

SHOWGIRL MURDERS

By

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CAST

The women - In order of appearance

Lorna Vogelsang - (playing Margo Dumont) an aging German film star
Gigi Hart - (playing Giselle) a French sex kitten with claws
Mona Lovemore - (playing Monique) a street wise Cajun/Creole
Tina "Icy" Storm**, - (playing Vousette) sleek, sensual and cold
Cassidy Rogers** - (playing Vousette) Icy double, a country girl
Carlotta Eastmore - a set costumer of a mature age

***Note: Tina and Cassidy are played by the same actress*

The men - in order of appearance

Guy Bayou - (playing Victor) a slick New Orleans jazzman
Lionel Greenway - (playing Gunter Lugar) a character actor
Dan Target - (playing Dirk Trouble) a leading man
Ashley Bentley - a film director
Randy Oxen - a blonde, muscular, stage electrician
Dane "Pappy" Delmont - a mature Assistant Director
Rudy Ravengill - a flamboyant Art Director
Effects - a meek Special Effects crewman
Louis B Mayer - offstage voice of the legendary studio head

EXTRAS/UNDERSTUDIES

Male Dress Extra, a sharp looking male in evening clothes
Female Dress Extra, an attractive woman a in evening clothes
*Note: the Extras speak no line and are only in the first scene.
They may be understudies for the other roles.*

THE SETTING: 1945, an MGM sound stage.

PROGRAM NOTE

Gustav Klimt was a Viennese artist who created distinctive stylized works. He died in Vienna on February 6, 1918. World War I ended ten months later on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918. Louis B. Mayer was born in Minsk Russia, July 4, 1885. During his tenure at MGM, he personally controlled every aspect of studio operations. He relinquished control of MGM studio in 1948 and devoted his remaining years to gambling on horses

APOLOGIA

Apologies to the working crew members who have been maligned, slandered, or omitted in the service of this play. To observers of union rules, traditions and the realities of filmmaking, scripts are only "suggestion pages" and the magic of the movies, and the theatre, is often in what the audience doesn't see.

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE LE MINETTE MAUVE NIGHT CLUB - NOVEMBER, 1945

Melancholy chords from a blues piano. Deuce tables ring a dance floor. Upstage, the neon outline of a purple cat, Le Minette Mauve, flickers through a glass brick wall. The voice of Dan Target as Dirk Trouble is heard on voice over.

TARGET (V.O.)

Le Minette Mauve was the hottest night club in Marseilles, until Nazi invaders turned it into a snake pit of Gestapo agents and French resistance fighters. Now, seven months after the Huns had burned to death in their bunkers, the night life had returned, hotter and more dangerous than ever.

(Spotlight an empty table with an unfinished drink and a tuxedo jacket draped over the chair.)

Life was hard in Marseille and the women even harder. Factories and shops were in ruins and a single girl had to find, or steal, a few Francs where ever she could.

(A sexy French showgirl, GIGI HART, slips a few Francs from the inside coat pocket.)

Some drank to forget.

(The spot moves onto other tables occupied by "dress mannequins" poised with drinks in hand.)

Some drank to not see what was in front of them.

(Spotlight drifts to a piqued FEMALE with a toxic look of disdain watching a couple dance.)

Some paid for their drinks with a dance held too tight.

(MONA LOVEMORE, a stunning Cajun/Creole showgirl, dances languidly with a clinging tuxedoed MALE, down a runway extending midway into the audience.)

Some sold whatever anyone would buy.

(Spotlight on a bargirl, TINA "ICY" STORM, wearing the purple cat outfit of Le Minette Mauve Night Club, purple boussetier, cat's tail and ears, prowling the tables offering drinks and company.)

Some lost all sense of shame.

(Mona releases her dance partner and takes Gigi in her arms. The two women begin a steamy adagio that climaxes next to the piano and the arched figure of LORNA VOGELSANG. She is poised atop a white grand piano, her vibrant red hair flowing like water to her shoulders. GUY BAYOU, a New Orleans jazzman with pencil mustache plays with wry nonchalance.)

And some sold songs of lost love with dark and dusky voices.

LORNA

Sings: DARK AND SMOKY LOVE

Lorna purrs the lyrics with a German accent, dismounts the piano and flows to the end of the runway with the showgirls. The music crescendos. A blackout. A shot is fired. Showgirls scream. The lights return. Lorna clutches her stomach where a large red spot expands. Lorna pushes past Mona and Gigi before collapsing. Gigi and Mona step over Lorna to escape. The spotlight remains on Lorna gasping for life.

TARGET (V.O.)

And, as in the five years of Nazi terror, some died.

ASHLEY

(Calling from the dark). Don't step over her like so much spilled spaghetti. You loved her.

MONA

I did not love her. She murdered my man.

ICY

Just like a kraut.

The showgirls share a laugh.

LORNA

(Sitting up) What did she call me?

MONA

(French accent) Le' kraut.

LORNA

Ashley, I want her fired. Schnell.

PAPPY

(Calling from the dark) Is that a cut?

ASHLEY

(Screams) Cut!

PAPPY

Take us off the bell. Kill the kliegs. Hit the work lights.

An electric bell rings twice. The red light over the upstage door blinks off. Work lights reveal Sound Stage 27 at MGM Studios. A crew is filming "Portrait of Death". Stage right, a row of directors chairs. Upstage, a portable make up table. Overhead, a catwalk greenbed with movie lights manned by RANDY OXEN, a blonde electrician. Far upstage is a craft service table with coffee and snacks.

ASHLEY BENTLEY, thirties, tightly wound, rises from a director's chair, megaphone in hand.

He wears pleated trousers, colorful open collared shirt and tweed jacket. He walks to center stage, steps over Lorna and calls to the unseen camera crew at the back of the theatre.

ASHLEY

Roman! Was that good for you? What do you mean, enh? Don't give me that dying fish thing. Pappy! Where's the pick up?

DANE "PAPPY" DELMONT, fifties, steps forward. He wears an open collared shirt and sports coat with one sleeve pinned back for his arm missing at the elbow. He tries to flip script pages but drops the script. Guy sweeps in to help.

PAPPY

Thanks, Guy. I'm looking.

CARLOTTA EASTMORE, forties, a costume designer in a stylish white smock over her tailored peplum suit, enters and goes toward Lorna. A hint of a Russian accent colors her speech.

CARLOTTA

Let me clean that before the movie blood sets.

LORNA

I am not moving until that showgirl is off this picture.

ASHLEY

Lorna, this is the last day of shooting. I can't fire her. Icy, apologize to Miss Vogelsang.

ICY

I will not apologize to a Nazi whore.

LORNA

Gott in Himmel! I was not der Fuhrer's mistress.

ASHLEY

For god's sake, Icy. Apologize to Lorna.

ICY

For what? Telling the truth?

ASHLEY

Miss Storm. You won't be the first actress L.B. Mayer banned from ever working at MGM again. Ever again.

ICY

I never meant to call you a washed up old bag of sauerkraut, or that you were ever a scum sucking Nazi whore. Done?

ASHLEY

Lorna? Lorna, we have an agreement.

LORNA

Get me out of this mess.

PAPPY

Effects!

EFFECTS, in dark shirt, gaudy tie, and tool belt, winds up a thin wire that leads to Lorna, who spreads her arms as Effects reaches inside her dress to snake out a blood bag.

ASHLEY

This is the last scene in the picture. The pay-off. I'm going to get it right! Carlotta! Clean the dress. Effects, reset the blood bag and make her ready to shoot. Where was Target?

GUY

He thought you were tight on Lorna and he'd be off camera.

ASHLEY

Tell Target I direct the shots, not him. Going again!

CARLOTTA

You've soaked all six changes of Lorna's club dress in stage blood. It'll take an hour to clean and dry even one of them.

ASHLEY

She can wear it wet. We're into coverage.

LORNA

I'm not putting on a wet dress

ASHLEY

This cast is killing me.

The Male and Female dress extras head for craft service.

PAPPY

If we've an hour, Ashley, we could shoot the scene in....

ASHLEY

We're shooting this scene. Michelangelo didn't stop painting the Sistine Chapel after... What take are we on?

PAPPY

(Reading) Twenty-seven takes, six false starts, four incomplete and six you hated because... just because.

ASHLEY

Hell. Get me a cup of java with...

PAPPY

Three lumps.

The voice of Louis B. Mayer comes over a loudspeaker.

MAYER (O.S.)

You are not Michelangelo and Stage 27 is not the Sistine Chapel. You are making a black and white B picture, the back end of a double bill with Mickey Rooney. When the MGM lion roars to intro.... what's this picture called?

PAPPY

Portrait of Death.

MAYER (O.S.)

Portrait of Death, only kids and insomniacs will be watching. Do you understand me, Mister Bentley?

ASHLEY

Yes, Mr. Mayer.

MAYER (O.S.)

Dane, what's left on the callsheet?

PAPPY

Scene seven, Interior Dirk Trouble's Hotel Room overlooking the port of Marseille in France.

ASHLEY

He knows Marseille is in France.

MAYER (O.S.)

Shoot Trouble's hotel. *(Mayer's microphone clicks off)*

ASHLEY

Where's my coffee? God almighty, do I have to do everything?

Ashley strides to craft service. While Pappy speaks to the unseen Roman, Ashley waves the two extras off and they exit.

PAPPY

Roman, have the boys roll out the hotel room. *(Calling out to anyone in earshot)* Art Department! Rudy. Anyone seen Rudy?

GUY

(Plays a chord) When you find Rudy, this piano's dead.

PAPPY

What's it matter, you're faking to playback?

GUY

I need to work on some music between setups.

PAPPY

Guy, I'm a little short handed here *(waves arm stump)*. Can you find Rudy and tell him the hotel rooms up next?

GUY

My pleasure, boss. I could use a trip to the old gold room.

PAPPY

Have a quick one and tell Rudy Ashley's on a tear for time.

GUY

Here's looking at you.

Guy exits. Randy rolls on a wall. Effects tests a smoker.

PAPPY

Effects, give Randy and me a hand moving in the hotel room.

RANDY

Back off. It's against union rules for A.D.s to move scenery.

PAPPY

Tell the union I was only pushing with one hand.

They roll the unit down stage, spin it 180 degree to reveal:

SCENE TWO THE GOLD ROOM

The gold room is a wire caged area filled with props, signs, antiques and assorted hanging chandeliers. RUDY RAVENGILL, the Art Director, in canary slacks, mohair jacket, relaxes on a settee. He drops an olive into his martini.

RUDY

"A kiss of Vermouth silences the gin...

MONA

(Enters) As a woman's knife silences her lover's betrayal.

RUDY

Joan Crawford as she coldly stabbed me three times.

MONA

"Mardi Gras Murders", 1933.

RUDY

You played the Creole girl who flirted and stole my wallet.

MONA

Damn sexy for only sixteen. Least ways, you thought so.

RUDY

Green apples make the best tarts.

(He tries to pull her toward him, but she resists)
It's too bad about us, Mona. If you hadn't abandoned me, we could have been Bogart and Bacall, Tracy and Hepburn.

MONA

Could'a been, mon cher, if you weren't hanging on Crawford like swamp water on a crocodile.

RUDY

Joan was riding my coattails like you're riding them now.

MONA

Coattail, my ass. I'm the girl who got you this deal.

RUDY

There would be no deal without my creation. I want half.

MONA

You get a third or you get nothing.

RUDY

You can't do it without me, Mona. Half or I'll...

Rudy grabs Mona. Guy enters, pulls Rudy off her.

GUY

Hey, you washed up has been, keep your hands off Mona.

MONA

That's okay, Guy. He ain't washed up, he's been discarded, like all his other stuff in here.

GUY

Yeah, the big silent star didn't have the pipes for talkies.

RUDY

The treasures in this gold room have made me Hollywood's greatest Art Director. (*Swills martini*)

GUY

Pappy says Ashley's in a rush to shoot the hotel room next.

RUDY

Can't directors shoot a schedule anymore? (*Heads to the door*)

GUY

Rudy, the piano sounds muffled. If you're too busy, I'll...

RUDY

That piano is my department, you keep out of it. (*Exits*)

Mona retrieves a lavender envelope from her bosom.

MONA

When you find Dan, would you give this to him?

GUY

(*Smells the strong perfume on the envelope*) Mon Cher, that perfume is stronger than Mississippi Delta moonshine.

MONA

Keep this between us, okay?

Mona exits. Guy stuffs the envelope into his pocket. Dan Target appears behind a prop shelf. He is wearing military khaki and holding a machine gun. He aims at Guy.

TARGET

Bip, bip, bip! Bulls eye.

GUY

Union rules, no shooting piano players. Pappy says they're shooting your hotel scene next.

TARGET

Hotel scene? Yes, where I tell the luscious dame she dresses like an auto mechanic, cause she's got my motor revving.

GUY

Writing your own dialogue, again?

TARGET

Who better to put some spice into this meatball script?

GUY

Dan Target, the poet of the French letter. Speaking of.

Guy gives Target Mona's letter. He sniffs it.

TARGET

I thought Nuremberg made poison gas a hanging offense.

The bell sounds. The work lights go off.

GUY

You're on.

TARGET

Really? How am I doing?

GUY

No time for drunken Barrymore jokes. See you on set.

Guy exits. Target contemplates the letter then slips it into the pocket of his costume jacket.

TARGET

But time for a quick one. Bartender, a double scotch. *(In bartender's voice)* Whatever you want Mister Target. You are the star.

Target savors his drink as Pappy, Randy and Effects rotate the gold room to reveal Interior Hotel Room.

SCENE THREE MARSEILLES HOTEL ROOM SET

A run down room with a bed and two doors. One door is frosted glass. The other door is solid wood onto a closet.

ASHLEY

Roman, start on the tomato's silhouette in the glass door, tilt down to her gams and... (*looking*) Where's the booze?

Rudy dashes in, slams down a bottle and two glasses.

RUDY

Great art direction takes time.

ASHLEY

What time will I see the 'great art' in this flick's title?

RUDY

When your 'great actor' Lionel Greenway gives it to me.

ASHLEY

Lionel? You said you painted it.

RUDY

I painted it. Lionel owns it and now I borrow it back.

PAPPY

Lionel had a late make up call. (*Points*) It's in that crate.

Rudy starts to take the crate away.

PAPPY

Rudy, show the picture to the director.

They all gather to watch Rudy open the crate. Randy turns a spotlight onto the crate.

RUDY

Christ, Randy, I told you not to make a production of it.

Rudy hold up a painting of a coyly standing nude, surrounded by gold leaf in the mode of Klimt's "The Kiss", "Danae" and "Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer".

ASHLEY

This looks as good as the original.

RUDY

Better. I painted it.

ASHLEY

But the nude is blonde and Lorna Vogelsang is a redhead.

RUDY

A redhead now, not thirty years ago. (*Examining the painting*)
The bastard, Lionel, look what he's done to my painting.

Rudy jams the painting back in the crate and exits.

ASHLEY

Why the fit about a copy?

PAPPY

Rudy thinks he's a great artistic talent.

ASHLEY

Save me from great artistic talent.

PAPPY

I think you're safe.

ASHLEY

If Rudy painted it, why did he have to borrow it from Lionel?

PAPPY

The original was painted by the Vienna artist Gustav Klimt for the Duchess Sophia Romanoff of Russia.

ASHLEY

And Lorna brags she was Klimt's favorite nude model.

PAPPY

The Duchess Sophia was broke after the communists took over and couldn't afford to pay Lorna's modeling fee, so Klimt promised Lorna a second portrait as payment.

ASHLEY

Klimt painted a second picture?

PAPPY

No, Klimt died a month later, but the Duchess lent Rudy the original so he could paint this copy for Lorna. In typical actress fashion, after Rudy gave Lorna the copy, she dumped him and ran off to Berlin with Lionel Greenway.

ASHLEY

The sour kraut and the ham actor.

PAPPY

The 'wry' lovers were split up when the Jewish Lionel had to flee Berlin ahead of Lorna's Nazi friend with the tiny mustache. Lionel took Lorna's copy to Hollywood with him.

Target rushes in to tape note cards around the set.

ASHLEY

Didn't learn your lines again?

TARGET

You do the directing, I'll do the acting.

PAPPY

Dan, we see your cheater cards on the bed.

Target moves the taped card off the bed.

TARGET

If you're waiting for me, you're backing up.

PAPPY

Harold, lock the doors and put us on a red light and bell.

Red light on. Bell rings. Sound of stage door locking.

ASHLEY

(To unseen camera crew) Roman, When Lorna looks to the door go with her look to Dan and he'll bring you back to Lorna in a loose two until the end of the scene. Play it right and we can get this in one. Screw it up and we'll be here until morning. *(Shouts)* Dan! Don't screw it up.

Ashley sits. Guy Bayou enters and sits in an actors chair. Ashley, Guy and Pappy remain in a dim pool of light.

TARGET

Somebody say 'action'. *(Exits)*

PAPPY

Start the rain.

Effects starts rain dribbling down the window with a hose.

ASHLEY

More rain.

Effects turns the valve and more rain is seen on the window.

PAPPY

Scene seven, take one. Roll sound. Camera. Roll playback.

TARGET (V.O.)

