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SF PERUSALS

Murder on the Rerun

A Comedy-Mystery in Two Acts

Fred Carmichael

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH
FOUNDED 1830

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CAST

HUGH LAWTON
BETSY RANDOLPH
VALERIE VICKERS
EDWINA DUNBAR
JUSTIN WILLS
JANE ACKERLY
KITTY

The action of the play takes place in a ski lodge in Northern Vermont.

ACT ONE

The present.

ACT TWO

A few hours later.

Murder on the Rerun

ACT ONE

SET: *The action of the play takes place in a modern ski lodge in the north of Vermont. Down right is an archway which leads off to the outside door and to the kitchen and dining room. Upstage of this is a jog in the wall and then parallel to the archway is a closet door. Above this is a right angle window with half the window on the right wall and half on the upstage wall. The window has no panes and looks out mostly on the sky or perhaps a tree-top as the lodge is on high elevation. Below the windows, on both walls, low shelves are built. The wall continues center where there is a staircase with the stairs coming down into the room. At the top of the stairs there is a landing and the passageway to the upstairs leading off to the left. Along the landing there is a railing leading to the rest of the upstage wall. Below the wall is a built-in bar containing all glasses, bottles, etc. necessary. There are two stools at the bar. The back wall slants to the left wall which contains a door opening offstage to the library. The furniture consists of a unit stage right which is a sectional sofa with the long part running parallel to the upstage wall and a smaller unit to its right so the sofa can sit three on the main part and one on the right side part. A large coffee table is in front of the unit. Stage left there is a chair with a matching hassock in front of it, a small end table to its left. The entire set is very sterile and modern with horizontal lines and as much glass and chrome as possi-*

ble. It does not look lived in but more like a rich man's retreat which it is.

The Curtain opens in a blackout. There is a scream and the sound of a fall.

HUGH. Who was that?

BETSY. What happened?

HUGH. Someone's hurt.

VALERIE. Nonsense, darling, that was acting.

EDWINA. No, it was real.

JUSTIN. It came from down here.

VALERIE. (*during above*) Someone found Jane, that's all.

BETSY. I'm scared.

HUGH. It's all right, Betsy.

EDWINA. (*during above*) Someone's hurt.

JUSTIN. Where the hell are the lights?

HUGH. Jane! Jane, are you all right?

JUSTIN. (*during above*) The light switch is here somewhere.

VALERIE. Jane's a writer. She's probably getting our reactions.

JUSTIN. I found the lights.

(*The lights come on to reveal JANE ACKERLY lying on the stairs with her head down as if she had fallen. She is faced away from the audience. The others are around her. JUSTIN WILLS is at the light switch to the right of the stairs. He is middleaged and always tries to be the leader. VALERIE VICKERS is on the landing. She is of indeterminate age since her make-up and face lifts have been perfect. She has fought for what she wants and is not about to let go. HUGH LAWTON is by the*

library door. He is same age as the others, handsome, trying to be debonair, but at heart there is a strain of weakness. EDWINA DUNBAR is by the bar. She is an opportunist and out exclusively for herself. She is not as well put together as the others but is of approximately the same age. BETSY RANDOLPH is above the sofa. She is the youngest of the group and very pretty. At first meeting, one always thinks she is Hollywood's idea of the perfect ingenue. They are all well-dressed in expensive clothes for a winter weekend in Vermont.)

HUGH. (*crosses to* L. *of stairs and kneels beside JANE*) Jane. Darling.

BETSY. (*moves in*) Call someone. A doctor, Someone.

EDWINA. Get a wet cloth.

JUSTIN. (*between BETSY and stairs*) Brandy.

BETSY. A doctor!

VALERIE. (*comes down one step*) Rescue squad, darling. This is the country. They have rescue squads.

EDWINA. The back of her head, it's cut.

HUGH. She's not breathing.

JUSTIN. A pulse. Look for a pulse.

HUGH. I'm trying.

VALERIE. Just find her pulse, darling. Don't take advantage of the poor child.

EDWINA. Does anyone know first aid?

VALERIE. I can do mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

EDWINA. So I've heard.

HUGH. (*stands*) No. She's dead. Jane is dead.

JUSTIN. Oh, my God!

VALERIE. She can't be. She's just faking. (*starts for her*)

HUGH. No, she's dead.

BETSY. But who—why?

EDWINA. The dark. In the dark.

VALERIE. I said it was a stupid game.

JUSTIN. Tripped. She was at the top of the stairs and she tripped.

(*JANE stands up. We can now see she is in a dress with long sleeves. She is a pretty woman probably in her thirties. She is obviously dead as she wears a grey "Blithe Spirit" make-up covering her face and hands; however, this has not stopped an application of lipstick, rouge, mascara and whatever else enhances her appearance. JANE is an attractive woman, rather more of the outdoor type than the others.*)

JANE. (*The others keep looking at where she was lying as they cannot see the ghost of her.*) Tripped, hell! I was pushed! I've been murdered!

VALERIE. (*as they continue looking at where JANE was*) Accidents will happen.

JANE. (*crosses away* R.) It was no accident. I was pushed.

JUSTIN. (*starts for library*) I'd better call the police.

EDWINA. (*gets there before him and goes into the library*) Not before I call the paper. This is front page.

JANE. This is murder, I tell you.

BETSY. (*looks after EDWINA*) How can she be so heartless?

VALERIE. Easily. She's a newspaperwoman first and a human being second.

JANE. Doesn't anyone see me? Can't you hear me? I was murdered.

(*KITTY enters from down* R. *She is usually a happy soul and is bright and cheerful. She is wearing a rather nondescript dress and carries a book, the cover reading "Rules" and there are several loose pages showing.*)

KITTY. Hold it right there. None of you move. (*The others, beside JANE, freeze as they are.*)

JANE. (*goes to her*) Who are you?

KITTY. One thing at a time. (*talks directly to the audience*) Were you paying attention? That's the way it started. An accident, they said, but, of course, Jane knows better.

JANE. You're damned right I do.

KITTY. Don't get so excited.

JANE. Excited? Do you know what it's like to be murdered?

KITTY. I know what it's like to die violently.

JANE. Oh.

KITTY. But that was over two hundred years ago.

JANE. I don't—

KITTY. I can't talk to you now. You're getting me all out of sync. I'm just telling them what happened. (*indicates audience*) You go back up there and wait to be called. Your visa hasn't come through yet.

JANE. All this red tape. It's worse than an IRS audit.

KITTY. Go!

