never can tell.

JOSEFA. No. I'm fine now. I won't need the handkerchief— (*Extending it to him.*) I promise you.

SEVIGNE. (*Ignoring the handkerchief; crosses back behind desk, sits.*) You knew Ostos wanted to get married? (*As she nods.*) To someone else?

JOSEFA. He got ambitious suddenly. This girl, her parents are rich. They own a butcher shop.

SEVIGNE. You weren't jealous?

JOSEFA. Of her father's money? A butcher shop, in a good location, that's something. And *my* dowry— (*She laughs.*) My father didn't know about me and Miguel until I was in Paris. Then he sent me a wire: "*Don't* come home and all is forgiven." Funny old Pop—

SEVIGNE. (*Sharply.*) Love or money, you knew Ostos would leave you?

JOSEFA. What could I do about it? (*Then incredulously.*) You don't think that gave me a reason for killing Miguel?

SEVIGNE. (*Mildly.*) It happens, you know—a woman scorned—

JOSEFA. (*Earnestly.*) You've got it all wrong. I kept reminding him about the money and telling him she was beautiful— (*Confidentially.*) Beautiful: just between us, a real dog.

SEVIGNE. So you were reconciled to losing him? It didn't bother you?

JOSEFA. What lasts forever?

SEVIGNE. Yet he died in your room—you were nude.

JOSEFA. Please! (*Tugging at her skirt.*) I'll tell you about that—it was to be the last time. His idea, not mine, but I thought, well, so what?—why not part friends? I mean, after all, I *liked* him.

SEVIGNE. Apparently.

JOSEFA. Poor Miguel! He was really in one of his moods. First he babbled in Spanish, then he cried—really broke down and cried—and when I tried to console him, make him feel better—*novares et centavos, puta, puta, puta*—suddenly he was tearing off my clothes, throwing them all around the room and cursing like a madman. (*Confidentially.*) Believe me, it's a good thing I wanted to part friends, or I would have belted him with an ashtray. I hate that kind of hurly-burly. After all, it's not something you do for exercise, is it?

SEVIGNE. (*Rises.*) Strange, isn't it? Ostos was leaving *you,* and by your own account, *he* was behaving like a jealous madman?

JOSEFA. Oh? (*She is slightly apprehensive.*) Well—he was funny in a lot of ways— (*She is off-balance, though, if only momentarily.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Crosses* U., *around down to* L. *of her; pressing his advantage.*) *Why* was he jealous?

JOSEFA. I don't know.

SEVIGNE. Did he have reason to be?

JOSEFA. I don't know. A Spaniard, who knows why he was jealous?

SEVIGNE. (*Quickly.*) Then he was?

JOSEFA. (*Rattled.*) It was foolish—I shouldn't have told him—

SEVIGNE. (*Hammering at her.*) Told him *what?*

JOSEFA. Poor Miguel! (*She is thinking hard.*) I told you I liked him, didn't I?

SEVIGNE. Yes—repeatedly.

JOSEFA. Well—I thought if he was leaving me, he'd suffer—thinking I was alone—so, I told him there was someone else. It was a lie, I admit that—but, out of kindness.

SEVIGNE. (*Admiringly.*) Just to make him feel better. There was no other man?

JOSEFA. (*Dramatically.*) How could there be? When I give my heart— (*Strikes the palm of her hand with clenched fist.*) I give it all! To the hilt!

SEVIGNE. You were so considerate? Even though he was going to marry Solange Duval?

JOSEFA. Solange! Only a butcher would name his daughter Solange!

SEVIGNE. (*Categorically.*) Ostos and the Duval girl went out together—*once.* He took her to the movies and she was hopelessly bored because all through the film he talked about you. And of his insane jealousy.

JOSEFA. Liars—all of them—test the scales in their butcher shop and you'll see what I mean.

SEVIGNE. Why was Ostos raving about his jealousy—of *whom* was he jealous?

JOSEFA. I don't know— (*She is getting cornered, and looks it.*) A crazy Spaniard—he was jealous of shadows—

(SEVIGNE *is holding the file and she gives it a pained look. Having unobtrusively found his place, he now* whips *out the document.* MORESTAN *gives him an approving look.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Formally.*) I confront you now with the testimony of Madame Marthe Herbeux—

JOSEFA. (*Interrupting.*) Who?