People say knowing how to make an entrance is an art. When Margo Saint Claire walks onto a stage or into a dingy hotel room in Marseilles, she is Michelangelo, Degas, Picasso and a little Gypsy Rose Lee thrown in for the boys.

Lorna, as Margo Saint Claire, enters, removes her fox coat, throws it on the bed. She wears a chic satin dress.

TARGET (V.O.)

A dead silver fox snuggled her vanilla cream bosom. The slit in her satin dress revealed more leg than a Kentucky Derby.

(MORE)

TARGET (V.O.) (cont'd)

Flowing rivers of flaming hair cascaded past lips redder than fenders on a fire truck. She had a look that would make most men surrender their soul. But I wasn't most men. Not yet.

Lorna scans the room, finds a suitcase on the bed containing clothes and a 44 revolver. While the voice over continues, she empties the gun, lets the bullets drop to the bed, puts the gun back and scoops the bullets into her purse.

TARGET (V.O.)

I had slipped Porthos, the bulbous nosed concierge, five Franks to warn me of uninvited guests. I had one, he snorted, (In a french accent) a woman who smelled of lavender and oleander, sweet and deadly. Porthos knew his perfumes.

Dirk's shadow falls on the glass door. Lorna puts her foot on the bed, straightens the seams in her stockings and, seductively posed, waits for Trouble. Dirk enters wearing an American Army Captain's well decorated uniform. He throws his hat on the bed. Lorna picks it up, strokes the brim.

LORNA

No way to treat military property, Captain Trouble.

TARGET

Mister Trouble. That hat and I turned civilian at midnight.

LORNA

Why would an American boy take his discharge in a grubby French seaport like Marseilles?

TARGET

Maybe the same reason a chanteuse puts her leg up on an ex soldier's bed at three in the morning.

LORNA

Maybe both looking for someone?

TARGET

Or running from someone?

LORNA

Is Captain... Mister Trouble, searching for a French coquette who retreated with the Nazis?

TARGET

You know a lot for a chanteuse.

LORNA

Men like your grubby concierge like to tell stories once a woman get's past their nosey natures.

TARGET

Did he tell you any bedtime stories?

LORNA

One about a San Francisco private eye who's staying in France and looking for a little work.

TARGET

You got any of you own bedtime stories?

LORNA

Sure, if you promise not to fall asleep... afterwards.

TARGET

How about the one that starts, "Once upon a time Goldilocks offered Papa Bear one hundred American plus expenses."

LORNA

What if Goldilocks thinks Papa bear's offer is too hard?

TARGET

What if Papa bear eases the offer with a glass of absinthe?

LORNA

A smart girl never drinks absinthe with men named Trouble.

TARGET

(Pours one drink) If it's not my bartending, what brings you here, Miss Sainte Claire?

LORNA

You know who I am?

TARGET

I caught a few of your songs at Le Minette Mauve.

LORNA

You liked the one about the french girl who forgot she was in love with the American soldier? Yes?

TARGET

(Hangs his coat in closet) No, but I'd like to hear the one about the french girl who forgot she was nearly my wife.

LORNA

Nearly being a wife is easy to forget. I've forgotten several nearly husbands.

TARGET

Occupational hazard?

LORNA

An American who spent two years with the Resistance blowing up Germans must have forgotten a few nearly wives himself.

TARGET

Giselle isn't easily forgotten.

LORNA

Nor are you, I'll ask around.

TARGET

And I'll ask around why a fat man has you scared enough to sit on a man's bed and not have a drink.

LORNA

He's taken something from me and I want it back.

TARGET

A woman with your good looks shouldn't find that unusual.

LORNA

Captain Trouble...

TARGET

Call me Dirk, makes me feel like a civilian.

LORNA

Dirk. He's got the Klimt.

TARGET

A man with the Klimt is a good to keep at arms length.

LORNA

It's mine and I want it back.

TARGET

A lady gives a man her Klimt and now she wants it back.

LORNA

You don't understand.

TARGET

I'm a detective, not a doctor.

LORNA

(Slaps him) You American pig!

Ashley rises and quietly closes the door to Target's room.
Ashley does not return until after Lionel enters the scene.

TARGET

Don't get skittish on me doll face. We need each other.

LORNA

I'm desperate. I must get that painting back.

TARGET

A valuable painting?

LORNA

The fat man killed Rudolpho to get it.

TARGET

Rudolpho?

LORNA

He was my lover.

TARGET

You loved the fat man?

LORNA

No, the fat man is Gunter Lugar. Lugar killed Rudolpho.

TARGET

Rudolpho loved the fat man?

LORNA

No, Rudolpho sold him the Klimt.

TARGET

Klimt, Viennese. I've seen his stuff. Lots of flat looking people and gold leaf. Not exactly Saturday Evening Post cover material, but worth a lot if it was genuine.

LORNA

It was 1943, the Nazi's controlled Europe, nothing was genuine. Rudolpho thought if he could pass off a copy of Klimt's "The Passion" we'd be able to buy an exit visa.

TARGET

Rudolpho would have to see the original to make a copy good enough to pass as the real thing. Who had the real painting?

LORNA

A Russian Duchess exiled by the communists and living in Vienna. She hired Klimt to paint a portrait of her niece, Lady Catherine Romanoff. Klimt died a week after finishing.

TARGET

So where does your lover fit in?

LORNA

When Hitler's art thieves began seizing valuable artwork, Rudolpho offered to make a copy of the Klimt for the Duchess to keep the original away from the Nazis.

TARGET

So your lover painted a copy, but instead of giving it to the Duchess, kept it for himself. Where does the fat man come in?

LORNA

The fat man is loathsome boar named Gunter Lugar. Rudolpho tried to pass off the fake as genuine at a very cheap price.

TARGET

Cheap because it was a fake.

LORNA

Somehow, Lugar realized the painting was fake and Rudolpho was trying to cheap him, they struggled and Lugar beat him to death with his walking stick and took the painting.

TARGET

So Lugar got the fake and kept the money.

LORNA

No. During the struggle, I picked up Lugar's satchel of money and escaped. Now, I've got to get the painting.

TARGET

Slow down, doll face. Lugar killed Rudolpho. He got the fake and you got the money. Rough justice. Why should I help you?

LORNA

It's a matter of life and death.

Lorna buries her face in Target's chest.

TARGET

It always is.

The shadow of a fat man appears on the glass door.

LORNA

What are you doing?

TARGET

Trust me doll face.

Target pushes Lorna into the closet, throws in her coat.

TARGET

It's open.

Lionel Greenway, as Gunter Lugar, enters. An imposing man, he wears a tailored topcoat, suit and waistcoat. He gestures about the room with his gold handled walking stick.

LIONEL

"Sweet are the uses of adversity", eh, Captain Trouble?

TARGET

Better than a fox hole on the Rhine.

LIONEL

(*Sniffs*) And more feminine company, as would suggest the lingering scent of... (*sniff again*) Ah, Moon-orchid perfume.

TARGET

The cleaning lady is mostly eau de pine-sol. But enough of making polite, Mister Gunter Lugar of Villa Lugar, Cote d'Azure, raconteur, gourmand and, oh yes, Gestapo informer.

LIONEL

Truly an amazing catalog of information, Captain Trouble.

TARGET

Make that Mister Trouble. What brings you to my adversity, your wife two timing you with a chauffeur? A spare Klimt?

LIONEL

Ah, yesterday a Captain of conscience, today a civilian freebooter. How many pieces of silver buys you today?

TARGET

One client at a time is my limit.

LIONEL

But you haven't seen my silver.

Lugar pulls out a silver derringer. Target sips his drink.

TARGET

Such a slender gun for a fat man.

LIONEL

Where is Margo Saint Claire?

TARGET

Women with fancy names don't evening in wharfside hotels.

Lionel pistol-whips Target to the floor. Lionel prods Target with his stick. Ashley returns to his director's chair.

LIONEL

Moon-orchid perfume is a rare and expensive scent. Too bad it now conjures up the stench of a liar and cheat.

TARGET

Didn't your Nazi friends make you used to stench?

LIONEL

Amusing riposte, Mister Trouble. As amusing as the tale of a priceless painting, misappropriated by thieves.

TARGET

Your Klimt is a fake.

LIONEL

Cunning Rudolpho and Margo. Claimed a Nazi prison guard had stolen the real thing.

TARGET

They tried to cheat you, so you killed Rudolpho.

LIONEL

There, our stories diverge. I paid them off and took the Klimt. A satisfactory transaction for all.

TARGET

When did you realize the painting you had was forgery?

LIONEL

When the Allies discovered in Goebels' hidden art trove and the real Klimt painting was with it.

TARGET

Now you want your money back.

LIONEL

Money is the least of my wants.

TARGET

Then to what do I owe the visit?

LIONEL

"Cher che' la femme".

(A woman stumbles backwards into the closet doorway.)

ASHLEY

You're not shot. Keep rolling! Lorna, say your damn line.

LIONEL

This is an outrage. No actress plays jokes in my scene.

Lionel pushes her away and into Target's arms.

TARGET

Ha, ha. Good girl, Icy. You got the old goat with that stunt.

ASHLEY

Stunt! I don't have time for stunts. This is not an Abbott and Costello movie. Damn it!

PAPPY

Is that a cut?

ASHLEY

Cut!

Effects steps out of the closet, looks around.

ASHLEY

Who told you to rig a the stunt double with a knife stabbing gag?

TARGET

Icy is dead.

ASHLEY

Nobody dies in this scene. Unless I kill... personally.

(Pushing past Target and Icy.)

Get this stunt woman off the set! Roman, two cameras, wide and tight as Lorna comes out of the closet.

TARGET

Listen you dumb bastard. Icy is dead! As in dead... dead.

ASHLEY

(Pause while it sinks in))

Dead... dead?

(Ashley lifts her arm and lets it drop.))

We killed Yakima Canut's stunt woman? I'm ruined.

Ad-libs: "Oh, my God", "No", et al. Target carries Icy to an off set couch, lays her down. Gigi rushes to Icy, Guy holds her back. Carlotta covers Icy with a nearby furniture pad.

GIGI

It could have been me.

GUY

It could have been anyone of us.

GIGI

You don't understand. It was me they were...

Gigi breaks away from him and dashes off stage.

ASHLEY

Who casts a stunt woman to play a speaking role anyway?

PAPPY

Mayer.

ASHLEY

I don't give a damn. She'll never work in this town again. Mayer? As in Mr. Louis B. Mayer?

Target and Pappy exchange a look.

PAPPY

I'll call the wrap.

ASHLEY

~~No. I've got to finish this picture.~~

PAPPY

Icy was in three more scenes.

ASHLEY

Call Central Casting and order a photo double.

TARGET

A photo double? She has lines.

ASHLEY

She was a stunt girl. She was a nobody.

PAPPY

What about the police?

MAYER (O.S.)

Are you shooting?

TARGET

She wasn't shot, she was stabbed.

ASHLEY

Print the master. Perfect. We're into coverage.

MAYER (O.S.)

Skip the coverage.

ASHLEY

But L. B.

MAYER (O.S.)

Mister Bentley, If I don't see the final rushes at breakfast tomorrow you'll never work in this town again. (*Mic clicks off*)

ASHLEY

Right. L.B. Tomorrow, L.B., we'll do lunch.

PAPPY

I'll call Central Casting.

Pappy goes to the rolling telephone stand upstage.

ASHLEY

Tell that meat factory ~~that~~ I need a double who can act.

CARLOTTA

Make sure she's the same height, and not too big in the bust.

LORNA

You can't be serious about continuing.

ASHLEY

Dead serious.

MONA

I can't go on. She's right there.

Ashley gestures toward couch. No one moves. Then Target shoves the couch around so that Icy is now unseen.

RUDY

That couch is for the mansion scene

~~TARGET~~

~~This is why I'm the star.~~

PAPPY

The double will be here in twenty minutes. ~~Then~~ She'll need make up and hair.

CARLOTTA

Don't forget wardrobe, Dane.

PAPPY

Could never forget about you Carlotta.

CARLOTTA

If only, Dane. If only. (*She exits*)

PAPPY

I'll call lunch. (*Shouts*) Lunch. Thirty minutes.

ASHLEY

Pappy. Lock the doors. Put us on a light. (*Shouting louder*) Nobody leaves the stage.

PAPPY

Harold, lock up the doors. Put us on a red light.

Bell sounds. Red light. Sound of doors locking.

MONA

We're prisoners? Not again. (*She runs off*)

LORNA

I'm calling my agent.

TARGET

He's right. Nobody can leave.

LIONEL

I need sustenance. Get out of my way.

TARGET

If Icy's death gets out, this picture doesn't finish and you don't get paid. Loose lips sink ships and showbiz careers.

GUY

I'm staying until the coda.

PAPPY

Lunch is on the company. No limits on the menu.

RANDY

I'll have the steak and lobster special.

GUY

The shrimp jambalaya.

PAPPY

Lionel?

LIONEL

Bring me a menu. *(Exits)*

PAPPY

Randy, while we're waiting for the food, you and Effects strike the hotel so Roman can move the cameras.

RANDY

Aren't we on lunch?

PAPPY

I'll make it up to you on your time card.

As Randy and Effects swing out the gold room, Target pulls Pappy to end of the runway.

TARGET

We got to do something about Icy.

PAPPY

She's dead.

TARGET

I know. I'm a detective, remember?

PAPPY

In a movie.

TARGET

I've been detective Dirk Trouble in three movies. With any luck this one will revive the series. I want your help.

PAPPY

You want to run your lines?

TARGET

I want to solve Icy's murder. I'm going I want to look for clues.

PAPPY

(Tense) How about 'clueing' into the lines already written.

TARGET

You get it? If me, Dan Target, playing Dirk Trouble, solves a real murder it's gonna hit the press like the fall of Berlin. The atom bomb. This case is bigger than the Black Dahlia.

PAPPY

No one has ever solved that case. And never will.

TARGET

But I'm gonna solve the, dum ta dum dum... showgirl murders.

PAPPY

But Icy was a stunt woman.

TARGET

Nobody looks twice at stunt women, not even stunt men.

PAPPY

Murders? There's only one.

TARGET

So far. This is gonna get me a real movie, something with Capra or de Mille directing. I could be another Bogart.

PAPPY

But we finish this movie. You got that? ~~Not until.~~

TARGET

~~Pappy,~~ Finishing "Portrait of Murder" is what makes this so right. I solve the case at the same time the celluloid hits the screen. Hedda Hopper is going to buy me drinks. And, just because I'm telling you, doesn't mean you're not a suspect.

PAPPY

I'll keep that in mind while you look for your clues. *(Exits)*

Target discovers a the trapdoor in the runway, opens it, fires up a Zippo, exits down, closing the trap behind him.

SCENE FOUR THE GOLD ROOM

Gigi and Guy barge in. Guy turns on a hanging chandelier.

GUY

Gigi, you've got calm down.

GIGI

What if someone connects us to Icy, connects us to the Klimt? It's all blowing up. Boom, boom.

He grabs her hard. She flails at him.

GUY

Stop it. Stop it. God, if Lionel hears you...

GIGI

Merde, what if our patsy already knows?

GUY

No one will find out if you keep your trap shut.

GIGI

Make me a drink.

GUY

I'll make you a triple if that'll quiet you down.
(*Pouring drinks in prop glasses*))

GIGI

Keep it down? You are not my keeper, you're my slave. That's how you like it isn't it? Hands tied, strapped down, begging for it.

GUY

Damn you, Gigi, you're asking for it.

GIGI

No, you're begging for it. (*Mimicking him*) Spank me. Spank me harder, cheri.

She spanks him and he grabs her hand.

GUY

Stop it!

GIGI

Mon Dieu, ~~Did they dress you as a fräulein~~ In that Nazi prison camp? Did you licked the Sturmbaumfuher's 'âne'.

Guy suddenly slaps her, knocking her down.

GUY

I'm not taking ~~this~~ crap from a French camp follower.

GIGI

Take it? You degenerate, you beg for it.

GUY

Damn you, Gigi, damn you to hell.

As he whips off his belt and raises it to beat her, Lionel enters and catches Guy's hand with his walking stick.

LIONEL

Theatrics for a ~~screwball~~ comedy, not our little mystery.
(*extends his walking stick to help Gigi*)

(MORE)

LIONEL (cont'd)

Let us retreat to the privacy of that sumptuous Italian Villa on the adjoining stage and revive our spirits with a bottle of Rudy's best vintage Dom.

GIGI

What about Icy?

LIONEL

She's beyond revival.

GUY

This isn't how we planned it to go, I swear.

LIONEL

When this actor goes up on his lines, what do I do?

GIGI

Knife a showgirl?

LIONEL

Too obvious, besides, I was on camera when it happened, in plain view. Unlike you and your piano playing consort.

GUY

Murder wasn't in my script.

LIONEL

Sometimes even a great actor has to improvise.

Gigi bends to straighten her seams.

GIGI

Go ahead, I need to make a feminine adjustment.

After Lionel and Guy exit, Gigi finds the art crate and starts to take out the painting. A loud knock starts.

GIGI

Ahhh! Mon dieu, an empty sound stages is like a morgue.

TARGET (O.S.)

(Muffled voice) Gigi. Gigi. I'm down below

GIGI

Icy?

CARLOTTA (O.S.)

(Distant and soft) Gigi. Gigi. Come over to the light.

TARGET (O.S.)