JANE. All right, I'm going. I'm going. (*She goes off down right sulking.*)

KITTY. (*to audience*) You'll have to forgive her. It's very traumatic being murdered. (*notices the others still frozen in position*) Oh, we don't need them any more right now. (*goes to right of sofa*) You can back where you were.

JUSTIN. (*As they unfreeze and look bewildered, EDWINA comes in.*) What are we doing here?

KITTY. I called you so we could flashback to the night Jane died.

EDWINA. And I got that wonderful headline, "Author Trips, Hollywood Flips".

HUGH. (*moves down*) But this happened three years ago. What are we doing here now?

BETSY. It's a reenactment, isn't it?

KITTY. That's right. I have a sort of celestial VCR.

VALERIE. And we're in a freeze-frame.

KITTY. That's right. Time stood still. Now you can go back to what you were doing.

JUSTIN. You can do that?

KITTY. Time's so relative once you're up there.

EDWINA. You mean you're from—(*points upward*)

KITTY. Let's just call it "up there".

EDWINA. Amazing.

KITTY. All right, you return to what you were doing.

VALERIE. (*goes upstairs*) Good. I can remember very well what I was doing but for the life of me I can't remember who I was doing it with. (*exits*)

JUSTIN. (*goes down* R.) I was having a fight on the set. That damned star won't let me photograph the right side of her face. (*exits*)

HUGH. (*takes BETSY's hand as they go down* R.) Come on, Betsy, back to the studio commissary.

BETSY. How can I finish my diet salad after reliving this?

KITTY. You won't even remember it happened. (*HUGH and BETSY exit.*)

EDWINA. (*goes down center*) Don't send me back. We'll make a deal. Give me an interview and I'll split with you sixty-forty.

KITTY. (*goes to her*) Money's no good up there. Everything's free.

EDWINA. But what a story—"Proof of Life After Death".

KITTY. That's in The Inquirer once a month. Off with you.

EDWINA. (*goes down right*) Back to the mundane. (*to audience*) But you people never get tired reading about it, do you? Marriage, divorce, rape, drugs—all the little niceties of our life give you such a vicarious thrill. Keep reading. (*exits*)

KITTY. (*looks out front*) I bet you're really confused, right? (*goes down* C.) It's not my fault you wandered in here but, since you did, you might as well stay and see what happens. You saw Jane Ackerly die right there on the stairs. That was three years ago tonight. She floated up to us making a terrible fuss saying she was hit on the head and pushed. (*looks around a moment*) Will you excuse me a minute. (*gets a small dish of snacks from the bar and leaves her book there*) Whenever I get down here I'm so famished. I can't help it, I love snacks and junk food. They feed us, of course, but it's so nutritional. (*sits on the bar stool as she eats and talks*) Anyway, the bosses gave Jane all the usual forms for a return visit. No one thought she'd get a passport but it came through this morning with one hitch. Me! (*eats*) Umm, these are almost sinful. If I help Jane find her murderer, I knock off my last seventy-five demerits. I had over three thousand against me when I got there. Three thousand. Oh, I was a naughty girl, but they took pity on me up there. I looked so pitiful standing there looking through those gates like the Little Match Girl. But I'll get through them yet. (*holds out the book*) This is my rule book. (*goes down* C.) It's full of dos and

don'ts. It tells me how to call people back, relive scenes, and all that. I'm working up to tonight when we gather all the suspects here (*goes down* L. *and looks up at room*) in the living room for the anniversary of Jane's death. Do you like this place? It's too modern for me but it's what those rich skiers like. It's owned by one Stanzio Garelli. He's a big film producer and this is his rustic hideaway in the Vermont mountains. (*goes up* C.) Some hideaway, over three hundred thousand dollars. I don't know why people can't just find a hill and ski down it. (*goes down* C.) Why do they have to be pulled up the mountain on a machine? None of the people you saw here ski of course but they've got the biggest après-ski wardrobe this side of Bloomingdale's. Did you figure out who they all were? I'll bring them back and introduce you. (*sits on the sofa and looks in her book*) Let's see. "Call Backs". C-C-C, there are so damned many rules. Here were are. That's simple. Now, hang on a minute. (*stands leaving the book on the sofa, closes eyes and stamps foot three times*)

JUSTIN. (*enters down* R.) Why do you keep calling me off the set?

KITTY. (*looks front*) It worked!

JUSTIN. I'm over-budget already.

KITTY. This is Justin Wills. He's a movie director.

JUSTIN. They know that. Everyone knows me. I'm a household word.

KITTY. So is Listerine or Pampers.

JUSTIN. You can talk. You're dead. I'm still down here trying to make a living. (*goes down* C. *and talks to the audience*) I didn't get where I am by luck, you know. I started as a messenger with the studio and worked my way up through assistant director until I finally got handed a cheapie no one else wanted. I turned that into a cult film. Then I got THE LOVES OF LAURA and—

KITTY. (*front*) Hang onto that. THE LOVES OF LAURA. It's an important clue.

JUSTIN. It got me an Academy Award and the envy of every two-bit director in Hollywood. Now I'm in trouble with a thirty million dollar fiasco and my career's on the line so can I go back now?

KITTY. They'll wait for you. Time is at a standstill.

JUSTIN. Time may be but my budget isn't.

KITTY. You're filming a nude scene, aren't you?

JUSTIN. The horse is nude, the star is in a bikini. (*turns to go and bumps into EDWINA as she enters*) Edwina, darling, how nice you look.

EDWINA. I know.

JUSTIN. I knew you did. (*They both smile at each other fatuously.*)

KITTY. (*front*) They're such good friends.

EDWINA. I hear your picture's in trouble.

JUSTIN. Nothing I can't solve if this interfering angel will—

KITTY. I'm no angel, just an apprentice trying to get through the gates.

EDWINA. I'm trying to get an interview in depth, something about clouds and harps.

KITTY. How little you know.

JUSTIN. (*to KITTY*) You're sure Edwina won't remember any of this?

KITTY. Positive.

JUSTIN. (*goes below EDWINA to down right*) Good, then I can tell her what I really think of her. (*turns and smiles at EDWINA*) Edwina, you are an egotistical, stupid, conniving—er—er

KITTY. Petty?

JUSTIN. Thank you. Petty, insincere little weasel of a woman. (*exits*)

EDWINA. Sometimes I think he doesn't like me.

KITTY. (*front*) This is Edwina—

EDWINA. (*front*) Edwina Dunbar, of course. The columnist. You've read me. I know, and seen me. The Tonight Show, Good Morning, America. You can't avoid me.