SEVIGNE. The Beaurevers' cook.

JOSEFA. Oh—Camel-Face.

SEVIGNE. (*Irritated, proceeds.*) Madame Herbeux, interrogated by Inspector Colas, of the police. (*Clears his throat.*)

Question: "Was Miguel Ostos jealous of Josefa Lantenay?"

Answer: "He was foaming like a fire-extinguisher."

Question: "Why?"

Answer: "He knew Josefa was unfaithful to him, but he didn't know with who."

Question: "Did he suspect one man, or many?"

JOSEFA. (*Outraged.*) What?

SEVIGNE. Be still— (*From the file.*) Answer: "One man. Josefa isn't really a whore—just bedminded."

JOSEFA. Well, at last—a kind word.

SEVIGNE. (*Pointedly.*) And finally this, from Madame Herbeux: "Only two days before he died, Miguel came raging into my kitchen. He swore he would get the name of the man Josefa was sleeping with, and then—Boom! —Boom!—it would be over quickly." (*Snaps the file shut ominously.*) The fact is, Miguel Ostos never dreamed of leaving you. (*Then, severely.*) You urged the butcher's daughter on Miguel Ostos because *you* were leaving *him* —had actually left him.

JOSEFA. He died in my room. And you're forgetting how I was dressed.

SEVIGNE. I'll get to that. (*Calmly, reading.*) The cook testifies that Ostos complained for six weeks that your door was locked to him.

JOSEFA. Between the book and the cook you'll drive me out of my mind.

SEVIGNE. All right. (*Snaps the file shut, puts it behind him on the desk.* JOSEFA *is wary now.*) The fact is, you had no reason to invent a lover—he existed. You discarded Miguel Ostos for another man.

JOSEFA. (*A hint of scorn.*) So *that's* what you're investigating?

SEVIGNE. Is it true?

JOSEFA. (*Evasively.*) If I tell you it all goes in that damned book. (*Defensively.*) I didn't mind coming here —I thought you suspected me of killing Miguel—I mean, after all, that's at least a crime—but all you ask me is what I did where—how—when—with who?

SEVIGNE. (*Sharply.*) No more digressions! Is it true? Yes or no?

JOSEFA. (*Defiantly.*) All right—yes, it's true.

SEVIGNE. Thank you. (*He seems content, goes on in a kindly tone.*) You may smoke now, if you like.

JOSEFA. You're being nice to me suddenly.

SEVIGNE. We're nearly finished. We have the motive now.

JOSEFA. (*Startled.*) The—WHAT?

SEVIGNE. (*Gently.*) Your motive for the crime. (*Calmly, reasonably.*) Josefa Lantenay, I charge you with the murder of Miguel Ostos.

JOSEFA. Good for you! Say, is this a full-time job you have here?

SEVIGNE. You were found on the scene of the crime, with the murder weapon in your hand. Only the motive was missing.

JOSEFA. As long as it's my motive, is it all right to tell me what it was?

SEVIGNE. The lover who supplanted Ostos. That was your motive. To protect *him* from Ostos' jealous rage. (*To* MORESTAN.) Have you got that?

MORESTAN. (*Admiringly.*) Every word.

JOSEFA. (*Plaintively, to* MORESTAN.) *You* look like a sensible fellow—you tell him this is silly—

SEVIGNE. (*Crosses to her.*) Pay attention to me! Stand up.

JOSEFA. Now, don't you dare lay a finger on me—

SEVIGNE. *Stand up!* (*She stands, crosses to* C.) We are now going to reconstruct the crime exactly as it happened.

JOSEFA. But you know all about that. (*And then, resigned.*) I knew this was coming—men! (*She starts to tug down the zipper of her dress.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Outraged.*) Stop!

JOSEFA. (*Hand on zipper.*) Oh? You *don't* want it exactly as it happened? (*To* MORESTAN.) Didn't he say "exactly"?

MORESTAN. (*Intrigued.*) As a matter of fact, he did.

SEVIGNE. (*Controlled.*) Sit down! (*She shrugs, fixes her zipper, sits down.*) What are the dimensions of your room? (*Crosses* D. R.)

JOSEFA. (*Deprecatingly.*) It's a maid's room—don't you know what they are like? (*And then.*) No, chances are you wouldn't— (*At his impatience, exasperated.*) I never measured it. I suppose it's about twelve feet long, eight or ten feet wide.