Gigi. Gigi, it's dark down here. Gigi. Gigi,

GIGI

Merde, why did I ever leave Monmartre?

Gigi runs out as both voice continue calling. Carlotta enters. She is the second voice calling for Gigi.

CARLOTTA

Gigi?

TARGET (O.S.)

Carlotta? Carlotta. Unlock the door.

CARLOTTA

Who is that?

TARGET (O.S.)

It isn't Ester Williams.

Carlotta unlocks a trap door beneath the prop shelves and Target, soaking wet, crawls into the gold room.

TARGET

Did you know Ester William's swimming pool is down there?

CARLOTTA

And Judy Garland's yellow brick road is by the water cooler. Change into the dry uniform that's hanging in your room. Then you're in the blue suit for the rest of the picture.

TARGET

I didn't see that in the script.

CARLOTTA

It's not in the script. But neither was Icy being stabbed. Good thing I have triples on her dress.

TARGET

That's cold.

CARLOTTA

A thousand girls like Icy have come through my fitting room. You know how many ever come back? Three, Carol Lombard and two girls that were boffing a studio head. That's why I take care of the wardrobe, not who's wearing it. After the face is on film, the dress goes back on the rack. And you know what I get it? A mortgage payment. One picture, one payment.

TARGET

I should have gone into costumes.

CARLOTTA

I doubt your huge actor ego could take the humility of it.

TARGET

Carlotta, what you call my 'huge ego' is my best acting.

CARLOTTA

Well, it's an Academy winning performance.

TARGET

Look me in the eye and say, I think everything is about me.

CARLOTTA

(Looks him in the eye) You think everything is about you.

TARGET

You know what I did during the war?

CARLOTTA

You made Army training films in Culver City.

TARGET

I only made one before they replaced me with Ronald Reagan, or Daffy Duck, one of those two. Flat feet kept me out of combat so they assigned me to the Grave Registration Service.

CARLOTTA

You buried dead soldiers?

TARGET

I was part of a collecting squad. We'd go in after a battle and pick up the pieces, dead soldier, kids with their guts blown out. Omaha beach, with nothing left but fragments of skin and dogtags. Monte Casino, I had to sort chunks of bone from the crumbling marble. At Remagen Bridge you couldn't tell G.I.s from Germans. Arms, legs, teeth and hair, that's all. Every time I look at my own hands, I wondered who they belong to, me or a nameless grunt. Three years of that and it wasn't hard for me to realize life wasn't all about me.

CARLOTTA

Never know it they way you demand others look after you.

TARGET

And not learning my lines?

CARLOTTA

That's part of it.

TARGET

You know what I do after wrap? I go home, drink two espressos and study the script until three in the morning. Get up at five, drive to the studio, go over them again and when I come onto the set, there's nothing there. *(Taps his head)* Nothing.

CARLOTTA

Take off that wet army jacket.

TARGET

In the army, I was the only guy in my unit who couldn't remember how to field strip his rifle and put it back together. I had the laundry draw tiny pictures of rifle parts on my shirt cuffs to keep the unit from losing weekend leave.

CARLOTTA

Where did you write your serial number, on your socks?

TARGET

(Removing socks) That's the funny thing about me, numbers go in and never leave. 37337566 T42 43 O. was the serial number, tetanus and typhoid immunization and blood type of the first dead soldier I recovered on Omaha beach. I remembered every number, but couldn't remember the names of my own squad if they were looking at me.

CARLOTTA

That's why you put notes all over the set? Give me the shirt.

TARGET

(Removes shirt) I make a big show of it, strut around like a hunk to cover the knot in my gut. What kind of movie hero can't learn his lines? Let them read that in Hedda Hopper.

CARLOTTA

That why Pappy can never find you? You're studying your lines?

TARGET

Most of the time, unless... I'm a dark corner with an attractive woman, like... now?

CARLOTTA

Well I remember the last leading man who pressed me into a dark corner. *(Sexy)* "Oooh, Mister Barrymore, if you'll take off your trousers, maybe I can, if you promise to be nice, hmmm hmmm, have them cleaned and back in an hour. Trousers.

TARGET

You were a Barrymore conquest? *(Removes trousers)*

CARLOTTA

I was a good Russian and, like Napoleon, froze him out before he took Moscow.

TARGET

(In his boxers) Hollywood, what a fantastic town.

Pappy enters.

PAPPY

You should get dressed, you're in the next scene.

CARLOTTA

Go change. I'll have your trousers clean and...

TARGET

Back in an hour?

Target exits. Carlotta take out a pack of cigarettes.
Pappy smiles and offers his empty hand as a lighter.

PAPPY

(Flicks thumb as if lighting a Zippo) Guess I've gone dry,
Fraulein. Die schon Machen ein Wiener ist?

CARLOTTA

I bin nicht Austrian. I am Russian. Niece of the Duchess
Sophia Romanoff.

PAPPY

A royal beauty on the run from the Bolsheviks?

CARLOTTA

Not running, waiting... to go home again.

PAPPY

Mind if a tired American doughboy joins your highness?

CARLOTTA

Where in America, my handsome young doughboy, you come from?

PAPPY

California. Pasadena, home of the biggest oranges in the
west, sweetest grapefruit too. You like grapefruit?

CARLOTTA

Never tasted one.

PAPPY

My parents own a whole orchard, goes right to the hills.
Can't beat the sunset looking across the arroyo.

CARLOTTA

What is arroyo?

PAPPY

It's a canyon, only much prettier. Like saying there are all
the women in the world and then there is you.

CARLOTTA

Are there in your Pasadena, Bolsheviks and Communists?

PAPPY

No, they're all in Hollywood.

CARLOTTA

I would like to see this arroyo. Will you show it to me?

PAPPY

Only if you promise to quit smoking.

CARLOTTA

(Laughs) How many times did I promise that?

PAPPY

Since 1918? Twenty-nine years multiplied by the number of houses we lived, would be, I'd say, roughly, ninety-seven-thousand times, give or take million or two.

CARLOTTA

I quit for two years.

PAPPY

I know. 1934 and '35. But I'd come back to Hollywood by then.

CARLOTTA

After Hitler's brown shirts raided my aunt's apartment and her dieing from the stress, all I had left was smoking.

PAPPY

I wish I had been in Europe to help you.

CARLOTTA

But you weren't and...

PAPPY

You still smoke.

CARLOTTA

Don't start, Pappy. Too much water through the arroyo.

PAPPY

I'm sorry.

CARLOTTA

Life is sorry. Our daughter was sorry. The stunt wrangler was sorry. I'm sorry I let you take her to America.

PAPPY

I shouldn't have let Cassandra ride in that stagecoach. She was only a kid. I shouldn't have...

CARLOTTA

Enough, Pappy, enough.

PAPPY

Next Tuesday would have been her twenty-third birthday.

CARLOTTA

Twenty-fourth. (*Moves away from Pappy*) Gigi and Mona and god knows who else are somewhere on this stage.

PAPPY

And Barrymore?

CARLOTTA

Just get them to wardrobe for their change. (*Exits*)

Pappy watches her leave. He looks at his watch.

PAPPY

We're back. (*He exits, now shouting to offstage*) We're back!

BLACK OUT

SCENE FIVE THE MAKE UP TABLE

One set of its mirror lights is dark. Randy test the bulbs. Lorna, wearing a dressing gown and tissues tucked around her collar, enters and sits at a lighted mirror.

LORNA

You can leave now.

RANDY

Pappy told me fix the bulbs.

LORNA

They can't all be burned out. Check the switch.

RANDY

The famous actress is an electrical expert?

LORNA

My father managed Bavarian Electric and before I was an actress and I helped him. Check the god damned switch.

Randy takes a screwdriver to the light switch.

RANDY

Ever see a dead women before?

LORNA

Do you mind?

RANDY

A knife in Icy's heart was personal.

LORNA

It was a madman. No sane person would kill an actress in the middle of her scene.

RANDY

Should have waited for her to be alone, like we are, now.

LORNA

Get away, you sweaty swine.

Lorna starts to leave. Randy stops her with his screwdriver.

RANDY

Tell me about the Klimt.

LORNA

Are you trying to frighten me?

RANDY

Maybe you should be frightened.

(Idly picks up Lorna's blue eye shadow, opens it))
What's the paintings worth?

LORNA

I have no idea.

RANDY

You told Greenway the Klimt painting belongs to you.

LORNA

It's a copy. A fake.

RANDY

How do you know?

LORNA

Because I posed for the original in Vienna.

RANDY

(rubs his finger in the make up)
Sure is a pretty blue eye shadow.

He motions to put some on her eyes. She yanks the make up tin from him and accidentally rips his dog tags off his neck.

LORNA

Gott in Himmel, you've filthy necklace has ruined my make up.

Rudy stoops next to her bare legs to retrieve his tags.

RANDY

After you posed naked, did you and Klimt make love?

Randy grabs her leg. She screams just as Ashley enters.

ASHLEY

What are you doing?

Surprised, turns quickly, holding his screwdriver as if to defend himself from attack. He relaxes and stands.

RANDY

Fixing something broken. (*Flicks the switch*) Works fine.

Randy bumps Ashley out of his and climbs to the catwalk.

LORNA

That juicer scares me.

ASHLEY

I'll have him thrown off the lot.

LORNA

No. I'd rather not drag up a past that is best forgotten.

ASHLEY

Lorna, your past is on celluloid. It will never be forgotten.

LORNA

He asked how much the Klimt was worth.

ASHLEY

Another muscle brain looking for a quick buck.

LORNA

When I signed my contract, this film was about a missing Van Gogh. Then the first day of shooting, pink pages changed the painting to a Klimt? Why Klimt?

ASHLEY

Maybe it was the only painting Rudy Ravengill could get.

LORNA

The script changes, Klimt. It's why Icy was murdered, I know it. Ashley, are you the screenwriter? Are you Casey Lamont?

ASHLEY

I did not write this picture. I've never even met writer. For all I know, Casey Lamont is the pen name for a bunch of four eyed hacks sitting in the basement of the Thalberg building.

LORNA

I'm frightened. This could mean the end of my career.

ASHLEY

You were a Nazi collaborator. You're career died in the war.

LORNA

I'm an American now. I have citizenship. I was nominated for best supporting actress in "The Lost Battalion"? I saved John Wayne's life. America loves me.

ASHLEY

Love you? ~~For god's sake, Lorna.~~ There are newsreels of you kissing Adolph Hitler.

LORNA

That was before Poland, ~~before France.~~ I didn't know.

ASHLEY

My agent keeps asking, why I'm using that "kraut actress"?

LORNA

You bastard.

ASHLEY

I may be a bastard, but you're mine, until I call wrap.

Lorna turns to the mirror and re-touches her mascara.

SCENE SIX THE SOUND STAGE

As Ashley storms under the greenbed, Randy drops a "baby" light. It crashes just behind Ashley. Ashley looks up to see Randy looking down and shrugging his shoulders.

PAPPY

(Rushing in) ~~You all right?~~

ASHLEY

I want that guy fired. Now!

PAPPY

What happened?

RANDY

Gremlins.

PAPPY

Check the safety chains and keep working.

RANDY

Whatever you say, boss. *(Moves other lights)*

ASHLEY

~~He tried to kill me!~~ I want him off this lot.

PAPPY

And you're going to light the next scene by yourself?

ASHLEY

~~Who are you working for, him or me?~~

PAPPY

~~You, if you'll let me.~~ If Randy goes, we're done. Wrapped. Mayer's put a budget freeze on this epic. No replacements.

ASHLEY

He can't do that.

PAPPY

Mayer runs this studio, he can do anything he wants.

ASHLEY

What about the Icy double? I can't shoot without her.

PAPPY

Mayer's not a fool. Miss Roger, come meet your director.

Cassidy Rogers steps into the scene. The same actress who played Icy, but her hair is now blonde and falls in braids to her shoulders. She wears a flashy western jacket and boots. She is all cowgirl. Ashley goes pale.

CASSIDY

(Hand out to shake) Pleased to meetcha, Mister Bentley.

ASHLEY

What is this, a joke? Her hair is the wrong color. Look at those hips! How can those hips fit into Icy's wardrobe?

PAPPY

Carlotta says she a fit. Hairdressing left an extra wig. She can be ready in twenty minutes and... she's all we've got.

CASSIDY

Bull-pucky. I can rope a calf in 24 seconds and be outta these duds in twelve flat.

(unzips her pants, pulls them to her knees, tries to pull off her boots and falls on her fanny.)

Oops I stepped in the cow pie that time. Guess I'm as nervous as a heifer during breeding season.

ASHLEY

Get her changed. We'll shoot the top of the night club scene.

CASSIDY

(Hobbles, pants down) You still want me?

CARLOTTA

(Sweeping to the rescue with a robe) Pull your knickers up, dear, you've already got the role.

Carlotta leads Cassidy off.

PAPPY

Randy, Effects, move on the nightclub club. If you can give Roman a set up without rehearsal, we can be ready in five.

ASHLEY

Whatever it takes. Roman. *(Goes to the end of the runway)*

PAPPY

Set Dressing?

(Rudy enters set holding a champagne glass.)

Ashley changed the shot a raking side angle.

RUDY

Oh god, another creative genius. Somebody remind our director this is a "B" movie, as in 'it BE good enough'.

(He sees Randy moving the piano.)

Stop! Get your hands off that piano. I'll move it.

Rudy, Randy, Effects and Pappy set up the night club rotated ninety degrees from the earlier scene. The piano is upstage center-left. Target's table will be downstage center.

ASHLEY

Roman, you with me? This is the first time we see the nightclub in picture. Start tight on the purple cat, tilt down to the showgirls. Push in on Target as he takes you to a loose two with and Guy. Let icy, I mean the new girl, come and go. I've already shot Lorna singing, so stay with Target and Greenway. Got that? Roman? Everybody take their places.

(Actors take their place. Ashley goes to Pappy)

What's in Roman's coffee cup?

PAPPY

I think it's Seagrams and Seven. You want one?

ASHLEY

Roman is half passed out in his chair.

PAPPY

Eddie will take care of it. That's what camera operator do.

TARGET

(Steps onto the set) What's the hold up? I'm ready.

ASHLEY

You know your lines?

TARGET

(Pulls script from pocket) Got 'em right here.

PAPPY

Rudy?

RUDY

It's as ready as time and money allows.

PAPPY

Carlotta?

CARLOTTA (O.S.)

~~Final adjustment and~~ She's ready.

PAPPY

Lock it up. Work lights..

The bell. Red light. Work lights. Effects rushes through the with a "bee smoker" to give the place atmosphere.

PAPPY

Scene One Charlie. Take one. Roll sound. Roll Camera.

ASHLEY

It's the opening shot. It's Marseille. The war is over. Life is dangerous and it's sexy as hell. Action.

Guy plays a longing ballad. Mona and Gigi, in "sexy doll" outfits for the new number, wander in from backstage.

PAPPY

Playback.

TARGET (V.O.)

After three years fighting alongside the French underground, the brass let me up for air. We had driven the Nazis out of Marseilles and Le Minette Mauve was back in business selling cheap whiskey and easy women. It was a low class dive, but it looked pretty good to this G.I. The only thing that would have been better would be to find Giselle serving my table.

The girls walk the runway playing the audience. Cassidy, enters in the bargirl's purple cat outfit, works the tables.

TARGET (V.O.)

Everyone said Giselle was a Nazi collaborator. Said she'd left with the Germans or been executed by the resistance. But I had to believe she was still alive. Somewhere. I had to believe I could find her. Maybe at the Le Minette Mauve. Maybe tonight. The proprietor, Victor, an ex-pat New Orleans jazzman, had a sharp eye for the mademoiselles and every week hired a couple new girls. Giselle had a voice to melt gold and legs that made ivory blush. She would be the right girl for Victor and she would be right for me.

(Target enters wearing his uniform and trench coat.)

As of three hours ago, I was no longer a soldier, fighting for home and country. I had resigned my commission and was just another ex-soldier without a job. I made a good living in San Francisco as a private detective.

(MORE)

TARGET (V.O.) (cont'd)

Maybe I could do that here in Marseille while I searched for Giselle. All I needed was a client and Le Minette Mauve looked like the kind of place to find one, or one would find me.

(Target crosses to Guy at the piano.)

The joint wasn't jumping, but it was early, or maybe it was Thursday and the heavy weights were still taping their fists for the main event on Friday.

GUY

Captain Trouble is always welcome in Le Minette Mauve.

TARGET

It's Mister Trouble from now on Victor. And you'd welcome Satan himself if he filled a table and ordered tall.

GUY

But you always come alone and drink only scotch.

TARGET

Make it a double. I'm back in business as a private eye.

GUY

It will be my honor to celebrate the beginning of a new life for Dirk Trouble, hero of the French underground.

TARGET

Lay off the shoe shine, times are tight and so is my tipping.

GUY

Do not be impatient, Monsieur Trouble, this is Marseilles. It is never long until violence makes an entrance. And that is good business for a private investigator, no?

TARGET

It's a living.

GUY

One of my girls will bring a scotch. First one, on house.

TARGET

The girl?

GUY

The Scotch.

Guy signs to Cassidy for the drink. She exits.

TARGET

Any new girls?

GUY

The girl who will bring your drink CAME ON THIS VERY NIGHT.