KITTY. Many have tried, few have succeeded.

EDWINA. You're sweet, you know that. You're really very sweet.

KITTY. That's all. You can go back now. We'll see you later.

EDWINA. You're going to interrupt me again?

KITTY. We're meeting here again in the present time.

EDWINA. Here at Stanzio's ski lodge?

KITTY. Yes, everyone who was here when Jane died.

EDWINA. I can't wait. None of us trusts the others, me included. It should be a most interesting meeting. (*to audience*) Are they coming, too?

KITTY. (*gets her book and returns it to shelves*) Of course.

EDWINA. (*front*) Don't you loathe these modern places? Makes me feel like I'm in the ladies room at the Guggenheim.

KITTY. (*comes down to sofa and sits on its back*) Miss Dunbar's a gossip columnist.

EDWINA. The best. (*front*) It's not what I write, you know. It's what I don't write that makes me a success. If I hadn't been with my publisher that night they picked him up for driving DWI, I'd probably still be reviewing flower shows. (*moves down* C.) I grabbed his little bag of dope from him and, would you believe it, I flushed it down the john at the police station with only the attendant watching me. (*moves down right*) She's on my payroll now, of course. She's also a witness and my insurance that I keep my job. (*steps down, intimately*)

Please don't believe everything you read about life in the fast lane. (*crosses to archway and turns back*) Only about ninety percent of it is true. (*exits*)

KITTY. That one's going to have a tough time getting through the gates up there. There's no one to blackmail, they're all so goody-goody. (*goes to shelves where she picks up a piece of fruit*) It sounds boring, doesn't it, but, you know, I'm getting used to it and I rather enjoy it now. (*tries to bite into apple*) Wax! If they'd had that in the Garden of Eden it would have saved a lot of trouble. (*puts apple back and goes* C.) It's time Jane got here, I hope they're sending her first class. (*A small scream, a thump, and the jangling of coat hangers comes from the closet.*) No, they didn't.

JANE. (*offstage in closet*) Help! I'm trapped!

KITTY. (*looks up*) This is no way to treat a heroine. (*opens closet door*) Hang on. I'll help you out.

JANE. (*She is on the floor of the closet with a coat and a hanger over her.*) This room's so small. Something's smothering me.

KITTY. Just some coats. There we are. (*JANE comes out. She is now wearing a long, flowing grey dress.*)

JANE. I was afraid they'd put me in solitary.

KITTY. Sometimes they have an odd sense of humor. (*hangs up the coat*)

JANE. I recognize that coat. It's Betsy's.

KITTY. That's right. She was here the night you were killed.

JANE. Here? (*looks around, goes to stairs*) I'm in Stanzio Garelli's ski lodge. This is where it happened. These are the stairs. This is where I was lying a minute ago.

KITTY. Three years to be exact.

JANE. Three years? But—

KITTY. (*closes closet door*) Don't forget about time. It's different up there. (*moves below sofa*) I still get confused. Einstein was trying to explain it to me again the other millenium.

JANE. Who are you? (*goes to her*) No, don't tell me. You're Kitty-something-or-other. I've seen you in the waiting room comparing notes with that snobbish Madame DuBarry.

KITTY. A misunderstood child. She's been waiting longer than I have.

JANE. Why do you have such a pink complexion? I look so ghostly.

KITTY. (*sits on sofa*) That fades in time.

JANE. (*sits sofa* C.) I hope so. All I've done in three years is fill out forms. In triplicate.

KITTY. You must have done it right because here you are.

JANE. I had a good case. Shouldn't I be allowed to find out who killed me?

KITTY. You didn't deserve to die so young.

JANE. I don't mind. I didn't know it would be so pleasant up there. Norman Vincent Peale was right.

KITTY. I felt the same way after I was shot.

JANE. Gangsters?

KITTY. No. I was a camp follower at Valley Forge and I followed too close.

JANE. But you don't have any wings.

KITTY. (*rises and goes to shelves for book*) I'm working towards them. If I can help you find your murderer they'll open those gates and I'll go right in.

JANE. I hope you make it.

KITTY. (*leans over back of sofa to JANE as she pulls out a form from the book*) Your application said that

you want to get all the suspects together and see how they react.

JANE. That's what Agatha Christie suggested. I was having tea with her and she said gather all the suspects into the living room so that's what I put down. (*points to it on application*)

KITTY. And that's what you've been granted. (*puts book on table* L. *of chair*) They're all meeting here tonight and none of them knows the other is coming. I did that. Isn't it delicious? (*goes to bar and takes a nibble*)

JANE. How'd you manage it?

KITTY. I left messages on their service or with their agents saying Stanzio Garelli wanted to see them here alone on a very important matter.

JANE. (*laughs*) They all think it's a job. When Stanzio calls people run.

KITTY. He's that important?

JANE. He produced the top grossing pictures for the past five years. You don't get more important that that. I was hoping he'd do my new one but I died too soon.

KITTY. He produced it all right.

JANE. THE LOVES OF LAURA? How did he get hold of it?

KITTY. Ah, there's the rub as Shakespeare keeps mumbling.

JANE. (*rises and goes to KITTY*) No one had seen the script. I had it with me upstairs there the night I was pushed. Hugh. Did Hugh find it and give it to Stanzio?

KITTY. (*picks up book*) Let's hope we find out.

JANE. And I really won an Oscar for Best Writer?

KITTY. Not by name. It was awarded to Anonymous.

JANE. They couldn't have. It's not in the by-laws.

KITTY. (*puts book on shelves*) No one knew who wrote it. It caused a sensation.

JANE. (*to audience*) I wrote it! Did you hear? I wrote THE LOVES OF LAURA and—(*to KITTY*) What are all those people doing out there?

KITTY. (*goes above sofa*) Watching. They're going to stay right through till we find out who killed you. (*goes to bar*)

JANE. (*front*) I did write that script. That was my seventh produced. They were all good but THE LOVES OF LAURA was my crowning achievement. But did I get an Oscar? No. Instead I got a hit on the head. (*looks up*) It's all your fault. I understand I wasn't due till the turn of the century.

KITTY. (*moves down*) Don't blame them. Sometimes folks down here get carried away and take matters into their own hands. You have no idea how angry they get when there's a war. All the bookkeepers load up on overtime.

JANE. I can't believe it. I won an Oscar and I never got to deliver my acceptance speech.

KITTY. (*holds out dish to JANE*) Have some junk food. It will settle your nerves.

JANE. I have to watch my figure.