SEVIGNE. How is it furnished?

JOSEFA. A chest of drawers, small table, an armchair, a straight chair by the window—oh, yes, and a bed.

SEVIGNE. How big a bed?

JOSEFA. (*Coolly.*) Big enough.

SEVIGNE. You told Ostos that it was all over—that you had a new lover.

JOSEFA. (*Reluctantly.*) Yes, I had to do it. It seemed the decent thing to do. (*Eagerly.*) But I told him it was nothing, a passing fancy, just a little bit of foolishness—

SEVIGNE. (*Sits at desk.*) He didn't believe you, did he?

JOSEFA. At first he did because I swore by the head of my papa— (*Adding wistfully.*) Poor Papa! But then he started raving again. He swore he would find the man and kill him. He rushed to get his coat, still cursing and raving.

SEVIGNE. What did you do?

JOSEFA. Well, I couldn't chase him—I was barefoot. I told him to stop acting like an idiot and come to bed. (*Ruefully.*) It was my own fault for trying to part friends.

SEVIGNE. You didn't struggle with him for the gun?

JOSEFA. What gun? We were in my bedroom, not a shooting gallery.

SEVIGNE. (*Leans in.*) Now, be sensible and listen to me. If you struggled with him, to get the gun away from him, it could have gone off by accident. An unpremeditated shooting. Under the circumstances, hardly a crime at all.

JOSEFA. (*Plaintive.*) You've got this thing about guns—

SEVIGNE. You said a moment ago that he was rushing out to find the man—and kill him.

JOSEFA. With a knife! (*Pityingly.*) Really, you know very little about Spaniards.

SEVIGNE. (*Crosses* L. *to her.*) Not all of us have had your opportunities for research. However, what about Ostos' speech to the cook: he swore he'd find the man, and then—Boom! Boom! it would be all over. Does that sound like a knife?

JOSEFA. (*Trying it.*) Boom! Boom! (*Shrugs, candidly.*) No, it doesn't. (*And again.*) Boom! Boom! (*Gives up.*) You've got me there.

(SEVIGNE *is circling the chair, stalking her as he did the empty chair at the opening.* JOSEFA'S *head turns with him, watching him warily.*)

SEVIGNE. (*Crosses* C., *circles. Suddenly.*) Did you know that a gun was kept in the glove-compartment of the Rolls-Royce?

JOSEFA. (*Calmly.*) Which Rolls-Royce?

SEVIGNE. What?

JOSEFA. (*Patiently.*) We have three.

SEVIGNE. (*Startled, involuntarily.*) You *have?* (*Blinks, fumbles in the file.*) Let me see—ah, the limousine. (*Confronting her again.*) Do you deny it?

JOSEFA. How should I know what goes on in the limousine, or in the glove compartment? But in my bedroom, no guns.

SEVIGNE. Very nice. What about the gun that was found in your hand?

JOSEFA. *I* was unconscious.

SEVIGNE. Conveniently. (*Takes a photo enlargement from the file.*) Do you know what this is? It was made by experts in the police department. This—on the left—is a microscopic enlargement of a bullet fired from the pistol you had in your hand—this on the right is a similar study of the bullet taken from the body of Miguel Ostos—

JOSEFA. (*Involuntarily.*) Oh! How awful!

SEVIGNE. They are identical!

JOSEFA. What a disgusting thing to carry about with you! (*She covers her face with her hands.* SEVIGNE *pulls them down roughly.*)

SEVIGNE. Furthermore, you had in your hand a .38 calibre Biretta automatic pistol which has been identified as the gun kept in the Rolls-Royce— (*Adding quickly.*) And don't say *which* Rolls-Royce! Ostos took it from the car, brought it to your room, and when he threatened—as you yourself have testified—that he would kill your lover, *you shot him!*

JOSEFA. No! That's not true! I swear it!

SEVIGNE. (*Turns away* L., *puts dossier on Morestan's desk.*) By the head of your papa? (*Adding ironically.*) Poor Papa!

JOSEFA. (*Wounded.*) Oh! (*And then.*) How can you hurt me so?