Target sits at a table. Mona dances, bumps Target and moves on. Gigi does a provocative bending stretch next to Target's table. He does not see her face, but she is startled, and quickly moves on. Cassidy re-enters with the scotch.

CASSIDY

Is he Trouble?

GUY

Every inch of him.

CASSIDY

(Gives him the drink) Need directions to a good time, sailor?

TARGET

Sailor?

CASSIDY

(Dropping out of character) Oh, I stepped in it that time.

ASHLEY

(Shouting) Pick up the drink and start again.

PAPPY

Still rolling. Everybody back to her entrance.

ASHLEY

He's 'soldier'. And you're supposed to be French. Remember?

CASSIDY

Yep. Ah, I mean, oui.

TARGET

Do I need a touch up?

ASHLEY

And... action!

CASSIDY

(a french accent) Is he Trouble?

GUY

Every inch of him.

CASSIDY

(Goes to Target and puts her foot on his leg) Need directions to a good time... soldier?

TARGET

Is this your leg or a road map?

CASSIDY

You a traveling man?

TARGET

I enjoy a little sightseeing.

CASSIDY

(Moving behind and brushing close) You like the mountain?

Cassidy dips a finger in the scotch, moisten Target's lip, rubs her damp finger on her cleavage and back to his lips.

TARGET

(Grabs her finger) You got a great warm up, doll face. But tell me about the other new girl. Who is she?

CASSIDY

Don't know much about her. Came in from Berlin.

TARGET

She's German?

CASSIDY

No, she sounds more...

TARGET

(Peering at Gigi) Alsatian?

CASSIDY

Perhaps.

Lionel Greenway enters. Guy stops playing and hurries to take his coat and show him to a nearby table.

GUY

Monsieur Lugar, welcome to Le Minette Mauve.

LIONEL

Is Margo performing tonight?

GUY

Miss Saint Claire is in next number.

CASSIDY

It's the fat man. Keep it warm, soldier, I may come back.

Guy plays. Gigi and Mona sing the open to a jazzy "sexy doll" song. The spotlight swings to a curtained entrance. Lorna makes a grand entrance as a Russian Empress doll.

LORNA

She sings SEXY DOLL SONG

During the song, Cassidy toys with Lionel, puts her foot on his knee, cuddles his neck. But she blocks his view of Lorna and he slaps his stick across her derriere. Cassidy slaps Lionel's cheek. Lionel raises his cane to strike her again.

When Target moves to intercede, Lionel backs down, tosses money at Cassidy and exits. The music finishes. Target picks Cassidy's money as she rubs her bruised backside.

TARGET

You gonna be alright?

CASSIDY

Nothing a cold bottle of '32 champagne wouldn't make better.

TARGET

Another time, sweetheart.

CASSIDY

You know where to find me.

TARGET

The other new girl, what's her name?

CASSIDY

Giselle.

Target goes to Gigi, takes her hand before she can exit.

GIGI

Monsieur?

TARGET

Giselle. It me, Dirk Trouble.

GIGI

I do not need more Trouble. Go away.

TARGET

Giselle G'estang from Alsace.

GIGI

I am Giselle Huenougt from Lyon.

TARGET

(Twisting her hand) This scar is from barbed wire.

GIGI

It was from my cat.

TARGET

We blew up a supply train and you were caught in the fence. I cut you free, remember?

GIGI

I do not know you. Let go. I must change for my next number.

He lets go of her hand and she exits. Cassidy joins him.

CASSIDY

Maybe the woman you are searching is dead, no?

TARGET

She's alive.

CASSIDY

Even alive, she may be dead. Come, I bring you drink, yes?

Target nods, goes to his table. Cassidy exit past Lorna.

LORNA

Who is the American Captain?

GUY

His name is Trouble. ~~He used to be~~ A private detective.

LORNA

An American detective?

~~GUY~~

~~Or a thug. One or the other.~~

~~LORNA~~

~~One or the other, he might be a good man to know.~~

GUY

You thinking what I'm thinking?

LORNA

My darling Victor, if I were thinking what you are thinking, I wouldn't be a lady.

Cassidy bring Target a drink.

CASSIDY

That was brave, standing up to Mister Lugar.

TARGET

It was a long war, standing up to bullies was my job.

CASSIDY

If there's anything I can do for you, let me know. Anything.

TARGET

I already have a date, she just doesn't know it yet.

CASSIDY

If you ever change your mind...

TARGET

You'll be the first one I call. *(He drinks)*

Lorna steps in from of Cassidy.

LORNA
So it is true about Americans.

CASSIDY
What is true?

LORNA
To get free milk, they will sleep with a cow.

CASSIDY
Nazi whore.

Cassidy raises her claws to scratch Lorna, but Guy plays, but the spotlight turns on Lorna, Guy plays her music cue and Lorna takes center stage and opens her mouth to sing.

ASHLEY
Cut!

The bell sounds, red light off, work lights on. Carlotta adjusts Lorna's dress Rudy straightens the nightclub drapes.

CASSIDY
Was I okay? Did I stay on the bull?

TARGET
You did good kid. (*Goes to craft service*)

ASHLEY
Sure, sure. Editing can cut to Guy to get around you're flub. But damn it, Cassidy, learn your lines!

LIONEL
You were splendid, dear. (*Goes to craft service*)

LORNA
I want another take on my solo.

ASHLEY
Nothing could top your first take, not even Dietrich.

LORNA
Lying bastard.

Lorna goes to make up table. Guy pats his pockets, looks to see if anyone is watching and disappears behind the set.

PAPPY
You want to pick up after the song and go into the coverage?

ASHLEY
You get the actors, I'll do the directing. Where's Roman?

PAPPY

(At the end of the runway) Where's Roman? (Listens) Until he's slept it off, you're it. (To Ashley) Roman is indisposed but Eddie's got the set up. Camera's reloading. Five minutes.

ASHLEY

(Head in his script) Get the actors ready.

PAPPY

(Calls) Make up and hair. Make up and hair?

CARLOTTA

Dane, the fluff and buff girls don't hear you.

PAPPY

They never do.

CARLOTTA

They never came back after the lock down.

PAPPY

The actors can do it themselves.

ASHLEY

Why aren't we rolling?

PAPPY

(Loads out to Eddie) Still re-loading.

ASHLEY

~~Come on~~ Pappy, do your job!

PAPPY

(Crosses stage and calls) Showgirls on stage. Let's go.

The showgirls hurry to the runway. Mona straightens her seams. Cassidy reads her script. Gigi comes out with Guy. Guy fills her coffee cup from a thermos. Gigi takes a gulp.

PAPPY

Give those to me and I'll put them by your chairs.
(he collects cup and thermos, smells the cup, shakes his head. Pappy tugs at Cassidy's script.)
 You don't say anything.

CASSIDY

Hope I don't look like a longhorn stepping in a gopher hole.

PAPPY

Hit your marks and you'll be fine.

CASSIDY

You're a lot more help than the head wrangler squatting in his chair. All he says is "keep it sexy".

PAPPY

Whatever makes it work.

GIGI

"Sexy is easy".

MONA

That's "dieing is easy".

GIGI

Oui, "Comedy is hard".

MONA

I never do dieing. It's bad ju-ju.

CASSIDY

Why is it bad... "ju-ju"?

MONA

'Cause if you die you don't get to be in the big last scene.

CASSIDY

So?

GIGI

You don't work as many days... get paid as much.

One of the neon light flickers and goes dark.

ASHLEY

Damn it, Rudy, can't you keep your set working?

RUDY

Art takes time... and talent, not that you'd know.

ASHLEY

Don't smart mouth me, you two bit cushion fluffer, fix it.

PAPPY

(Getting in between them) Take it easy, Rudy.

RUDY

I told him in the pre-production, neon is a headache.

ASHLEY

Your headache, not mine! Fix it.

Rudy storms toward the neon lights but Randy cuts him off.

RANDY

Someone kicked out a paddle plug. Tell people to watch where they step. One of these electric boxes goes up somebody's gonna killed. *(Disappears behind the set)*

PAPPY

Everybody off the set while electric fixes the neon.

CASSIDY

Gives me time for a cuppa joe.

Cassidy goes to craft service. Gigi pours coffee from the thermos. Rudy follows Mona to a distant nightclub table.

RUDY

I'm warning you Mona, don't push me on this.

MONA

Listen you artsy fartsy reefer head. You're nothing but a middle man looking for a cut.

RUDY

If I hadn't set this up Don't cross me, or you might find yourself lying on that sofa alongside Icy.

MONA

You bastard.

Mona grabs a vase of flowers and tosses the flowers and water on Rudy. He raises an arm to strike her.

CARLOTTA

Rudy! Don't get water on her satin dress.

Rudy exits toward the neon light. Target and Lionel, coffee in hand, pause by the sofa where Icy's body lies covered.

LIONEL

During my long career in the theatre I've encountered many superstitions, whistling backstage, wishing actors good luck, but nothing about keeping dead showgirls on a sofa.

TARGET

Right up there with the Scottish play.

LIONEL

Can't see why anyone would murder such a lovely creature.

TARGET

You knew her well?

LIONEL

Oh, ah, not at all. First time I met anyone in this cast.

Lionel moves away. Target steps downstage of the sofa.

CASSIDY

(Upstage of the sofa) Thanks for the encouraging words. This is my first Hollywood rodeo and I sure don't want to fall off the bull. Whoo-ee. These high heel hobbles are sure killing my girly hooves. *(Starts to sit on the sofa)*

TARGET

Don't sit there. It's... occupied.

CASSIDY

Nothing but a horse blanket, I'll just toss it over the rail.

The couch is turned away from the audience. Cassidy lifts the pad and looks startled, then smiles.

CASSIDY

You should've told me someone was sleeping.

TARGET

She's not sleeping. She's dead.

CASSIDY

(Dropping the pad) Dead. Ah! She's been shot.

TARGET

Knifed in the heart. Icy is the showgirl you replaced.

CASSIDY

You just leave dead showgirls where they lie?

TARGET

It's a tough town.

LORNA

Ashley? How long are you going to keep me waiting?

MAYER (O.S.)

Why aren't you rolling?

ASHLEY

(Rushing onstage) Sorry, L.B., I'm stuck with a slow crew.

MAYER (O.S.)

They're your crew, Mister Bentley. Start shooting.

ASHLEY

Pappy!

PAPPY

Ready, Eddie? *(Listens)* Places.

Target and Lionel takes places at tables, Lorna and the showgirls on the runway. Carlotta exits. Rudy and Randy exit. Guy enters from behind the scenery to piano.

ASHLEY

Let's go. Let's go.

PAPPY

Lock it lock. Put us on a bell.

Red light on. Bell sounds. Work lights off. Movie lights up.

PAPPY

Roll sound. Roll camera. Playback.

Guy starts to play the piano matching playback.

ASHLEY

Action!

Lorna and the girls pick up the song and dance. Gigi missteps and bends over holding her stomach, recovers for a moment, then clutches her stomach and drops to her knees.

GIGI

Ahh. Ahh. My stomach. It's killing me.

Gigi collapses to the floor of the runway.

MONA

She's been poisoned.

LORNA

Poisoned? (*Dashes off behind the set*)

PAPPY

(*Rushing forward*) Cut camera.

Lionel runs off the set, nearly colliding with Target, and disappears behind the set. Target charges forward and lifts the unconscious girl's head and shakes her.

TARGET

Gigi, ! Gigi!. Gigi, wake up. Wake up. (*He slaps her*)

~~CASSIDY~~~~This is a tough town.~~

GIGI

(*Gigi revives slowly and looks around*) Guy. Guy.!

TARGET

Guy?

CASSIDY

Maybe she wants her coffee.

PAPPY

It's by her chair. *(Goes to get it)*

TARGET

Gigi, you want your coffee?

GIGI

No!

Target lifts her to her feet and walk her to a chair.

ASHLEY

Cut!

PAPPY

We already did that.

ASHLEY

~~Thank god.~~—I thought we were going to have another murder.

Guy plays a couple of chords of melodramatic suspense music

ASHLEY

That's not funny.

Suddenly a flash of lights and a flare up of sparks behind the glass block set walls as if a roman candle had gone off.

RANDY

(Offstage) Hot box!

The figure of Rudy is being electrocuted behind the glass blocks. The only cast in evidence, Ashley, Pappy, Target, Cassidy, Mona and Gigi, watch in horror as Rudy's silhouette flails in the sparking light, burst through the glass block and lands on the stage floor. Rudy is blackened and burned.

MONA

Rudy!

Randy appears behind the hole in the glass blocks tugging on an electric cable. His shirt is open and he no longer wears his dog tags. Effects rushes in and sprays Rudy with a CO-2 fire extinguisher. Pappy feels Rudy's neck for a pulse

MONA

Is he...?

PAPPY

He's dead.

MONA

Oh, Rudy.

RANDY

I warned everybody to look out for the electric boxes.

ASHLEY

What has that careless fool done to me?

TARGET

Better question would be, "who's done that to Rudy?"

CASSIDY

This is a tough town.

END OF ACT ONE

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE INTERIOR TROUBLE'S CAR

Out of black, sound of car driving in a heavy rain. Randy sweeps a pair of lights across the audience and onto a cut-away car, simulating the headlights of passing automobiles. A vintage French car is represented by a bench seat, rear window and ivory steering wheel. Target with a bandaged cheek is driving. Shadows of rain on windshield. Effects bounces the car with a plank and an "apple box" fulcrum.

TARGET (V.O.)

The pistol whipping from the fat man left my skull feeling like Babe Ruth had swatted over the fence. The next evening, I drove up to Luther Gunter's villa to slug a few long balls of my own. Lugar's villa hung below a cliff on the Cote d'Azure the way a nasty pimple hangs on a blonde teenager's lip, big, pink and hard to ignore. An evening rain made the drive up the narrow, winding road slipperier than a roadside diner's fried eggs and harder to pass.

(Randy passes him with the lights. Tires squeal.)

A twelve cylinder chariot passed me on a blind curve, fishtailed and skidded into a mud bank.

(Target swerves the wheel. Effects rocks the car.)

The driver climbed out of the car and stepped into a pouring rain. I dipped my lights and a woman in a trench coat and scarf approached my little coupe like an angel coming out of a white light. I pinched myself to make sure I wasn't dead.

Mona steps into the glare of Randy's light and approaches. Target mimes opening the passenger door. Mona slides in.

MONA

You're a life savor, Monsieur.

TARGET

Fair trade. You nearly took mine.

MONA

Maybe I can make it up to you sometime.

Target turns the wheel. Effects bounces. Randy circles the light, recedes giving the impression Target is pulling away.

TARGET

Where can I take you?

MONA

There's a Villa above the next cove.

TARGET

The Lugar place?

MONA

You know him?

TARGET

(Touching his bandage) I've run in to him. What's a doll like you doing with a swine like Gunter?

MONA

Well, for starters, I call him, Poppie

TARGET

Jest being real friendly, or is it biology?

MONA

He was a close friend of my mothers. Poppie raised me after her car drove off the road, right at that same curve.

She jerks and the wheel. Tires squeal. Target reacts and saves them. Mona laughs at him.

TARGET

Are you nuts? That's a two hundred foot drop.

MONA

You're prickly for a two bit gumshoe.

TARGET

You know who I am?

MONA

Sure. You're Dirk Trouble, I saw you at Le Minette Mauve. Poppie told me you were one of the lucky ones.

TARGET

Lucky? To be bashed in the face with a blunt object?

MONA

Lucky he didn't pull ~~out~~ the sword out of his walking stick.

TARGET

Likes to make his point?

MONA

Goes right to the heart.

TARGET

I've brought a lead cased argument of my own.

MONA

You're packing heat?

TARGET

That worry you?

MONA

No too much. I'm the only name in his will.

TARGET

Tough runs in the family.

MONA

Pull in here.

Randy moves the lights as if a car drives past them

TARGET

Must be a dull party, the guests are leaving.

MONA

That's the butler and his wife. Park next to the Dusenberg.

TARGET

It won't be embarrassed in the company of my little 2CV?

MONA

The Dusenberg is a lot like me, Mr. Trouble. ~~Yeah,~~ We both like an occasional rainy night with a firm hand on the stick.

Target pulls to a stop. He gets out and takes in the impressive mansion and crosses to Mona, offering her a hand.

TARGET

I don't suppose that's your bedroom up there.

MONA

Yes, it is.

TARGET

Must have a great view.

MONA

An even better ~~view~~ when the drapes are closed.

They get out. She takes his hand and leads him into the dark. Everything is still for moment.

ASHLEY

Cut! Print and move on.

SCENE TWO THE SOUND STAGE

Work lights come on. Carlotta takes Mona's coat and scarf.

TARGET

Pure genius. I didn't drop a line.

ASHLEY

Drop them, ~~hell~~ you rewrote them.

TARGET

Just the lousy ones.

(pulls cards taped in the car)

~~The rest was all in "An Actor Prepares".~~

MONA

How is Gigi?

PAPPY

She's resting backstage.

TARGET

Her mysterious stomach pain?

CARLOTTA

~~Just~~ An upset stomach.

TARGET

Maybe I should question her.

PAPPY

Dan, leave her alone.

MONA

And Rudy?

PAPPY

Randy and Effects put him on the couch in the gold room.

MONA

I have to see him.

TARGET

It won't be pretty.