KITTY. Nonsense. Once you're through the gates everyone has a 36-25-36.

BETSY. (*offstage down* R.) Who wants me? Who called?

KITTY. Ah, there's Betsy Randolph. I've called them from sometime last week so the folks can meet them.

JANE. (*heads for closet*) I'll go back in the closet.

KITTY. She won't see you. You're not as advanced as I am.

JANE. That's good. Poor Betsy would burst into tears.

KITTY. (*calls*) Miss Randolph, in here.

BETSY. (*comes in to below sofa*) I was in the middle of giving my recipe for banana nut bread to the nicest interviewer from PEOPLE magazine and suddenly I'm here.

KITTY. It'll only take a minute.

BETSY. I hope so. I'm up to puréeing the bananas.

KITTY. I wish you'd brought some.

BETSY. It's too squishy.

KITTY. I want to introduce you to these nice people.

BETSY. (*steps down*) How do you do. Is this some committee meeting I forgot?

JANE. Always doing good works. Humane society, UNICEF, unwed fathers.

KITTY. (*goes to BETSY's* L.) We're all going to Stanzio Garelli's ski lodge in a few minutes and I want them to know who you are.

BETSY. Didn't they see THE LOVES OF LAURA?

JANE. (*to BETSY's* R.) Betsy was in it, too?

BETSY. (*front*) That was my first important role.

KITTY. (*sits on hassock*) Some of them may not go to the movies.

BETSY. You really should. It's our national art. (*to KITTY*) Do we have to go back to Stanzio's? I always hate it, all modern and sterile like a science fiction movie. Shouldn't a ski lodge be all logs and chintz?

JANE. You're thinking of Abe Lincoln.

BETSY. (*goes below stairs*) And Stanzio's is where Jane fell down.

JANE. (*goes above sofa to BETSY*) Where I was pushed.

KITTY. (*settles back in chair*) You can't get out of it. You won't remember any of this and you'll have a very plausible reason for showing up.

BETSY. It all sounds dreadfully morbid. (*goes* D.C. *to audience*) A professional ingenue shouldn't have to go through these scenes. I never wanted to be an actress. My boyfriend entered me in a beauty contest. I won first prize as Miss Pizza Topping of Rochester, New York. (*goes below sofa*) Like all beauty queens, I went to Hollywood, but I'm still a litte girl at heart who likes to play tennis and cook and thinks America is just a cottage with a picket fence and Mom's apple pie. (*goes to arch* D.R., *turns back*) Of course now that I'm a success I have my apple pie a la mode. (*exits*)

KITTY. (*goes to shelves for her book*) I wonder if I can't think up pie and ice cream.

JANE. I'm delighted Betsy got into THE LOVES OF LAURA. Hugh discovered her, you know. It was at a Drive-In and she served him his double cheeseburger and fries on roller skates.

KITTY. (*brings book to back of sofa*) Double cheeseburgers—

JANE. (*moves to her*) Betsy came to help Hugh's secretary. She organized his fan club in Japan. I always said she was responsible for his getting more fan mail than Godzilla. Hugh even got her an agent.

KITTY. Nothing under pie. How about cheeseburgers?

JANE. Hugh always helps people. Me for example. (*gives up getting her attention, goes* D.C. and talks to the audience) My second book was ADVENTURE IN HONDURAS and Stanzio Garelli bought it from the proofs and hired me to do the script. I'd found my place in life. I had a script mind. I was good at it. I wrote another and Hugh had the lead. We had conferences over line changes he wanted and then we had conferences without discussing the script and, before I knew it, we were married. Then I wrote THE LOVES OF

LAURA. Maybe it's best I died because I could never top that one.

KITTY. Damn! (*reads*) "No food ordered unless essential to your work." (*closes book*)

VALERIE. (*comes storming in at the top of the stairs*) Why do you keep interrupting me? Is nothing sacred?

JANE. (*Front; she sits in chair.*) Hold onto your husbands. Here's Valerie.

KITTY. I want these nice people to know who you are.

VALERIE. (*crosses down stairs*) Everyone knows Valerie Vickers. I've been a star since—well, since I was a teenager.

KITTY. Five husbands and thirty-two movies later and you're still a star.

VALERIE. Thirty-one movies.

KITTY. Aren't you forgetting STAG PARTY SENSATION?

VALERIE. (*goes to KITTY*) Oh, my God, you won't tell Edwina, will you?

KITTY. (*puts book on shelves*) I'm not a tattle-tale.

VALERIE. I was a mere child. I thought STAG PARTY SENSATION was about a deer. You know, like Bambi. (*comes down to* R. *of sofa*)

JANE. Oh, come now—

VALERIE. Besides, I wasn't Valerie Vickers then. I was little Emily Pyle, from East Scranton. (*gets carried away with her performance, crosses* D.C.) Oh, where is that innocent child now?

JANE. Here she goes!

VALERIE. Where is that sweet girl who used to go to the park and play with the squirrels and chipmunks?

HUGH. (*starts applauding offstage down* R. *as he enters*) You're giving one of your best performances, Valerie.

JANE. (*rises*) Hugh. My Hugh.

VALERIE. (*breaking her mood*) I didn't know you were going to be here.

HUGH. Neither did I.

JANE. You look marvelous.

KITTY. (*goes below sofa*) I called you here to meet these nice people.

HUGH. (*front*) Ah, my fans. How do you do.

KITTY. This is just an introductory meeting which you will forget as soon as it's over.

JANE. It's like group therapy.

VALERIE. You mean we're letting our hair down?

HUGH. You can take yours off. I know it's a wig.

VALERIE. (*steps down to audience*) I don't want you to get the wrong idea about me. That little bit about the sweet girl with the chipmunks? That's my image. I created it and I cultivated it. What was I supposed to do with my life, be a secretary from nine to five? Not me. I worked my way up from the chorus to a seven year contract with M-G-M. I did whatever and whoever I could to get ahead. I'm a movie star twenty-four hours a day. That's my job and I'm damn good at it. (*goes down right*) I've sacrificed a lot for my showplace in Beverly Hills, my swimming pool, and my Ferrari, but what secretary has that? Do you blame me for what I am? Think it over. Maybe you'll find you're just a little bit jealous. (*exits*)

HUGH. Poor thing. She never got over missing the Oscar for THE LOVES OF LAURA.

JANE. Was she nominated? (*KITTY nods her head.*)

HUGH. I thought it was very generous of me to include her in my acceptance speech.

JANE. (*comes close to HUGH*) Hugh won? I'm so glad.