SEVIGNE. You're lying and concealing information. That means I have to dig deeper. Don't blame me if I strike a nerve. Morestan—chalk! (MORESTAN *brings his chalk from the desk drawer. Meanwhile* SEVIGNE *turns to his books on the desk, nods approvingly at what he reads. To* JOSEFA.) Get up! (*She rises. He moves her chair* U. R., *leaving the space between the two desks free.*) Over there— (*Pointing to Morestan's desk. She moves obediently. Kneeling.*) Now, then— (*He draws a rough rectangle on the floor. He crosses* R., *then Down.*) this is the shape of your room—

JOSEFA. (*Crosses* L.; *to* MORESTAN.) Is he *always* like this?

SEVIGNE. (*Roughly.*) Pay attention. (*Crosses, then Up, completes room. Indicating the chalk outline.*) Show me the location of your bed. (*And as she hesitates.*) Now, don't be coy. It seems to have been a landmark as well-known as the Eiffel Tower.

JOSEFA. (*Outraged.*) Oh! (*Stamps her foot on* R. *side of the outline.*) There!

SEVIGNE. (*Makes an* X *on the spot.*) The chest of drawers? (*Sullenly* JOSEFA *indicates* U. L. *of the outline and* SEVIGNE *marks it with a small square. As he works:*) The window—here, on the street side—right? (*At* D. L.; *he marks it.*) The armchair, here, by the window—right? Now—the door? (JOSEFA *sullenly indicates it, at* U. L. *of the rectangle, and* SEVINGE *marks it. He straightens up, tossing the chalk back to* MORESTAN.) The pure science of criminology will bring us to the truth in this matter. (*Confidently.*) Now, then— (*Peers at his drawing but having made it he isn't quite certain what to do with it.*) Er—just study that. Fix it in your memory. (*Crosses* D. R. *While he turns to the desk for a quick flash at the books.*)

JOSEFA. (*At* U. C.; *critically.*) I like it. In the house they have funny pictures like that—*millions* some of them cost—and not a bit better than yours. (*At his cold, penetrating look—defensively.*) You told me to study it!

SEVIGNE. Now—think—were the lights in your room on, or off?

JOSEFA. (*Flatly.*) Off.

SEVIGNE. You're positive?

JOSEFA. Positive. With Miguel, it was always in the dark. (*Confidingly.*) Poor Miguel! You see, he couldn't get over thinking it was a sin. Maybe it is, but turning out the lights doesn't change *that* and the times I've stubbed my toe in the dark—

SEVIGNE. You're wandering again. No reminiscing, *please!*

JOSEFA. (*Wounded, but sweetly.*) But these are memories of love! They're important!

SEVIGNE. Another time. Now, just stick to the facts.

JOSEFA. Why don't you listen? It might take your mind off guns and those dirty pictures of bullets— (SEVIGNE *crosses* R. *a step. At his mounting impatience.*) All right, the facts. There we were. The door opened, a shot was fired. He fell, and I fainted. (*At* SEVIGNE'S *steady stare.*) Well, you asked me. (*At his pitying stare.*) That's what you wanted—facts.

SEVIGNE. Sit down! Who else had a key to your room?

JOSEFA. (*Sits.*) Nobody.

SEVIGNE. Then how did the door open behind Ostos just before he was killed?

JOSEFA. I don't know.

SEVIGNE. This happened in the home of the banker Benjamin Beaurevers. (*Crosses behind* C. *desk, sits.*) Now, honestly, can you picture unknown intruders prowling in the halls, opening locked doors, firing shots, vanishing like ghosts? That's a ridiculous story.

JOSEFA. (*Angrily.*) Sure, it's ridiculous. (*Rises.*) It's the truth, that's why. Do you think *I* like it? When I told it to Inspector Colas he took my temperature, he thought I had fever. I wish I could tell you a smooth, elegant story, but I'm telling you what really happened. I know it's terrible and clumsy, but it's the truth, and it's all I have.

SEVIGNE. Morestan, note that I am unimpressed by this outburst. Sit down! (JOSEFA *sits.*) What other visitors did you have?

JOSEFA. (*Still sulking.*) When?

SEVIGNE. (*Patiently.*) The night Ostos was killed.

JOSEFA. I'm not allowed to have visitors in my room— (*Then sheepishly.*) That *does* sound funny, I admit. But poor Miguel, I mean, he wasn't really a visitor.

SEVIGNE. Please answer the question.

JOSEFA. Oh—I thought I did. (*Her response is nervous.*)

SEVIGNE. Just a simple "yes" or "no" will do it.

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