MONA

I have to. I just have to.

PAPPY

Effects. You have the key?

Effects dangles the keys and Mona grabs them from his hand.

MONA

I need to see him alone. (*Exits*)

PAPPY

Strike the car.

Effects moves the car off stage.

TARGET

~~What if Rudy's death wasn't an accident.~~

PAPPY

Two murders?

GUY

Another actor dies and there won't be any place to sit down.
(*Guy folds his music portfolio and exits after Mona*)

TARGET

Mona threw water on Rudy before he was electrocuted. And why did you leave your chair just before Icy was stabbed?

ASHLEY

~~Hey,~~ I'm the director, not a suspect.

TARGET

Everyone's suspect until I find out what's behind this.

PAPPY

~~Like a hidden~~ What's the motive?

TARGET

~~Or something worth a lot of bucks.~~ What about the painting?

ASHLEY

Just A worthless copy.

TARGET

It could be a red herring. Writers like to do that.

PAPPY

You think the writer did it.

TARGET.

The writer? No, it's too complicated for a Hollywood hack.

ASHLEY

What are you going to tell the police?

TARGET

Don't worry about the cops. We've going to solve this before police ever know it happened.

Cassidy and Carlotta have been nearby listening.

CASSIDY

You didn't call the police?

ASHLEY

Mister Mayer's orders.

CASSIDY

Why is Mister Mayer giving the orders? He's not the president.

CARLOTTA

He is in Hollywood.

ASHLEY

We're wasting time talking. ~~We got a picture to make.~~

PAPPY

L.B.'s releasing this sound stage to a Gene Kelly and Judy Garland pirate musical in the morning.

LORNA

(Entering) By morning? You're going to work us all night?

RANDY

(Re-appearing above in the greenbed, Randy sings a ditty and does a little jig) We're in the money. We're in the money.

CASSIDY

What's he mean?

PAPPY

Double overtime and double-double overtime. ~~A lot of money.~~

RANDY

Gold and double gold. How sweet it is.

TARGET

Pappy, I've got an idea... for the waterfront scene.

Pappy follows Target to the far end of runway.

TARGET

Okay, be straight with me. What's up with Mayer?

PAPPY

This is the third Dirk Trouble movie in the series and he wants it finished. That's it.

TARGET

Paying double-double gold to finish a B-movie? I don't believe it, even if I am the star.

PAPPY

(Looking over his shoulder) He's got other money on this.

TARGET

What other money?

PAPPY

You know "The Passion"?

TARGET

The Klimt painting in the script?

PAPPY

It's not just in the script. It's real.

TARGET

So.

PAPPY

Mayer wants it.

TARGET

Okay, L.B. Mayer is an art lover. So what?

PAPPY

This crew, this cast, they were Mayer's idea.

TARGET

And me?

PAPPY

You too. Why do you think we're making a third Dirk Trouble movie when nobody went to see the first two.

TARGET

I have my fans.

PAPPY

Your mother doesn't buy enough tickets.

TARGET

If he'd have used me instead of Gregory Peck in...

PAPPY

It's not about you. It's them. *(Points upstage)* One of them knows where the real painting is. The one the Nazi stole.

TARGET

And he thinks he can produce a mystery movie and use the story line to find out who in the cast...

PAPPY

Or crew.

TARGET

To find out who has the real painting?

PAPPY

And he gave you the role of the detective.

TARGET

Does Mayer know you're telling?

PAPPY

I'm an A.D. I do whatever it takes to make a production work.

TARGET

Hmm. Whoever has that painting must have been in Europe right after the war. Where were you?

PAPPY

(Raises his stub arm) MGM, making Mickey Rooney movies.

ASHLEY

(Coming down the runway) Why aren't we shooting?

PAPPY

We're still repairing the night club set.

ASHLEY

What else can we shoot?

PAPPY

There's the Luther Gunter mansion.

TARGET

I know the lines.

ASHLEY

The hell you do.

PAPPY

All right, rig for the mansion.

LORNA

(Enters) Where's my make up girl?

PAPPY

She got locked out after Icy got it. You need her back?

LORNA

I do it in the theatre, I can do it for this drek.

CASSIDY

That's the cowgirl spirit.

(Cassidy throws an arm around Lorna.)

Let's paint each other's cheeks like we're going to a hoe-down.

LORNA

(freeing herself from Cassidy))

Would you mind fetching me a hot tea and a slice of lemon?

CASSIDY

Sure, thing. Hey, Target, walk me to the waterin' hole.

(Cassidy pulls Target toward craft service.

So, how're the smoke signals?

Ashley at the portable telephone stand.

ASHLEY

Get me Martin Goldstein at Artist's Agency in Burbank.

BLACK OUT

SCENE THREE THE GOLD ROOM

Mona unlocks the door, flicks a switch, a chandelier comes on. Rudy's body is on the sofa covered by a tapestry. A burned arm dangles out.

MONA

I knew you'd screw this up the way you screwed up everything.

Mona removes the Klimt from its crate. She opens a concealed compartment in a prop shelf, extracts a second Klimt copy and switches the paintings. Guy enters, startling her.

MONA

Guy!

GUY

Sorry to bring you out of your reverie. *(Pour a drink)*

MONA

At least I came to say goodbye, not swill his booze.

GUY

Then say it.

MONA

I hope he burns. *(She exits)*

Guy goes to the concealed shelf, removes the second painting and is about to switch paintings, again, when Lionel enters.

GUY

(Covering) Damned good for a copy.

LIONEL

Rudy was ~~damn~~ good. The Louvre still exhibits one of his Velazquez forgeries they're too embarrassed to admit is fake.

GUY

Fake, like when you were, Jerome "the hammer", Tapper"?

LIONEL

That name is best forgotten.

GUY

You don't remember me do you?

LIONEL

Should I?

GUY

Nineteen-twenty-seven, the Orient Express between Belgrade and Budapest? You were working out a tap routine in the dining car? I was the skinny kid you taught to do this. (*Does a couple fancy tap steps*)

LIONEL

Not a bad hooper yourself. But do you remember this one?
(*Lionel dances. Guy dances. They tap together.*)
Whew. Not as light on the feet as I was.

GUY

Light on you feet and light with your fingers.

LIONEL

Maybe you remember too much.

GUY

Like the jewelry heist from Fanny Brice's dressing room.

LIONEL

I don't know where you think you're going with this.

GUY

You and Rudy were partners.

LIONEL

I didn't know Rudy before this awful film.

GUY

Gigi overheard you make a deal to spit the money.

LIONEL

An overhead a contract is not worth the whisper it's written on.

GUY

You and Rudy had deal to cheat Mona. Cheat me.

LIONEL

Preposterous

Target and Cassidy enter.

TARGET

Running lines?

LIONEL

Join our wake for a fellow artist.

Lionel motions to the drinks. Target starts pouring.

CASSIDY

Is that a prop or is it really...

GUY

Rudy Ravengill?

CASSIDY

For a dead guy he don't look too unhealthy.

TARGET

Dead is as unhealthy as it gets.

CASSIDY

He's still holding on to his rosary.

TARGET

Rosary? That isn't a rosary.

(taking it out of Rudy's clenched fist.)

It's dogtags Corporal Randie J. Oxen's dogtags

LIONEL

Randy Oxen, the juicer?

TARGET

Serial number N dash 10102447.

GUY

Rudy must have grabbed it when Randy trying to save him

LIONEL

An interesting supposition.

CASSIDY

Lots of bull riders get bucked off still holding the rope.

TARGET

And some soldiers grab their dog tags when they're dying. Isn't that true Lionel?

LIONEL

Wouldn't know. I was too old to serve.

GUY

I thought you lived in Vienna.

LIONEL

As a civilian. ~~Now,~~—I have to prepare for my scenes.

Lionel exits. Target turns to Guy.

TARGET

You ever live in Vienna?

GUY

I had a brief visit.

TARGET

See the sights?

GUY

Not much sightsee when you're in a Nazi prison camp.

TARGET

No famous paintings, Van Goghs, Rembrandts, maybe a Klimt, hanging in the prison barracks?

GUY

Funny. I'm going to run lines. Maybe you should too. *(Exits)*

CASSIDY

He trotted faster than a filly put to pasture with a stallion.

TARGET

That's because I may know his secrets.

CASSIDY

Secrets?

TARGET

Like who murdered Icy and... Rudy.

CASSIDY

Whomping range wars, you think Mister Rudy was murdered too?

TARGET

Don't you think it's quite a coincidence that Rudy got drenched with water just before he was electrocuted?

CASSIDY

Like a slab of ribs slopped in hot sauce before the barbecue?

TARGET

If I knew what that meant, I'd probably say, 'exactly'. And you're going to be my girl Friday.

CASSIDY

Your accomplice?

TARGET

No, an accomplice is someone who helps the killer and since you weren't around when Icy was murdered, you're off the hook. But you can help me solve the murders.

CASSIDY

Will this get me into Screen Actors Guild?

TARGET

You help me find the killer and it will get you into Variety.

CASSIDY

That's good, isn't it?

TARGET

Usually. Since you're now my "accomplice" I want you to get the low down on soldier, Randie E.Oxen, serial number. V dash 10397447. *(Hands her the dogtags)* I happen to know a little about soldier's dogtags and the numbers on this ones says there's something odd about our juicer.

CASSIDY

What do they say?

TARGET

The letter "V" in first line tells where a soldier was inducted, but I'm not good at letters, so I don't remember where.

(They bend close together to read the dog tag. A loaded moment between them and they break.)

Then there's is this letter "B" on the fifth line. Those two letter paints a strange portrait of our blonde juicer.

CASSIDY

You're sure.

TARGET

Dead sure. Can you sneak off and a make a few calls?

CASSIDY

Who do I call?

TARGET

Your agent. If anybody knows about dirt, he'll know.

CASSIDY
Call my agent? I can do that?

TARGET
You know his number?

CASSIDY
Yeah, it's Sidewinder 666.

TARGET
Sidewinder? Isn't that a kind of rattlesnake?

CASSIDY
The spit'n venom kind.

TARGET
Call him, but hold the receiver away from your face.

Target gives her cheek a friendly touch and exits. Cassidy looks at the dog tags and then caress her own cheek.

BLACKOUT

SCENE FOUR THE MAKE UP TABLE

Gigi sits at the make up table, her head bent low, recovering from her near collapse. Lorna enters.

LORNA
I'd rather Ashley propped Icy's corpse on a light stand than play a scene with that bumpkin. (*Touch up her eyes while barely glancing at Gigi*) Who knocked you up? Don't tell me, Dan Target notched another one.

GIGI
What are you saying?

LORNA
Come off the act. I've seen more pregnant showgirls strapping themselves into corsets than Fredericks of Hollywood. Who's the papa?

GIGI
None of your business.

LORNA
Anyone I know?

GIGI
Hard to tell, since you've known so many.

LORNA
My lovers had names above the title, not casting directors.

GIGI

No, it was...

LORNA

I hope you weren't stupid and screwed a writer.

GIGI

At least Randy is not one of your sissy-boy escorts

LORNA

Randy, our electrician? Did he keep his gloves on? Ha, ha.

Cassidy enters juggling tea cups, lemon slices and a honey jar bear.

CASSIDY

Didn't know if you wanted honey, so I brought the whole bear. Gigi, you want my coffee? I haven't touched it.

GIGI

I don't really feel like...

CASSIDY

Gas cramps got ya twisty? Too much coffee does. Stomach feels bad as a billy goat with it's horns caught in the hay bailer.

LORNA

Enough barnyard dialogue. *(Picks up her make up. Exits)*

CASSIDY

She's what my mama used to call "uppity", Very uppity.

GIGI

She a German film star reduced to ~~making~~ B-movies.

CASSIDY

A Nazi?

GIGI

Claims she wasn't.

CASSIDY

You ever see a real Nazi?

GIGI

After the war when I toured ~~with~~ Vienna with a USO show.

CASSIDY

Vienna? Wow. Didn't Guy ~~used to~~ do shows in Vienna too?

GIGI

Before the war, he travelled with his dad's mentalist show..

CASSIDY

What about during the war.

GIGI

He was an Air Force tailgunner, until his plane was shot down and he was German prisoner for three years. Uh, my stomach.

CASSIDY

Some tea and lemon will make it feel better.

GIGI

Going to take a more than tea.

Carlotta enters, offers Gigi a costume.

CARLOTTA

I let out the waist. Try it on.

CASSIDY

That time?

GIGI

You could say that. Thanks for trying with the tea. *(Exits)*

CARLOTTA

Stand up, let me take your sizes.

(measuring Cassidy)

Same hip, but a cup size smaller than Icy.

CASSIDY

Is that good?

CARLOTTA

For me, yes. For you, no.

CASSIDY

That's what Grandpa used to say, " Good for me no, Good for you yes." He was from Vienna. You too?

CARLOTTA

Russian.

CASSIDY

But you lived in Austria?

CARLOTTA

Yes.

CASSIDY

It sure is funny. Nearly everybody in this movie has lived in Vienna, Gigi, Guy, Target, Lionel, Mona, Rudy. Even Pappy. Isn't that a coincidence?

CARLOTTA

How you know this? Turn around.

CASSIDY

I'm a good listener. How about Randy? He wears dog tags so he must have been in the service. I should ask him.

CARLOTTA

Maybe you shouldn't. As Mr. Hitchcock's ~~onee~~ said, "It is not good to look too closely at these things".

CASSIDY

What's the harm?

CARLOTTA

Cassidy dear, Hollywood may look like a real town with real buildings and real people. But it's make-believe. Make-believe people with made up lives, hopes for bright futures and secrets of dark pasts. There is a dragon that sleeps on top of Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Legend say the dragon has a fat belly from devouring actresses and a sly smile because it knows there will always be a new actress tomorrow. Don't wake the dragon, you might be the next actress it swallows.

CASSIDY

That painter, Klimt, is he real or make-believe?

CARLOTTA

He was real. Lift your arm and bend your elbow.
(shows how to bend her elbow to measure)
 He lived in Vienna.

CASSIDY

You ever meet him?

CARLOTTA

The other arm. Herr Klimt was a friend of my cousin, Fraulein Adele Bloch-Bauer. He painted her portrait, several times.

CASSIDY

Was she the naked woman in the "The Passion"?

CARLOTTA

Cousin Adele? She was too much the Viennese elite to pose nude, especially for an erotic painting as "The Passion".

CASSIDY

So the real nude in the picture, did you know her too?

CARLOTTA

It was me.

CASSIDY

You're the naked girl?

CARLOTTA

My aunt Sophia, the Duchess Romanoff, wanted a portrait to capture my spirit, my youth, a portrait fine enough to hang in the Czar's palace in Saint Petersburg, and she hired Vienna's most famous artist, Gustav Klimt to paint it.

CASSIDY

The painting is of you, alone and... naked?

CARLOTTA

I wasn't alone. Charlemagne was with me.

CASSIDY

Charlemagne?

CARLOTTA

My white, toy poodle. Klimt painted him sleeping at my feet, but Sophia didn't like Charlemagne, he used to chew her pillows, so Klimt painted him over. If you look very closely in the lower right corner, you can see a bump of paint that hides my little Charlemagne.

CASSIDY

Really? I'm going to look for it.

CARLOTTA

There's no little bump in our picture. It's only a copy that Rudy painted twenty years ago in Vienna.

Pappy enters.

PAPPY

Miss Rogers, you're in the next scene. Page twenty-seven.

CARLOTTA

She'll be ready in ten.

PAPPY

Is Carlotta being good to you?

CARLOTTA

Like she was my own mother.

Carlotta and Pappy exchange a poignant look.

CARLOTTA

~~And be on the~~ Watch out for smiling dragons. (*Exits*)

CASSIDY

(*Reading*) "That's some choice, art or Trouble." (*Again, different emphasis*) "That's some choice, art or Trouble."

PAPPY

Try it with "acting"? (*he crosses out*)

CASSIDY

"That's some choice, art or Trouble." *(Again, different emphasis)* "That's some choice, art or Trouble."

Cassidy repeats the line, each time differently

SCENE FIVE THE SOUND STAGE/ LUGAR MANSION LIBRARY

The library set rolls and drops in around Cassidy, working on her one line. A painting, Klimt's "The Kiss", hangs between two looming bookshelves. Upstage, a tall leaded glass window with a sky backing. Randy and Effects rolls in a large desk with telephone and desk lamp. Ashley adjust the props while Effects rolls on a chair. Effects hurries in with a lit candelabra. Lightning flashes outside the leaded glass windows.

CASSIDY

(Looks around) I don't think I'm in Kansas anymore. *(Exits)*

ASHLEY

(Straightens painting) Where's the decanter and glasses?
(Pappy carries on glasses and crystal decanter)
The sofa. Where's the god damned sofa?

PAPPY

Under Icy's body.

ASHLEY

Ah... leave it there Roman. Roman?

PAPPY

He's passed out in the grip room.

ASHLEY

(Looking out the leaded window) It's night outside.
(sky backing lights change to streaked moonlight)
It's raining.

(Effects runs off. Rain starts on the window)

And windy!

(Tree branches slide into, swaying gently. Flashes of lightening and the trees sway in the storm.)

This isn't a two bit Boris Karloff horror movie.

PAPPY

Kill the lightening. Easy on the trees.