HUGH. (*front*) I'm delighted to meet you. Is there some award you want to present?

JANE. One kiss. Just one little kiss.

KITTY. I wanted these folks to see you before we go to Stanzio's.

JANE. Not a passionate one.

HUGH. I'm not going there.

JANE. Just one little peck.

KITTY. Oh, yes you are.

HUGH. (*as JANE kisses his cheek, reacts with a yelp and goes* D.R.) Ow! It's that damned shaving cream. I've got razor burn again.

JANE. (*sinks on hassock*) I tried.

KITTY. (*sits on sofa*) You can go. I'll call you back later.

HUGH. We'll see about that. (*front*) Thanks for coming. It's you fans who made me a star. You and, of course, my talent. I love you all, each and everyone of you. (*starts to exit and turns back*) Not the men, of course. I'm fond of you men. But the ladies—ah, I just love you ladies. (*blows a kiss and exits*)

KITTY. You married that?

JANE. I know he sounds conceited, but why shouldn't he be? I'm sure while I was at my IBM Selectric he was charming some cute little script girl but it's all in fun.

KITTY. Some fun. I could show you—(*rises and goes to bar*) No, that's mean.

JANE. (*goes to KITTY'S* L. *at bar*) Show me what?

KITTY. (*picks up dish of snacks*) No, you keep your illusions.

JANE. About what? Hugh? What illusions?

KITTY. (*eating as she moves away* R.) Nothing, nothing, nothing.

JANE. He didn't kill me. He couldn't have.

KITTY. No, he was a faithful husband and—(*lurches forward as if hit*) Ow! (*looks up*) What did you do that for?

JANE. What? What happened?

KITTY. They hit me.

JANE. We don't have corporal punishment up there, do we?

KITTY. (*looks in book on shelves*) Let me look it up.

JANE. (*goes* U.C.) I guess once you get past the gates it's all right, beautiful music and such?

KITTY. That's the gossip. (*in book*) Here it is. (*reads*) "Corporal punishment is permissable. One can slap a worker when he tells a fib."

JANE. All you said was Hugh was faithful and—that was a lie? (*crosses to center of chair*) I don't believe it. I absolutely don't believe it.

KITTY. (*goes above sofa*) You want proof?

JANE. (*confused, goes towards library*) No! Yes! I don't know.

KITTY. You remember the night you were murdered?

JANE. Vividly.

KITTY. (*puts the snack dish on the bar*) You were worried Hugh would be suicidal with despair?

JANE. The poor dear. He loved me so.

KITTY. (*goes to the* R. *of stairs*) That night, after the local police had finished their investigation and Edwina had called in the story, Hugh came downstairs to get a drink. (*HUGH comes down and goes to bar.*)

JANE. Scotch on the rocks. Johnny Walker Red. (*She goes to him as he pours drink.*) Look at him, Kitty, he's finding solace in the bottle. He's desolate. Oh, he'll never recover from this. I told you, he's destroyed.

KITTY. (*goes to HUGH's* R.) Actually, he's wondering what photo of him they'll use in the papers.

HUGH. (*musing*) I hope they use that one from ADVENTURE IN HONDURAS.

JANE. He's just keeping his mind off the tragedy.

KITTY. (*not believing this*) Uh-huh.

JANE. I wish I could comfort him. (*to him as he drinks*) Hugh, dear, it's all right. I don't seem to mind being dead.

KITTY. He can't hear you. (*HUGH goes below sofa.*)

JANE. Perhaps the thought gets through.

HUGH. I must play that part in THE LOVES OF LAURA. (*BETSY comes downstairs.*)

KITTY. Well, what do you know? Here comes Miss Apple Pie.

JANE. She'll comfort him.

BETSY. Hugh.

HUGH. Betsy.

KITTY. (*goes to* R. *of sofa*) That's some comfort.

JANE. She'll know how to relax him.

BETSY. (*goes to HUGH*) Everyone's gone to bed.

HUGH. Watch out for Edwina. She's always snooping.

BETSY. She's taking her Estee Lauder bubble bath.

HUGH. You're sure we're alone?

BETSY. Positive. (*They go into a deep and passionate embrace.*)

JANE. Look at that! Do you see what he's doing?

KITTY. (*by sofa* R., *goes close to watch them*) I don't think she's relaxing him very much.

JANE. (*goes* D.C., *to HUGH*) Stop it this instant! Hugh, I'm here. I'm watching. I'm not even cold in the ground.

KITTY. And he's getting hot up here.

JANE. (*to KITTY*) Can't you stop them?

KITTY. I'm rather enjoying it. I can barely remember

how nice it was. (*BETSY and HUGH sink onto the sofa in an embrace.*) When I think of the men I seduced. There was that lieutenant—(*reacts as if slapped again*) Ow! (*looks up*) Sorry! (*to JANE*) They don't like that kind of talk.

HUGH. (*breaks the kiss*) Not now. Edwina may come down.

BETSY. (*giggles*) Swathed only in bubbles.

HUGH. If she knew about us it would ruin me.

BETSY. Now we can tell everyone.

HUGH. There has to be a suitable mourning period.

KITTY. He must mean more than two hours.

BETSY. Why don't you throw yourself on her casket?

HUGH. That's always good for the front page of the Daily News.

JANE. I hope you get splinters in your—

KITTY. We must think kind thoughts.

HUGH. We can start being seen together in six months.

BETSY. And announce our engagement at a large press party at the Hilton.

JANE. (*pacing indignantly*) I don't believe it. Right under my very nose.

HUGH. This is much better than divorcing. That's such rotten publicity.

JANE. It didn't hurt that Taylor girl.

BETSY. Now we can be together always. (*They kiss.*)

KITTY. (*goes to JANE*) And you really thought you two were America's Sweethearts?

JANE. We had a six page spread in Good Housekeeping, Barbara Walters interviewed us and once we were even mentioned by Billy Graham. (*sits on hassock*) I think I'm going to cry.

KITTY. You can't. We don't have tears.

JANE. (*notices BETSY rubbing HUGH's head and*

messing his hair) He hates to have his hair mussed.

HUGH. (*straightens up*) Don't muss my hair.

BETSY. No one's watching.

HUGH. You never know.

JANE. You're damned right you don't.

BETSY. After the funeral, can't we sneak away somewhere? Hawaii? Acapulco?

HUGH. I know this little place outside Manzanillo—(*pronounced Mon-zan-ee-yo*)

JANE. (*rises*) That's where we spent our honeymoon.

BETSY. Just the two of us, alone. Unless we're working, of course.