(Lightening stops. Tree sway gently.)

Mr. Director. Is this the vision you had?

ASHLEY

No, but it's all the studio will pay for. Roll it.

PAPPY

Put us on a bell. Quiet on the set. Roll sound. Roll camera.

ASHLEY

Action!

SCENE SIX THE LUGAR LIBRARY

A flashlight beam precedes a woman. She, like Mona in the cars, wears a coat and scarf. We cannot see her face. Her flashlight scans the room and the Klimt.

ASHLEY

(Calling from his chair) Hear voices.

LIONEL

(Offstage) Millard, you and your wife take the night off in town. I'll make do alone until morning.

ASHLEY

Door.

The woman hides beneath the desk. Lionel enters, flips on a switch, crosses and pours himself a scotch. He goes to the painting and hinges back "The Kiss" to reveal... a blank space behind the frame. Lionel drops out of character

LIONEL

Where's my painting? *(Shouting)* Ashley, where's my painting?

ASHLEY

Rudy! Where's the...

PAPPY

Rudy's dead, remember?

ASHLEY

Oh, and my career.

PAPPY

He probably left it in the gold room. *(Produces a key from his pocket)* Keep us on a bell and I'll get it *(runs out)*

LIONEL

(Looks under desk) Want to come out? *(Listens)* As you desire.

ASHLEY

Lionel, I'm sorry, Rudy screwed up.

LIONEL

I know and He'll never work again in this town.

ASHLEY

We'll get this in one.

LIONEL

I'd rather a hundred takes than hear Target invent dialogue.

ASHLEY

(Calling to off) Dan, you got your lines?

TARGET (O.S.)

They're taped to the back of the desk.

LIONEL

How reassuring.

Pappy hurries in and begins hanging the painting, not easy with one hand. Effects jumps in to help him.

PAPPY

I hope I got the right one.

LIONEL

There is only one... isn't there?

ASHLEY

Roll camera.

PAPPY

Roll sound. Roll camera.

ASHLEY

Action.

Lionel re-enters and plays the scene again. He opens the hinged painting to reveal "The Passion". He raises a glass and toasts the masterpiece. Ashley gives a hand cue to Pappy who signals to behind the set and Mona enters the library.

MONA

Hello, Poppie.

LIONEL

(Closing the painting) Not performing tonight?

MONA

Just the late show. *(Sniffs the air)* Where is she?

LIONEL

To whom do you refer?

MONA

Didn't take Charlie Chan to see the servants driving off, Poppie. That and the aroma of cheap perfume ~~of your latest bimbo.~~

LIONEL

You are too suspicious, my dear.

TARGET

(*Entering*) Lots to be suspicious about... Poppie.

LIONEL

Ah, my sweet, trouble follows you.

TARGET

Don't blame your daughter.

LIONEL

Did she tell you that our relationship was paternal? Oh, then I am a very naughty daddy, indeed.

TARGET

So it's not so much 'daddy' as it is 'sugar daddy'.

MONA

He's been sweet to me.

TARGET

And you've been sweet to him.

LIONEL

Misery may love company, but I am growing weary of yours.

TARGET

You're a man of the world, Lugar. (*Indicates the painting*) After the kiss comes "The Passion". Where is Margo Saint Claire's painting?

LIONEL

I'll have the shop deliver a framed print to your hotel.

TARGET

Cut the wise talk, Lugar. Give me the painting.

MONA

He's stashed it behind here. (*Reveals "The Passion"*)

LIONEL

You ungrateful whelp. After all I did for your mother.

Lionel raises his walking stick. Mona removes a pistol from her handbag and fires into the air. Lugar backs off.

MONA

That worked on Momma, but not me.

TARGET

Have I arrived in at an awkward moment?

MONA

That picture is worth a hundred grand if it's worth a dime. It's ours for the taking. What do you say? You and me?

Target approaches the picture, kneels behind the desk, rises holding up the nail file Cassidy had dropped.

TARGET

Any showgirls missing a nail file? Gunter? Monique?

MONA

Dirk. We can be rich.

LIONEL

Don't let your greed blind you. That pistol is not the only deadly thing about Monique.

MONA

That's an original Gustav Klimt. It's money in the bank.

LIONEL

Poor Monique, born in Barstow, and educated in... Barstow, doesn't have the eye to see that my Klimt is a reproduction, a fake. A good fake, but hardly worth losing your life over.

MONA

That painting is the real thing and I know how he got it. How he collaborated with his Nazi friends to steal it.

LIONEL

A charming fantasy. But so is love.

Mona aims and fires. The desk lamp shatters.

MONA

(Aims at the painting) Then a bullet hole won't hurt it.

LIONEL

Don't. It's the real Klimt.

MONA

How about it, Dirk? You and me, together, in dreamland.

TARGET

You paint a rosy picture, sweetie, but you forget one thing.

LIONEL

The painting is in my possession?

MONA

That's the easy part. *(Aim at Lugar)* Cheer up, Gunter, if I don't shoot you, the next showgirl would.

Target lunges and swings Mona's arm in time to avoid hitting Lionel as she fires the gun. The gun drops to the floor.

MONA

Dirk, I'll make you happy, I know I could.

TARGET

I know you could, sweetie. But then we'd be on the run for the rest of our lives. It'd be like the war, but instead of just Nazis in black leather coats, it would be the whole world chasing us. We couldn't trust anybody. And with that kind of money in our pockets, we wouldn't trust each other. Sooner or later one of use would crack. Maybe you. Maybe me. One of us would end up dead in a nameless hotel in a nameless country. You wouldn't like that, sweetie.

MONA

I would, if I were with you.

TARGET

But I wouldn't, not even for you.

LIONEL

Very touching. But now I have a problem.

TARGET

How to get the canvas back to the real owner?

LIONEL

You are a sentimentalist.

(draws the sheath from his sword-cane)

The problem is you.

Lugar lunges at Target. Target dodges the thrust.

TARGET

Killing two people could leave a terrible carpet stain.

LIONEL

Monique won't be a problem, will you? Nothing a diamond necklace and Paris apartment won't solve, am I right, dear?

MONA

(Moves to Lionel) Along the Champs-Élysées?

LIONEL

Pick up the gun and hold him while I arrange a boat ride.

Mona picks up the gun, steps back from Target and holds an aim on him. Lionel goes to the desk and dials a number.

TARGET

Is it worth murdering a man for a view of the Arc de Triumph?

MONA

You could have been sleeping with me instead of the fishes.

TARGET

Something tells me I'd be happier with the barracuda.

LIONEL

(On the phone) Pick me up at my private dock and hurry, I've a show to catch. *(Hangs up and takes the gun)*

TARGET

A boat ride? I hope you aren't expecting me to row.

LIONEL

No, the Golden Lady is amply powered to do our deep water drop off and get us to Marseille with minutes to spare.

MONA

Guy will kill me if I'm late for the show.

TARGET

Yeah, I'd hate to see that.

LIONEL

You won't. You have my word on it.

Lionel prods Target out. Mona clings to Lionel. Cassidy rises, removes scarf, finds the nail file and scrapes a fleck off the lower corner of the painting. Ashley jumps, gives Pappy a look of "what's she doing".

CASSIDY

(On the phone) Luther's got Trouble and Monique. *(Pause)* No, he isn't dead... yet. *(Pause)* But what about Trouble? *(Dramatically)* That's some choice, art or Trouble.

ASHLEY

(Rising) Cut. Print.

The rain stops. Effects blasts the candles with the CO-2

SCENE SEVEN THE SOUND STAGE

The bell, work lights.

ASHLEY

Eddie, you good? Great. Yank this set and go to the pier.

PAPPY

What was the bit with Cassidy scraping the painting?

ASHLEY

~~I don't know,~~ but I'll cut around it. ~~Now~~ Let's go. Go

The following scene plays during the set change. Library goes off. Night backing stays. Randy rolls desk off. Effects puts up a rope and post handrail to half way down the runway. Randy runs a string of lights along the handrail.

ASHLEY

Get Target and Greenway to go over the fight.

(Pappy goes looking for the cast)

Mona, you were better than Stanwyck.

MONA

Better than Grable?

ASHLEY

And prettier legs too.

MAYER (O.S.)

Good morning Mister Bentley.

ASHLEY

Just two scenes to go.

MAYER (O.S.)

Three scenes.

ASHLEY

Three? Pappy?

PAPPY

(Looks at callsheet) Two, that's all we've got.

MAYER (O.S.)

Seven 27, Exterior Sidewalk Cafe, Day.

PAPPY

Shot that yesterday.

MAYER (O.S.)

Every take had a scratch the size of Charlie Chaplin's ego.

ASHLEY

Nothing was good?

MAYER (O.S.)

Not a frame. It is now five o'clock in the morning. I will read cost reports over bagels and cream cheese until six o'clock at which time you will report to me that you have wrapped.

ASHLEY

But L.B., they struck the restaurant set yesterday.

MAYER (O.S.)

Shoot it on the set up next.

ASHLEY

I can't shoot a daylight sidewalk café on a pier at night.

MAYER (O.S.)

At six A.M. the swing gang arrives to strike your stage.

ASHLEY

~~Six o'clock this morning?~~ That's an hour from now.

MAYER (O.S.)

At seven o'clock, they begin building a pirate set Vincent Minnelli picture with Garland and Kelly. (*Clicks off*)

ASHLEY

Can we do cafe scene next?

PAPPY

If we use the same lighting as the pier.

ASHLEY

Roman, or Eddie, whoever the hell is back there, give me a street lamp. Anything to make it look intimate.

PAPPY

Fog.

ASHLEY

Fog, hail, snow, a band of Comanches on horseback, who gives a damn. Crap with bagels and cream cheese is still crap.

PAPPY

They're ready for the fight rehearsal.

ASHLEY

Why do we do this, Pappy?

PAPPY

Because everything else is boring.

ASHLEY

Right now, boring sounds pretty good.

PAPPY

Then after two weeks what?

ASHLEY

Hmm. Yeah. Hooray for Hollywood. Where are the two jerks?

PAPPY

Behind craft service.

ASHLEY

Pappy, I know you directed twelve silent films and I doubt I'll ever make one as good as your 1927 flick with Gish and Barrymore, but despite my admiration, I'd love a coffee.

PAPPY

And I'd love to get it. Now show those jerks how to make a punch work for camera. Over the shoulder and across the eyes.

Pappy executes a slow motion punch across Ashley's eyes, who snaps his head as if hit. Ashley repeats the punch across Pappy's eyes as he snaps his head as if hit.

ASHLEY

Right across the eyes. *(Exits)*

PAPPY

(Going onto the runway) We need to be ready to shoot exterior street, night, with fog in five. Eddie, can you do this without Roman? Yeah, I know you can, but I have to ask.

Carlotta comes onto the runway.

CARLOTTA

Dane? *(Joins him)* Anybody get wet in this pier scene?

PAPPY

Shouldn't. But we're reshooting the café scene first. Only it's on a pier at night and the water is done with lights.

CARLOTTA

Is it working?

PAPPY

The show or the other?

CARLOTTA

The other.

PAPPY

I don't know. We only got an hour and we have to wrap and with Rudy dead, we could be on the wrong track.

CARLOTTA

Been a lot of wrong tracks since our days on the Vienna.

PAPPY

And a lot of right ones.

CARLOTTA

I wish it had worked out differently.

PAPPY

It was my fault.

CARLOTTA

I should've tried to understand. But it hurt.

PAPPY

Yes, it did. Still does.

CARLOTTA

Seeing Cassidy, putting on make up, looking so young, so alive, she...

PAPPY

If only.

CARLOTTA

Will this make it better?

PAPPY

You can't make that better. But there is still...

CARLOTTA

(Puts fingers to his lips) Don't say that, Dane. We've changed too much.

PAPPY

(Pulling her close) You still have that lonely wisp of hair across your forehead, that little dimple when you smile.

(They bend close and kiss. Pappy pulls back.)
That perfume you're wearing, deadly.

CARLOTTA

Perfume? Oh, that's from this letter I found in Dan's jacket.

PAPPY

I'll give it to him. *(Takes letter)* It's damp.

Cassidy call from across the stage.

CASSIDY

Pappy, do I have time for a phone call?

PAPPY

A quick one.

Cassidy goes to the phone. At first she holds the receiver next to her face, thinks, then holds it farther away.

Lorna enters in a robe.

LORNA

I'm still waiting for my wardrobe.

CARLOTTA

(To Lorna) It's almost dry. *(Turns to Pappy)* I forgave you a long time ago. Now I think it's time you forgave yourself.

PAPPY

If this works, I might.

LORNA

If what works?

CARLOTTA

It's a private matter. *(Exits)*

LORNA

You think I don't recognize Carlotta? Well, I remember that phony Romanoff and her phony painting. Mayer's on my side and if either of you get between me and what is rightfully mine, there will be hell to pay. *(Exits)*

PAPPY

Eddie, I'll be in the gold room. Cover me while I'm gone.

Pappy exits past Cassidy on the telephone.

CASSIDY

(Without her twang) You're Guy's agent too, you've got to know the scoop on him. Okay, I'll owe you one. *(Pause)* So, Guy Bayou was a POW. *(Listens)* He escaped and hid out in Vienna? What about Mona Lovemore? *(Listens)* She toured Europe with the USO with 'Liddy's Luscious Ladies'. *(Listens)* Enlisted man entertainment to keep the dogfaces grinning. What else? *(Listens)* Her USO plane was shot down and she was captured by Nazi's? That's tough, even for a girl who keeps her panties up with rubber bands. *(Listens)* No, really? You're telling me when Guy escaped from the prison camp he was able to take Mona with him? But how the hell could that pair break out of a Nazi prison together? *(Listens)* Rumor is one of them struck a deal with a kraut guard? Getting to be a small world. Got to be movie in that. *(Listens)* No, I'm not pitching another movie script, not yet. At least not until I've finished writing the movie we're shooting now.

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE SOUND STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ashley enters past Cassidy as she hangs up and exits. Ashley is holding a bloody handkerchief to his nose. Target and Lionel follow. Pappy brings in Mona and Carlotta.

TARGET

I've got to pull it a little more.

LIONEL

You nail one on me and I'll plant you, so help me.

TARGET

Ashley, you Okay?

Carlotta gives Ashley a box of tissues to clean his face.

ASHLEY

(Calls to Eddie) Tilt down from the street lamp as Trouble steps in. Giselle enters and push in on a tight two and finish the scene in a close up on Trouble.

PAPPY

Put on us on bell. Roll sound. And... roll camera. Playback.

Bell sounds. Work lights. Randy hurries in with an already lighted street lamp. Effects fogs the area.

ASHLEY

Action.

A ship's horn sounds, long, low and lonely. Target, wearing a fedora and a mackintosh with its collar up, enters.

TARGET (V.O.)

Talking to Giselle in the nightclub had been a harder blow than the pistol whipping Lugar had given. It wasn't just seeing her after two years of fighting the Germans, it was the denial she slapped in my face like a dead tuna. It hurt and it didn't smell right. So I downed a liter of absinthe and contemplated the price of oblivion. ~~The~~ I bribed the piano player and he told me Giselle lived in a cheap flat by the waterfront. I found the place and waited for her after the her last show. The midnight fog was damp and gloomy. I began to feel like a starving wharf rat looking for something dead.

Gigi, wearing a lightweight flowing wrap over her skin tight dress hurries, past the light. Target speaks.

TARGET

You always looked great in moonlight and fog.

GIGI

I told you, monsieur, I don't know who you are.

TARGET

Funny, I guess six months side by side in the Resistance, dodging Nazis isn't much of an introduction.

GIGI

Soldier, go back to San Francisco. Marry a nice girl and buy a house on Nob Hill. Marseille is no place for you.

He reaches out and pulls her into an embrace.

TARGET

San Francisco, Nob Hill, that was what we were planning, Giselle. I know who you are. I know where you hide your humming bird tattoo, inside your left thigh, where you pretend it tickles you with its wings. What's going on?

GIGI

I'm not your Giselle... anymore. The Gestapo found me. They took me to Berlin. They made me... do things... not just to me... but to others... *(in tears)* Dirk, I've done terrible things. Dirk, the Resistance knows what I did. Who I betrayed. I'm frightened and there is nothing anyone can do.

TARGET

(Hugging her) The war is over. It's just us, doll face.

GIGI

The scars are too deep.

TARGET

Give it time, babe. Give us time.

GIGI

I don't have time. Tomorrow, I'm leaving France forever.

TARGET

That's right. You'll be on a boat to San Francisco, with me.

GIGI

I wish I could. But I've got another...

TARGET

Another guy?

GIGI

Another life. A life I can't share with you, or anyone.

TARGET

You know I can't let it end, don't you.

GIGI

Dirk, you have, we have, no choice.

TARGET

That's all I got, baby, is choices.

GIGI

(Starting to move away) I don't want to see you killed.

TARGET

I can take care of myself.

GIGI

Then do it, Dirk. Take care of yourself, the way I must take care of myself. Au revoir.

They kiss in the street light and Gigi vanishes into the fog. The ship horn sounds. Target straightens his coat, drops his head. The lamp goes out. A moment of silence.

PAPPY

Is that the...

ASHLEY

Cut. Everybody change for the pier.

PAPPY

Places people. Keep the work lights off. Get ready to roll.