HUGH. Maybe Jane's new script.

BETSY. She said it was very good.

JANE. (*moves above sofa*) It was terrific.

BETSY. What's it called?

HUGH and JANE. THE LOVES OF LAURA.

BETSY. Is it really good?

HUGH. How would I know? She never shows—showed—me anything before it was finished.

BETSY. When you find it, you will let me see it, won't you?

HUGH. Of course.

BETSY. Maybe it has leads for the two of us. We'll set the town on its ear. Just us. You and me. (*kisses him*)

JANE. (*moves to KITTY*) I am furious. I typed my fingers to the knuckle for that?

KITTY. Think how mad you'd be if you wrote longhand.

JANE. (*sits in the chair sulking*) Haven't we had enough of this? I'd rather watch a rerun of LASSIE.

KITTY. Whatever you want. I'm here to help. (*moves to* C. *of sofa, claps hands*) All right, you two. Break it up. Break it up!

BETSY. (*as they break the kiss*) What—who said that?

HUGH. Edwina. It's Edwina.

KITTY. No, it's just me again.

BETSY. I feel as if I'm on a casette.

HUGH. (*rises*) Why did we have to repeat this?

KITTY. Just a whim of mine. You two go back upstairs and you'll forget all about it.

BETSY. (*rises, takes HUGH's hand and takes him to the stairs*) Why don't you just go back and sit on a cloud?

JANE. (*to KITTY*) They don't understand, do they?

KITTY. (*moves above JANE*) Cloud-sitting would be a bore.

BETSY. (*as she and HUGH are on landing*) Then go to hell.

JANE. She's going the opposite way.

KITTY. You go to bed.

BETSY. That's what I intend to do, but not alone. (*takes HUGH off with her*)

JANE. (*rises and paces below sofa*) I am livid. I don't feel in the least bit angelic.

KITTY. Calm down.

JANE. How can I be calm? Where's that book? (*grabs the book from shelves and looks in the index*)

KITTY. (*goes to her*) What are you doing?

JANE. I'll take care of Hugh.

KITTY. What are you looking up?

JANE. How to make him do a musical version of PEER GYNT.

KITTY. (*takes book back*) We don't use this for revenge.

JANE. (*goes to bar as KITTY puts book on shelves; to audience*) Did you see them? Of course you did. I feel so naive. While I was slaving over a hot typewriter, Hugh was slaving over a hot ingenue.

KITTY. (*goes to JANE'S* R., *to audience*) She's upset. You can understand that, can't you?

JANE. They both pushed me. Together. I was hit on the head and then I felt twenty fingers on my back and ten of them had long fingernails.

KITTY. (*guides her to bar*) You're making that up.

JANE. What am I going to do?

KITTY. Sit down here and count to ten.

JANE. I don't want—

KITTY. (*pushes her down on bar stool*) Count!

JANE. One, two, three, four—

KITTY. Have some snacks. Oh, they're all gone. (*puts dish down, picks up another*)

JANE. —five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

KITTY. Olives! (*eats one*) Here, Jane, have one.

JANE. Only if it's dunked in a martini.

KITTY. (*sits by her as she eats another olive*) I wish we had olives up there. The menu in the commissary is so limiting.

JANE. (*pulls herself together and rises*) I've come to a decision.

KITTY. That sounds ominous.

JANE. I want to go back. I don't care who killed me. (*goes* D.C.) I just want to get out of here.

KITTY. (*worried*) You can't.

JANE. I asked to come down, can't I ask to go back?

KITTY. What about me?

JANE. You can stay if you want to.

KITTY. (*rises and goes to JANE*) But this is my big chance. I've got to help you find your murderer. I've flopped so many times already.

JANE. On other cases?

KITTY. (*moves below chair*) I spent ages on that missing person case. I looked everywhere—in swamps, the

bottom of muddy old lakes, and even in a garbage disposal unit and I couldn't find him.

JANE. Who?

KITTY. (*turns*) Jimmy Hoffa. Maybe he had plastic surgery and now he's Idi Amin.

JANE. (*sits on sofa*) You did your best.

KITTY. (*goes to her*) I've always been good at the little things.

JANE. Like what?

KITTY. (*moves* C.) Oh, sitting on people's shoulders and whispering like their conscience when they're about to sin. I've stopped more adultery than the Pope.

JANE. You should have been on Hugh's shoulder.

KITTY. I can't be everywhere at once. Sometimes I make people confess to their little indiscretions. They feel better and I get another demerit erased, (*sits by JANE*) but I'll never get through those gates without a big case and this was going to be it and now you want to go back and leave me and—(*leans on JANE's shoulder and is crying without tears*) Oh, I wish I could cry real tears.

JANE. (*patting her shoulder*) There, there, Kitty.

KITTY. I've always messed things up. Remember, I told you I was shot and killed at Valley Forge?

JANE. I remember.

KITTY. That isn't quite the truth. I died because I was greedy. General Washington threw that silver dollar across the Potomac and—

JANE. Yes.

KITTY. I was stooping down to pick it up when I fell in the river and drowned. (*wails*)

JANE. (*starts laughing*) You don't mean it? You picked up the—(*Laughter takes over.*)

KITTY. It doesn't help to have you laugh at me.

JANE. That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard.

KITTY. It does seem rather silly, but at least I got you laughing. You feel better now, don't you?

JANE. Much.

KITTY. And you won't go back?

JANE. You win. I'll help you get your wings. Oh, dear, I sound like Uncle Sam talking to an air force recruit.

KITTY. You're nice. You're going to make a very respectable angel. (*goes to bar*) Now you'll have an olive?

JANE. No, thank you.

KITTY. (*takes one*) Wouldn't you think someone as rich as Mr. Garelli would have loads of tid-bits and munchies?

JANE. (*crosses KITTY*) What about THE LOVES OF LAURA? I had it with me the night—it happened. I'd told Stanzio I was bringing him the best writing since Moses walked down the mountain with those tablets.

KITTY. Careful, Jane. They're very touchy about things like that.

JANE. (*looks up*) I was only joking.

KITTY. You never did show the script to Mr. Garelli, did you?

JANE. (*goes to windows and looks out*) How could I? We were marooned in a blizzard and his plane was so delayed he missed the whole weekend.

KITTY. (*goes* C.) Skiers are miserable without enough snow because they can't ski and then they're miserable with too much snow because they can't get up the slopes. Why don't they just take up scuba-diving?

JANE. (*goes to her*) I had the script in my attaché case. (*goes to library*) That first night someone must have brought it down here, xeroxed it in the library, and taken it back without my knowing it.

KITTY. (*crosses by hassock*) Then whoever did that killed you?

JANE. But who? (*sits in chair*) Stanzio asks us here—five dear friends. That's Hollywood style, you know. We're dear friends who are so jealous of each other we could—

KITTY. Commit murder?

JANE. Obviously. But what happened to the script? Who took it to Stanzio and why was it anonymous?

KITTY. Would you like to see how that happened?

JANE. Curiosity killed the cat but I'm already dead so let me see it.

KITTY. (*gets book from shelves and brings it to above the sofa*) Let's see how to bring that about. (*to audience*) You don't mind waiting a bit longer for us to get to the present time, do you? It's only fair for Jane to see her group plotting away. (*from book*) Here we are. "Events taking place elsewhere."

JANE. (*goes to her*) Where are we going?

KITTY. A little bar in Ventura called Outtakes.

JANE. (*moves away* D.L.) That's a terrible joint.

KITTY. That's where the five of them plotted their course to the Oscars two months after you died. (*front and crosses* C.) Now you all use your imagination. You'll have to excuse me for being childish but this is what the books says. (*does the childish rhyme and gesture of PATTY-CAKE and yells*) Ventura. Outtakes Bar.

JANE. Are you sure that's how to do it?

KITTY. (*goes to her*) It must be because here they come. (*turns front*) Amazing, isn't it?

(*The five of them come in and gather around the coffee table. They come in unemotionally and sit as if at a*

banquette. BETSY sits D.R. *on the sofa with HUGH above her, JUSTIN sits in the middle with EDWINA to his left and VALERIE to the* C.)

JANE. Where are they going?

KITTY. (*as they sit down*) This will serve as the table they were sitting around. (*goes* C. *as they remain in frozen positions*) Now you'll see what happened to your script. Ready?

JANE. (*Watching the others, she goes below KITTY and below sofa to* D.R.) I'm a little nervous.

KITTY. Go! (*As she gestures, they unfreeze and continue as if they had been drinking and talking.*)

JUSTIN. . . . and so we all admit we received a copy of THE LOVES OF LAURA in the mail Wednesday morning.

JANE. Where did they get them from?

EDWINA. And we've no idea who sent them?

HUGH. One of us obviously. We were the only people at Stanzio's lodge when the script disappeared.

BETSY. You're absolutely sure Jane had it with her?

HUGH. Positive.

VALERIE. It's all she talked about at dinner, remember?

JANE. (*goes above sofa*) Me and my big mouth.

BETSY. I can't believe one of us would steal it.

VALERIE. Why not? One of us stole her husband.

JANE. (*leans over VALERIE's shoulder*) Good for you, Valerie.

BETSY. That's a terrible thing to say.

HUGH. (*at the same time*) Valerie!

VALERIE. Come on, Betsy. We all knew what was going on.

JANE. I didn't.

EDWINA. I suppressed the story in exchange for an exclusive with Hugh on the funeral, didn't I, dear?

HUGH. Edwina, you promised—

BETSY. (*turns on him*) Is that true?

HUGH. It would have started a lot of filthy rumors.

VALERIE. Where there's smoke—

KITTY. (*sits on hassock and leans in towards them*) This is exciting.

BETSY. Edwina, it's time someone told you off.

JUSTIN. (*rising above the growing fight*) Well, not now! We're here for business. You two can meet with pistols at dawn if you want, but right now we have our futures to think about.

VALERIE. (*applauds*) That's the director for you. Calm us down.

HUGH. Yes, Betsy, let's get on with it.

BETSY. You're a big help.

JANE. (*to KITTY*) He always collapsed in a crisis like a cold soufflé.

EDWINA. I accept your apology.

BETSY. I didn't apologize. (*JANE crosses by her.*)

EDWINA. (*smiles*) You will, dear. You will.

JANE. (*leans in over BETSY*) She means you'd better.

JUSTIN. To get back to THE LOVES OF LAURA. We know someone stole the script, read it, and realized Jane was right. It was brilliant. That person mailed us xeroxed copies with the stipulations attached.

JANE. (*goes to above JUSTIN*) What stipulations?

VALERIE. Thank God for that.

JANE. (*yelling in JUSTIN's ear*) I said, "What stipulations?"

JUSTIN. I am to direct the picture, Betsy plays Laura—

VALERIE. And I get Myra. It's a much better role.

BETSY. And much older.

EDWINA. The letter says I get an exclusive on everything connected with LAURA straight through the opening.

HUGH. But why was this all done, that's what I want to know?

JANE. (*moves towards KITTY*) Me, too.

KITTY. And me.

JUSTIN. Let's reconstruct the whole thing. Someone—

JANE. (*turns to them*) One of you—

EDWINA. One of us—

JUSTIN. Read the script of LAURA, realized how good it was and wanted to guarantee he participated in it.

VALERIE. Or she, darling. Don't forget the three of us.

BETSY. Why couldn't this person claim to have written the script? Who could tell?

HUGH. I could.

JUSTIN. How?

HUGH. There are certain moments, little snippets here and there from Jane's past only I knew about.

EDWINA. Then you can still prove it and you get the rights.

JUSTIN. The royalites all go into a numbered Swiss bank account.

HUGH. Perhaps I'm just being generous.

BETSY. The marriage contract. It said that—

HUGH. Why don't you shut up?

JANE. Good for Betsy.

BETSY. But we might as well be honest, Hugh.

KITTY. Why start now?

VALERIE. Why start now? (*KITTY and JANE exchange a nod.*)

EDWINA. So there was a marriage contract between you and Jane?

HUGH. Well—

BETSY. It's just like the one we have, isn't it?

JANE. (*looks to KITTY*) They have one?

EDWINA. Why, Hugh, a pre-marital contract doesn't sound like you expect the marriage to last.

JANE. They're married?

KITTY. Didn't you guess?

HUGH. My lawyer advised it.

EDWINA. Ah, the fly in the ointment. All Jane's effects didn't go to you, did they, Hugh?

JANE. No way.

HUGH. Everything except the community property went to that stupid university in the Midwest.

JUSTIN. They would have inherited the rights to THE LOVES OF LAURA.

VALERIE. Hugh is in the same boat as the rest of us.

JUSTIN. Whoever took the script sent it to Stanzio thereby guaranteeing his future in the picture.

JANE. (*moves above sofa*) But which of you?

VALERIE. But which of us?