TARGET

How was that, Ashley?

ASHLEY

You rewrote the whole damn scene. I hope it makes sense in the edit. (*Calling out*) Eddie, start low, tilt up in a tight three as they enter. Push in on the punches so we can't tell if they hit or miss. Dan and Lionel, keep the fight going for a few beats so we get enough pieces to cut a sequence.

LIONEL

I'm not taking any more wild swings from him.

TARGET

I'm pulling back.

PAPPY

On a bell. Smoke it up. Roll sound, camera.

Bell and clapper. Effects fogs the pier.

ASHLEY

Action.

SCENE EIGHT THE PIER

A fog horn. Sound of a car drive up. Randy waves the car lights across the pier. Lionel pushes Target ahead of him onto the dock. A trap door at the end of the pier snaps open, a flashlight beam shoots up from below and signals.

MONA

Gunter, you're hurting him.

LIONEL

Tenderizing him for the sharks.
(prods Target with his stick)
 A little blood to wet their appetite.

MONA

You got the painting. Let him go.

TARGET

Nothing I say can prove you stole it.

LIONEL

Monique, get aboard the boat.

MONA

(Looks down the trap door) It looks slippery.

LIONEL

(Calling into the trap door) Hand up the electric torch.

A flashlight is followed by Gigi. She sees Target.

TARGET

Giselle.

GIGI

Dirk? *(To Lionel)* What's he doing here?

LIONEL

You know Mr. Trouble?

GIGI

We fought in the Resistance together.

TARGET

Is Lugar the commitment you couldn't share?

GIGI

A long stay in Berlin taught me to do whatever it takes.

TARGET

Killing ex-lovers included?

GIGI

What're you going to do to him?

LIONEL

Nothing that will make us slow down the boat.

TARGET

We can make it.

GIGI

It's too late, Dirk. A million dead soldiers too late.

LIONEL

In a few minutes it will be a million and one. Get below.

Target grabs Lionel and bring himself to his feet. Mona and Gigi escape down the hatch. Target struggles to keep Lionel from using his sword cane. Target's foot goes over the edge of the pier and he half falls and is cornered. Lionel flicks calmly at Target's collar with his sword.

LIONEL

The art of stage combat does have it uses.

TARGET

Play acting? Is that how you stole the Klimt from the Nazis?

LIONEL

(Quietly) What script are you reading?

TARGET

Everyone thought you were a master art thief.

LIONEL

Thief, yes, I, Gunter Lugar am a master.

TARGET

Hardly a master, The only reason you were able to steal the painting was because you were also a Nazis collaborator.

LIONEL

A collaborator? What are you saying? *(Calls)* Ashley!

ASHLEY

Go with it. We're running out of time.

TARGET

Were you running out of time when the Allies surrounded Vienna and you smuggled the painting out of Europe?

LIONEL

You've gone to far.

Lionel pulls back to thrust his sword into Target. A gunshot. Cassidy steps into the light holding a gun.

CASSIDY

Stand still.

Lionel pulls Target in front as a shield..

TARGET

Shoot, sweetheart.

CASSIDY

I might kill you. *(Steps closer to them)*

TARGET

Come a little closer

LIONEL

Two men dead with one bullet ~~from you gun~~ will be impossible to explain away, and in France women go to the guillotine.

TARGET

Squeeze slowly on three. One. Two. Three.

As Target says 'three' and Lionel propels Target into Cassidy. Both tumble to the pier. Lionel hurries down the ladder and closes the hatch. Cassidy aims the gun toward the water.

TARGET

Don't shoot, you might hit Giselle.

CASSIDY

Where are they going?

TARGET

Across the bay to Le Minette Mauve.

CASSIDY

The club? After he tried to kill you?

TARGET

Lugar knows Giselle and Monique are showgirls, right?

CASSIDY

Yeah, so?

TARGET

The show must go on.

SCENE NINE THE SOUND STAGE

ASHLEY

Cut.

PAPPY

Take us off a bell. Work lights.

LIONEL

(Rising from hatch) I will never in my life do another picture with that... that defiler... that wanton despoiler of the spoken word. And you should not be allowed to direct traffic in the Mojave desert. I am through.

ASHLEY

Wait, we have one more scene.

LIONEL

(Storms down the pier) And I'm taking my picture with me. Even a fake masterpiece deserves more respect.

ASHLEY

Lionel, I only have a few minutes left to finish shooting.

LIONEL

A caffeine addled newsreel director couldn't finish this picture in the time you have left.

PAPPY

We need another scene to make story sense.

LIONEL

After the improvised ravings of this performing baboon, this story makes less sense than a Groucho Marx monologue.

TARGET

I improvised a bit, but none of that was about you... was it?

LIONEL

You know damn well I was falsely accused of being a collaborate, an accusation kept me under arrest for months.

ASHLEY

Lionel, I didn't know.

LIONEL

Then who wrote the script changes? Who told him to call me a collaborator?

MAYER (O.S.)

The screen writer, Casey Lamont.

LIONEL

I demand you send in this Casey Lamont to fix this mess.

MAYER (O.S.)

Casey Lamont is already there. Start shooting. *(Clicks off)*

MONA

It's Ashley. He's Casey Lamont.

ASHLEY

Hell, no, you can't blame this trash on me.

GUY

Well it sure the hell isn't me.

GIGI

I wouldn't even sleep with a writer, let a long be one.

CASSIDY

I am Casey Lamont.

ASHLEY

You can't be the writer, you're ~~just~~ an actress

LIONEL

You can't be the writer, you're a woman.

CASSIDY

I am a writer and a woman. I wrote all the Dirk Trouble scripts.

TARGET

You wrote my first two Dirk Trouble pictures? That's great. Hey, I got this idea for the next one. It opens with Dirk trapped in a Turkish Harem with no... ah... ah, something.

MONA

A female screenwriter? No wonder they're all crap.

TARGET

Yeah, he's there to rescue a... a... a cowgirl, who an evil rancher... wait. It's not a Turkish harem it's in... Hawaii.

ASHLEY

You're really Casey Lamont?

CASSIDY

My real name is Cassandra Delmont.

ASHLEY

Pappy, your last name is Delmont.

TARGET

I get it. Del Mont is La Mont and Cassandra is Cassidy.

Carlotta is nearby and drops several hangers of clothes.

CARLOTTA

Who is she, Cassidy Rogers or Cassandra Delmont?

TARGET

She's Cassidy. The double for Icy and she's Cassandra, who's really Casey, but her real name is... Somebody help me out.

ASHLEY

Cut. Cut. Cut.

PAPPY

We're not rolling.

ASHLEY

That's the point. Eddie, set up the club for a reverse angle.

PAPPY

Everybody change for the nightclub. Let's go. Go. Go. Go.

All hands strike the pier and hurry to set up Le Minette Mauve while Lionel glares from center stage..

ASHLEY

You got your writer on the set. Now get into wardrobe.

Lionel exits. Carlotta goes to Cassidy.

CARLOTTA

I need a minute with you.

CASSIDY

I have Icy's costume and I know how to...

CARLOTTA

I'm the costumer and you will dress how I tell you.

CASSIDY

(Taken aback) Yes, Ma'm.

CARLOTTA

Carry these, Cassandra.

Carlotta gives Cassidy some costumes and they exit.

PAPPY

Eddie, have your First A.C. operate a second camera and newsreel the scene. Thousand foots loads. Shoot closes ups, cut-a-ways, roving pans. Stay on the action, whatever it is.

ASHLEY

You read my mind.

PAPPY

I knew what you'd want and I'm making it work.

ASHLEY

Oh, hell. The extras for the nightclub, I sent them home.

PAPPY

It's okay. I needed them gone.

ASHLEY

You needed them gone?

PAPPY

Randy, Effects. See Carlotta in wardrobe, you're extras.

RANDY

I get a voucher?

PAPPY

You get a voucher.

RANDY

Dress rate?

PAPPY

Now Damn, move it and I'll give you a silent bit and a wet check.

Effects rushes off, starting to remove clothing as he exits.

ASHLEY

(Quietly to Pappy) Okay, tell me. What are we shooting?

PAPPY

We'll pick it up from Dirk's entrance, jump to the end where the showgirl's is murdered. After that, it's all new.

ASHLEY

Dirk enters. The song begins. Jump to the murder. Got it.

PAPPY

Come on, we've got to change.

ASHLEY

Change?

PAPPY

It's a fancy night club isn't it?

ASHLEY

I'm going to be an extra?

PAPPY

There's more to directing movies than saying action and cut.

They exit. Guy begins a piano overture while Randy the sets up the club from a 'cheated' reverse of the opening scene with the tables downstage and the runway upstage. Showgirls enter, warm up. Effects, wearing only boxers and undershirt, lights table candles with a blow torch. There is a loud pounding sound from far upstage.

RANDY

(Calling out) The swing gang is here to strike the set.

Pappy and Ashley enter in tuxedos.

PAPPY

We're locked and on a red light.

The work lights go off. Lionel and Mona enter, share a table. Cassidy enters, adjusts her cat costume.

Carlotta enters dressed as the missing extra. Carlotta, Ashley and Pappy will cross at the top of the scene to their tables. Effects run through with a smoker. Randy, as French workman, climbs to the greenbed, snaps on a spotlight.

ASHLEY

Where's Lorna and Target?

PAPPY

They makes entrances. You're crossing to the side table. Anybody not ready? (*Shouts*) Rolling. Two cameras

ASHLEY

Keep the energy up. If you mess up, pick up the line and start over. Here we go. And... CUT!

PAPPY

Say the "A" word?

ASHLEY

And ACTION!

SCENE TEN LE MINETTE MAUVE NIGHT CLUB

GUY

Madams et Monsieur. Welcome to the brightest light of Marseilles, Le Minette Mauve. I am proud to introduce the singing sensation of Nazi free Europe, Mademoiselle Margo Saint Claire.

People at tables applaud. Guy plays the FIRST SONG. Randy swings a spotlight onto Lorna making her sultry entrance. She glides forward and sprawls enticingly across the piano. She sings a few bars.

ASHLEY

And... pantomime.

Lorna and Guy go into a silent version of the number. Everything continues as in Scene One, except Lorna and the showgirls are upstage and not the center of attention.

ASHLEY

Dirk!

Target enters at the side.

TARGET

I had to cancel the boat ride.

LIONEL

Another day perhaps?

TARGET

I've lost ~~my~~ interest in boats. Taken up art collecting.

He reaches behind him and reveals the painting.

LIONEL

It serves me proper, leaving the house unlocked for ruffians.

TARGET

Mademoiselle, I'd like to buy a round for this table.

CASSIDY

Oui. What is the gentleman having?

TARGET

He'll have what I'm having.

CASSIDY

But of course.

LIONEL

Awfully presumptuous, Mr. Trouble. Dangerously so.

Cassidy returns with the other Klimt and gives it to Lionel.

CASSIDY

Mon dieu. They are the same.

LIONEL

What kind of trick is this? She's re-writing the script.

ASHLEY

You wanted the writer on the set. Cassidy's the writer and whatever she says is in the script.

PAPPY

Cassidy, pick it up from your line.

Cassidy steps back and again gives the painting to Lionel.

CASSIDY

Mon dieu. They are the same.

LIONEL

A gracious demonstration of the copist's art. Now, if your game is played, I will take my painting and go home.

Lionel tries to take the first painting.

CASSIDY

Monsieur Gunter, you are mistaken. That painting belongs to the Duchess

LIONEL
 What Duchess

CASSIDY
 Allow me to introduce you to Duchess Carlotta Romanoff.

Pappy stands, offering Carlotta his hand and she rises.

MONA
 The wardrobe lady is a Duchess?

LIONEL
(Breaking character) This charade has gone far enough. I won't be a part of it. I'm through. I'm calling my agent.

He gets up to leave. L.B. Mayer comes on the speaker.

MAYER (O.S.)
 Don't waste film, Mr. Greenway. Play the scene.

LIONEL
 L.B., you said that if...

MAYER (O.S.)
 Play the scene, Lionel, like it was your last.

ASHLEY
 Dan, say your line.

TARGET
 I don't have a line.

ASHLEY
 Do what you always do. Make up something. Action.

TARGET
(Collecting himself) Yes, the Duchess Romanoff, the true owner and the real model for this painting.

RANDY
(In the greenbed) No. Lorna Vogelsand is the naked woman.

PAPPY
 Eddie, single on Randy. Say that again Randy, but call her Margo Saint Claire. Action.

RANDY
 What?

ASHLEY
 Say the line. Say it!

RANDY
 Margo Saint Claire is the naked woman.

The Act One, Scene One murder is replayed from the reverse angle. Lorna turns into the spotlight. Blackout. A shot. Women scream. The music stops. The lights return. Lorna clutches her stomach where a large red spot expands. She staggers, struggling to hold herself up on the reluctant showgirls. Lorna collapses and falls. Gigi and Mona step over her. Target rushes to the fallen singer, props her up.

TARGET

Don't talk, Mademoiselle. We'll get the doctor.

LORNA

They tried to kill me. (*Gasps*) Because I know.

GUY

(*Rushing over*) What do you know, Margo?

TARGET

Get back, Victor.

GUY

Tell me.

LIONEL

(*Pushes Guy aside*) Let her speak.

LORNA

Gunter, is that you?

There is a pause as Cassidy scribbles on piles of cocktail napkins and hands one to Lionel who reads quickly.

LIONEL

I can't say this.

ASHLEY

For god's sake, Lionel, play the scene.

LIONEL

(*Reading the napkin*) It's me, your husband.

LORNA

My...?

LIONEL

(*To the room*) It's true. She's my wife. But the painting is mine. It was always mine. Rudy painted it...

ASHLEY

(*Correcting him*) "Rudolpho".

LIONEL

Rudolpho, painted it.

LORNA

Don't let that bastard... Don't let... (*convulses and dies*)

Everyone step back from Lorna. Target covers the body.
Cassidy continues writing, feeding actors lines on napkins.

TARGET

Who saw what happened?

GIGI

I heard a shot. It came from there. (*Points at Guy*)

GUY

What am I supposed say?

ASHLEY

Casey, Cassidy, whoever you are, what's his next line?

CASSIDY

(*Writing as she talks*) He says, "I thought the shot came from over...(*points at Randy*) there." (*Hand Target a napkin*)

TARGET

(*Reads*) The spotlight operator? One of you is lying.

CASSIDY

It's Giselle. She's lying to cover up for the man who...

ASHLEY

Who what?

CASSIDY

Made her pregnant.

GIGI

What the hell is going on.

PAPPY

Stay in character, Gigi.

RANDY

I didn't do anything.

GIGI

Hell, you didn't, you did this (*pointing to her stomach*)

TARGET

I bet you killed Icy and Rudy too.

RANDY

I don't need this crap. I'm calling the union.

Randy leaps down to leave, but Target lunges for him and they fight.

Effects, dressed as a French Gendarme, enters, blows his whistle, breaks up the fight, puts Randy in handcuffs and sits him near the dead singer.

ASHLEY

Eddie, get a single on him. Now. Arrest him, Dan.

RANDY

This isn't real. This is a movie.

TARGET

And it wasn't brain surgery to figure out you aren't the real Randy Oxen. *(Pulls dog tags)*

RANDY

What are you talking about.

TARGET

The name Randy E. Oxen fooled everyone. But the serial numbers on your dogtags don't fit. The little "B" in the corner, that means you're a Buddhist.

RANDY

Don't we have freedom of religion?

TARGET

Sure we do, but it doesn't mean they can draft men into the Women's Army Corp. The numbers on line two, say it all.

RANDY

I don't know anything about the number on those dogtags.

TARGET

Of course you don't, since the real Corporal Randy Elizabeth Oxen died in a Nazi POW camp where you were a prison guard.

GIGI

It's over, Randy. He knows.

RANDY

Okay, they're not mine. But I wasn't a Nazi.

TARGET

Just following orders, soldier?

RANDY

I was regular German Army. Captain Otto Kruger. But I was just a guard, not a Nazi. He knows. *(Points to Guy)* He was in that prison camp. Tell him, Guy.

GUY

I don't know him.

RANDY

I helped you and the Mona get over the fence.

Cassidy tries to hand Guy a napkin with lines on it, but he just throws it down and goes on the attack.

GUY

This is a set up. But I'm not taking the fall.

TARGET

Did you kill Icy?

GUY

I was with Mona when Icy was stabbed. Tell them Mona.

MONA

Yeah, we were in the gold room with Rudy, kicking back a couple of eye openers.

TARGET

Sounds convenient, both of you together and Rudy not around to say it was a lie.

GUY

It's the truth.

TARGET

The gold room. You gave me a letter from Mona. (*Looks in his jacket*) It's in my other coat, the one that got wet and... and Carlotta took from me. She has Mona's letter.

PAPPY

No, she gave it to me.

Pappy hands Target the letter.

TARGET

You opened it.

CARLOTTA

It was wet. I ironed it dry.

TARGET

(*Reading*) "Dan, I'm desperate. Ashley is going to kill me in the car scene... unless... I make you... learn your lines."

MONA

What did you think I wrote? The man never knows his lines!

More pounding at the stage door.

ASHLEY

Tell those idiots we're still rolling.

TARGET

I don't know what to say. I'm out of cheater cards.

ASHLEY

Make up something.