EDWINA. The royalties go into the Swiss bank account which cannot be touched for five years until the tv, foreign, and casette rights are all in. One of us here is a lot smarter than I thought.

JANE. (*leans over EDWINA*) It could be you, Edwina.

VALERIE. It could be you, Edwina.

JANE. (*turns to VALERIE*) Stop repeating everything I say.

JUSTIN. Isn't it time we mention what's lurking in the back of all our minds?

HUGH. Which is?

JUSTIN. We played that stupid game of Sardine. We put the lights out and wandered around the lodge looking for who was it. We heard a scream and we found Jane dead.

VALERIE. We have total recall, darling.

JUSTIN. The coroner said the cut on her head came from the stairs but we all know it could have come from that objet d'art thing in the upstairs hall.

BETSY. Justin, what are you saying?

JUSTIN. Isn't that a blunt instrument?

JANE. (*rubs her head*) Blunt and hard.

JUSTIN. Wasn't Jane hit and then pushed to make it look like an accident? (*looks from one to the other*) It's what we're all thinking, isn't it?

JANE. Good for Justin.

EDWINA. It had crossed my mind.

VALERIE. But we're all such dear friends . . . aren't we?

BETSY. Murder? None of us could do that.

JUSTIN. Couldn't we? Just look at us. Have you ever seen a more greedy, avaricious group?

VALERIE. We're only trying to get ahead. It's the American way of life.

HUGH. But I hate to believe that one of us would—

VALERIE. It doesn't really matter, does it? Jane is gone. We can't bring her back.

KITTY. Would they want to? (*JANE goes towards KITTY.*)

JUSTIN. Yes. Jane is happy wherever she is.

JANE. At the moment, I am miserable.

BETSY. Poor Jane.

JANE. (*turns to them*) Stop calling me poor Jane. I died rich.

VALERIE. How do we know we can trust each other? Suppose one of us goes to the authorities. He'd be a national hero.

EDWINA. I somehow don't see you on Mount Rushmore.

VALERIE. How about little Goody-Twoshoes?

BETSY. It would ruin Hugh.

HUGH. Just lay off, Valerie.

VALERIE. (*rises angrily*) Don't tell me what to do. It's not my wife that was pushed downstairs. (*goes* L. *of coffee table*) That was very convenient, wasn't it?

JUSTIN. Aren't you just shifting the scene away from yourself, Valerie?

VALERIE. What about you? You seem to have taken charge. Your career hasn't been doing too well lately and—

JUSTIN. (*rises*) Stop it right there. We're all in this together and this back-biting will get us nowhere.

KITTY. It's exciting though.

JUSTIN. We all have a lot on the line. No one outside of the five of us need ever know what's happened. Stanzio says he will produce the movie and the script credit will read "By Anonymous".

JANE. I should contact the Dramatists Guild.

JUSTIN. Whether Jane fell or was pushed is immaterial.

JANE. To everyone but Jane.

JUSTIN. (*sits on sofa*) I suggest we all calm down and agree that we go ahead with the plan.

EDWINA. Well put, dear.

JUSTIN. As for myself, I'd like to congratulate whichever of us took advantage of this opportunity.

VALERIE. (*sits on sofa*) Are you just being self-congratulatory, darling?

JUSTIN. (*smiles at her*) You'll never know. Then are we all agreed? We go ahead as outlined?

HUGH. It's the only sensible thing to do.

JUSTIN. (*puts his hand out*) Agreed? (*They all put their hand on top of his.*)

ALL. Agreed.

KITTY. (*rises with a gesture*) Stop! Hold it right there! (*They freeze in position. To JANE:*) A nice group of friends you have.

JANE. (*as she goes above sofa looking closely at each one*) But which killed me? Valerie? She'd murder for a close-up. Justin? After three divorces, his community property is divided up like Gaul. Edwina? She'd kill her own mother to interview herself on death row. And Hugh? My dear, sweet husband who is a louse. (*to BETSY*) And let's not forget this one. Another Bonnie looking for a Clyde. (*moves away to windows*) Oh, get rid of them. Get them to the present. They look like a freeze-frame from ALL ABOUT EVE.

KITTY. (*to them, claps her hands*) O.K. Break it up. Back to wherever you were. (*They all exit silently with no communication, they go* D.R.) You'll be back here again in a few minutes.

JANE. (*goes above sofa with book*) Couldn't we call Sherlock Holmes?

KITTY. (*goes to her*) He's a character.

JANE. (*gives book to KITTY*) How about Dashiel Hammett or that gloomy little man who's always by himself in the corner of the waiting room?

KITTY. Edgar Allen Poe?

JANE. That's the one.

KITTY. All he ever does is mumble "Never more, quoth the raven, never more."

JANE. While sipping his Amontillado. (*They laugh as JANE goes to bar.*) How about looking in your book and reconstructing my death scene?

KITTY. They won't let us dabble in violence.

JANE. (*picks up bottle*) Oh, how I wish I wanted a double Scotch, but I haven't felt like a Happy Hour since I got up there. (*sits on* L. *stool*) Do you suppose

Alcoholics Anonymous is in charge of the waiting room?

KITTY. (*crosses and sits on* R. *stool*) Along with Weight Watchers and Smoke Enders.

JANE. I don't even want a cigarette and I wouldn't have to worry about the Surgeon General. It wouldn't be dangerous to my health. I'm already dead.

KITTY. (*looks in book*) Now to get to the present. I've arranged it for the third anniversary of your death in the place where it happened. They each think no one else has been invited. Hugh and Betsy came together, of course.

JANE. Of course.

KITTY. There's bound to be tension and fights and—

JANE. What if there isn't?

KITTY. I have a prop that will start things going. (*goes* U.C. *with book*) Here we are. The present. Oh, that's a snap. (*closes book and puts it on shelves, goes down by closet*) All I have to do is think and we get there.

JANE. (*sees KITTY standing there with her eyes closed*) Are you thinking or napping?

JANE. Shh! I'm thinking. Very hard. The present. The present.

VALERIE. (*Comes sweeping in* D.R., *she is wearing a fur coat, her head is swathed in a chiffon scarf and she wears sun glasses making her almost unrecognizable.*) Stan! Stanzio! (*crosses to foot of stairs*)

JANE. (*rises*) I thought they were here already.

VALERIE. (*looking up the stairs*) Where the hell are you?

KITTY. (*goes above the sofa to VALERIE*) I guess I'm not up to the present. (*behind her, calls to her*) Miss Vickers.

VALERIE. (*turns*) It's you again. Once and for all what are you doing?

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