Cassidy give Guy a napkin and pushes him to center.

GUY

(Reading the napkin) I killed Margo Saint Claire? I... I shot her in the dark ~~from~~ with a gun I keep... where?

(Cassidy hands him another napkin)

In... in the piano? I did it to keep my share from the sale of the real painting. I did it to keep Margo from telling Lugar his painting wasn't a copy. He had the real Klimt.

LIONEL

I had the real Klimt?

GUY

Giselle and I had the fake and we were set to make a switch.

TARGET

That's why you *(to Gigi)* killed her.

GIGI

He was supposed to scare her, not kill her.

ASHLEY

Guy, go for the gun. Dan, slug him across the eyes. Action.

Guy goes for the gun in the piano. Target lunges and knocks it to the ground. Target throws a punch and Guy falls.

ASHLEY

Great! That's a cut!

CASSIDY

It's not the end.

PAPPY

Keep rolling. Eddie, how many feet of film left? *(Pauses to see an answer)* Four hundred? Four minutes.

CASSIDY

Solve Rudy's murder. *(Offers Target a napkin)*

TARGET

Solve it? *(Takes napkin)* But I'm ~~just~~ an actor.

CASSIDY

You not just an actor. You're a star.

TARGET

I am aren't I.

CASSIDY

Think of the headlines. Dan Target solves real murder case. It's big, really big.

PAPPY

Cassandra, what are you doing?

CASSIDY

We can do this, Pappy. Like the stage coach stunt when we made the Bolsheviks think I was dead. We can do this too.

CARLOTTA

Let her do it, Pappy. Let our daughter fix everything.

ASHLEY

Your daughter?

PAPPY

You know?

CARLOTTA

She had all my sizes when I was twenty. And her eyes, she has her my mother's eyes. You can't fool a mother.

Cassidy goes to Carlotta. They embrace. There is a loud pounding at the stage door.

ASHLEY

Target, we're in the last reel. Solve the murders.

LIONEL

Who killed Margo?

GUY

Who killed Icy?

MONA

Who killed Rudy?

TARGET

Here goes. (*Reads napkin, confronts Lionel*) You thought your painting was a fake and not the real Gustav Klimt.

LIONEL

Of course. Otherwise I would have sold the wretched thing.

TARGET

When Guy and Gigi showed up with the genuine Klimt, you saw an opportunity.

LIONEL

They claimed it was stolen from a hidden Nazi stash.

GUY

If we tried to sell, we'd be arrested.

TARGET

So you agreed to switch paintings, claiming you had the original all the time and everyone splits the wealth.

LIONEL

A fair plan, I thought.

GIGI

Until Lorna, Margo, she saw it. She knew he had the real painting and thought she could...

LIONEL

Cheat me out of my share.

TARGET

That's when the forger, Rudy, turned up alive and everything got complicated.

LIONEL

Nothing worse than a living painter.

TARGET

Or a dead showgirl. Then more people were interested, weren't they... *(reading the napkin)* Carlotta Delmont, Duchess Romanoff of Moscow?

PAPPY

Wait a minute.

ASHLEY

Pappy, keep out of this. Three and a half minutes. Action.

CARLOTTA

(Steps forward) My pleasure, Mister Trouble.

TARGET

Did you pose for the original Klimt painting?

CARLOTTA

Yes. I was seventeen.

TARGET

You posed in the nude?

CARLOTTA

Aunt Sophia didn't want me to, but Klimt insisted or he wouldn't do the painting. It was the price of great art.

CASSIDY

Where you nude when Rudy painted the copy?

CARLOTTA

For the first one.

TARGET

The 'first' one?

LIONEL

There's a third painting?

GIGI

Three paintings?

RANDY

Rudy said he only made one copy and I believed him.

TARGET

You believed Hitler was the good guy. Duchess, what were you planning to do with third picture?

CARLOTTA

Get my original painting back.

CASSIDY

You wanted the original painting the Nazis had stolen?

CARLOTTA

No, the picture the Nazi confiscated was the first copy.

TARGET

The krauts took the copy? How the hell did that happen?

CARLOTTA

After Rudy finished the first copy, he kept the original and tricked THE my aunt and gave her the fake.

CASSIDY

How do you know that?

CARLOTTA

I helped him. Rudy promised to sell the picture so I would have enough money enough to take you, my baby, to America.

TARGET

Your aunt was a Duchess, didn't she have money?

CARLOTTA

My aunt fled the Bolsheviks with only the clothes she was wearing. She survived on handouts from other refugees.

CASSIDY

So you and Rudy tricked your aunt so you'd have money to bring me to America?

CARLOTTA

And Rudy tricked me. He had secretly painted the third copy and told me that it was the original.

CASSIDY

How did you know it wasn't?

CARLOTTA

Neither copy had the raised paint in the lower corner where Klimt had painted over my dog, Charlemagne.

TARGET

Is anybody following this?

CASSIDY

What did you do?

CARLOTTA

I broke into Rudy's Vienna apartment to get the original painting. But I was arrested. Rudy lied in court and called me a thief. With a criminal record I couldn't immigrate to America. I had lost everything. I even lost my daughter.

CASSIDY

That's why Pappy brought me to America, alone?

CARLOTTA

I was desperate to follow my daughter. So desperate I joined the anti-communist underground and became the private secretary to Leon Trotsky. When Trotsky fled to Mexico and I went with him. I was his confidante when he lived with Frieda and Diego. When Stalin's assassins found us and murdered Trotsky, I was terrified.

CASSIDY

Why didn't you come for me then?

CARLOTTA

I had all of Trotskys secret papers and the Reds came after me. I was a hunted woman. No one around me was safe.

CASSIDY

That's why Pappy you staged the stage coach stunt accident to make everyone think I was dead?

CARLOTTA

~~He did it to protect you. You were a Romanoff, everything the communists hated, sought out and killed. That's why you grew up with his brother and his wife in Boulder Colorado.~~

PAPPY

I did it to protect you. You were a Romanoff, everything the communists hated, sought out and killed. That's why you grew up with my brother and his wife in Amarillo, Texas

TARGET

Not many communists in Texas.

CARLOTTA

After Pappy told me that Cassie had been killed doing a movie stunt, my world collapsed. Even my hatred for the Soviets. That's when I met Lionel. He already had one copy of the painting when he heard there might be another.

TARGET

He knew there were two copies?

LIONEL

This is poppycock. I only knew of the one copy I own.

CARLOTTA

No, Lionel, ah,... Mister Lugar. You don't own the copy, you own the original Klimt.

LIONEL

No, I thought it was the real painting. But later, Rudy, convinced me it was the copy he painted. Showed me where he secretly signed it. What a fool, I've been.

More pounding and shouts at the stage door..

TARGET

That means Carlotta murdered Rudy, and Icy?

LIONEL

She had the motive. She had the second copy.

(Lionel goes to the piano, opens the top and takes out the unwrapped third painting.)

She was going to make the switch. She was working with Rudy to switch this copy for my original Klimt.

GUY

No wonder Rudy wouldn't let me fix the piano.

Target takes the third painting and sets it up on a chair. Now the three are displayed. Ashley waves Cassidy over to him.

ASHLEY

Wrap it up. The grips are at the door.

CASSIDY

We're getting there.

TARGET

(Big accusation) Rudy and Icy were murder by...!

ASHLEY

I don't care who murdered Rudy or Icy. Get back to our movie!

TARGET

Carlotta is the murderer... Murderess.

CASSIDY

My mother? No. She couldn't have.

TARGET

Then who? *(Aside to Cassidy)* Help me out here, I'm dying.

Cassidy hands Target a napkin, takes Carlotta to Pappy.

TARGET

Monique. You were going to let Lugar throw me overboard.

MONA

He had a gun. What could I do?

TARGET

Giselle. You were going to feed me to sharks.

GIGI

I warned you to stay away from me, ~~Dirk~~.

TARGET

But you, Gunter Lugar, held all the cards.

LIONEL

You can't pin Icy's murder on me, I was in the hotel room with you, remember.

TARGET

No, you didn't kill Icy, but you did kill Rudolph. You rigged the wiring so that he'd be electrocuted and you'd get the money from real painting all to yourself.

LIONEL

That's a fabrication. It was the piano player.

TARGET

Ah, Victor, the mysterious owner of Le Minette Mauve.

GUY

You can't pin that on me. Besides, there's no Rudy in this movie. It's Lorna who get's killed and Gigi...

CASSIDY

Giselle.

GIGI

Me Gigi? Or me Giselle? Real life or "B" movie plot.

ASHLEY

Stay in character.

GIGI

You stay in character, you two timing bastard.

ASHLEY

You can't talk to me like that.

TARGET

Where were you when... anyone... was murdered?

ASHLEY

I'm not ~~even~~ in this movie. I'm the director.

MONA

Where were you?

ASHLEY

~~I'm the director.~~ I was in my chair, directing.

MONA

You left before Icy and Rudy were murdered. I saw you.

ASHLEY

I was rehearsing Gigi for her next scene.

GIGI

We never rehearsed.

TARGET

Pappy was looking for you.

PAPPY

I found him talking with Randy.

CASSIDY

The electrician?

Cassidy scribbles on a napkin and gives it to Randy. During the following, Cassidy slips behind the crowd and exits.

RANDY

(Reading) I loaned him my pliers to fix his... script.

ASHLEY

My script didn't need fixing.

LIONEL

It to needs it now, my boy.

ASHLEY

I did not kill Icy. Rudy's the one who got me into all this. He's the one who came up with the story line about the Klimt and had me pitch to L.B. Mayer.

TARGET

Rudy offered you a cut didn't he?

ASHLEY

A cut big enough to finance my own films. Real films. I should have known everything he did was a crooked scheme.

TARGET

You rigged the wiring that killed Rudy?

ASHLEY

No, but I know who did. It was...

RANDY

I didn't do it. I didn't hurt nobody. I wasn't a Nazi.

GUY

You sadistic monster.

Guy charges over and kicks Randy in the sides until he falls over and Target and Pappy has to pull them apart.

TARGET

Hold on hero. The man is in handcuffs.

GUY

That's how he did it with the prisoner. Put them in handcuffs and then beat them until they begged. Begged him to...

GIGI

Beat them harder.

GUY

That's right. We had to say we wanted to be beaten. Wanted him to strip us naked on the hard concrete and beat us raw.

RANDY

You creepy little bitch. You liked it. You wanted it!

Guy breaks free and kicks Randy again and again until Mona puts her arms on Guy and leads him to a table..

LIONEL

Very impressive Target, rather Dirk. You've exposed all our sins, but still the question waits. Who murdered whom?

MONA

What about Gigi? She collaborated with this stinky Nazi so he'd get her out of prison camp. She brought the picture to Guy and now she's carrying his Nazi baby.

GIGI

You don't know a damned thing about me, or about him (*she goes to Randy*) He didn't start the war. But he had to fight it. You would have too, if you had been born a German. He saved my life. Saved a lot of other lives too, including his.

LIONEL

For a price.

GIGI

You're wrong about him. Randy, tell them who you are.

TARGET

If he has three names, you're going to need bigger napkins.

RANDY

Alright. I found the painting, but I didn't know what to do with it. So I grabbed a set of dog tags from the a dead American soldier, but I didn't kill her. The three of us got out, got the painting and made it to Hollywood. That's when Gigi brought in Rudy. He set the whole thing up.

TARGET

What about Icy? Gigi could have stabbed Icy, couldn't she?

PAPPY

No. The one who stabbed Icy, wasn't a woman.

LIONEL

You have proof of that?

PAPPY

(*Calling*) Special Effects.

ASHLEY

Effects? You can't save a picture with special effects.

PAPPY

Tell them.

Effects steps forward, takes a deep breath explains it all.

EFFECTS

I put the knife in Icy's back. It was some of my best work. I was only following orders. Pappy made be do it, but was some of my best work. I used a six inch steel blade and a four ounce rubber bag and a hidden pull line so the blood didn't really start running until she was right in the middle of everyone. Wanted it to look really fresh.

(MORE)

EFFECTS (cont'd)

Fresh is what makes it real, you know. Getting the knife in was a real chore, I had to practice stabbing and stabbing and stabbing until I got it just right because I knew I'd only have just a moment. Oh, and Icy, she was real good, carried it off like a pro. Could have fooled DeMille himself, she was that good. But of course, we rehearsed it a lot. That's what you should do Ashley, rehearse and rehearse and rehearse.

TARGET

Wait a minute. Icy's stabbing was a stunt?

ASHLEY

She's alive?

GIGI

That little bitch.

LIONEL

Then who's the body on the couch?

Target and Pappy swing the couch to face front. Icy's arm flops from under the cover. She still wears the bloody coat.

MONA

She's still dead.

LIONEL

What kind of childish game is this.

Lionel lifts Icy's limp hand to feel her pulse. Icy pulls him to her, terrifying Lionel. Pappy removes the sheet.

CASSIDY

Well if you ain't a whiter than prairie dog's backside.

More pounding and muffled shouts at the stage door.

ASHLEY

The Huns are pounding at the gates.

PAPPY

Keep rolling.

LIONEL

You want to put this fraud on film.

CASSIDY

It's not a fraud. It's a sting.

GIGI

Who's is being stung?

CASSIDY

The person who knew Lionel's painting was the real thing.

MONA

Carlotta knew her painting was a fake.

CARLOTTA

Everyone knew ~~that~~.

MONA

We can't all be guilty.

CASSIDY

No you can't. But there is one person we're leaving out. One person who had the means and the opportunity to do it all.

ASHLEY

Oh, god, you don't mean...

TARGET

It couldn't be...

MAYER (O.S.)

Have your wrapped Mister Bently?

ASHLEY

Last shot.

MAYER (O.S.)

Make it a good one. *(Clicks out)*

CASSIDY

Not him. Her. *(Points to covered body of Lorna)*

ASHLEY

But she's dead.

TARGET

(Rips off the cover) Another great performance.

CASSIDY

Gendareme, arrest the dead woman.

LORNA

What's happening?

CASSIDY

You killed Rudy. You rigged the electricity.

LORNA

I'm a movie star. What do I know about electricity?

CASSIDY

It says so in your bio. Your father was a repairman for the Bavarian Electric company, where you helped him before you became an actress.

CARLOTTA

You were Rudy's lover when he cheated me with the second copy.

TARGET

You knew Lionel's painting was real.

GUY

That's why she tried to make a deal with me and Gigi.

RANDY

But wouldn't cut me in.

LORNA

It's a lie.

ASHLEY

You promised I'd direct if I used you in the lead role.

GIGI

She begged me to kill Rudy, but I wouldn't do that.

TARGET

You murdered Rudy for the painting.

CASSIDY

It your last scene, Miss Vogelsang. This is your chance to go out like a star. A real star.

Cassidy gives a hand to Lorna, who rises like a star in her blood stained dress. Lorna takes command of the scene.

LORNA

I am the star. I deserved that painting. I killed Rudolpho.

ASHLEY

And cut.

LORNA

No!

Lorna grabs the knife from Effect's belt and holds the knife to Cassidy's throat.

PAPPY

Put it down, Miss Vogelsang.

LORNA

No one leaves the stage until I've completed my scene.

ASHLEY

Keep rolling.

LORNA

You pitiful little people. I am Lorna Vogelsang. Men have adored me. Rulers of empires have made love to me.

MONA

I told you she stooped the Fuhrer.

PAPPY

Let her go Lorna.

TARGET

Think of your fans.

LORNA

My fans. Ha. What do they know?

CARLOTTA

The photographers, you don't want them to see you in a bloody costume. Come, let me dress you in something beautiful.

LORNA

Drama is not always beautiful. Real drama is blood and danger, and a great death.

Lorna throws Cassidy aside.

LORNA

Watch me world. The greatest actress in her greatest scene. Put the camera here, boys, on me. Am I in the light? How's my make up? Say it, Ashley. Say the magic words. Be my director.

ASHLEY

Not this way, Lorna.

LORNA

Speak the speech I pray you, trippingly on the tongue. Do not mouth it. Egypt, I am dying. Romeo, oh, Romeo. Say it. My public demands it.

ASHLEY

Action.

LORNA

I live. I love. I die.

She plunges the knife into her breast and dramatically, she dies. The pounding outside the doors begins again.

ASHLEY

Cut.

PAPPY

Wrap.

Effects covers Lorna. Lionel tries to slip away with a painting, but Carlotta stops him. He puts it back with the other two and exits. Gigi and Randy leave together. Mona and Guy leave together. Pappy joins Cassidy and Carlotta.

CASSIDY

You're a great director, dad.

PAPPY

When I have a great writer, daughter.

CARLOTTA

You've both got talent. Runs in the family.
(*They hug and exit*)

TARGET

Gonna be a hell of a smash hit, Ashley.

ASHLEY

If they ever release it.

TARGET

With the press we're going to get, you and I are going to own this studio.

ASHLEY

Not, me, I'm moving back to New York.

TARGET

The Broadway theatre?

ASHLEY

Television. NBC wants see what I can do with some comic named Milton Berle. See you around. (*Exits*)

Target is alone on the stage. He sees Effects.

TARGET

Good work on the Icy knife work. Of course I knew, but the stunt fooled the others. Well, time to face the press. How do I look? Do I need more make up? How can you improve on perfection. (*Goes to the stage door, shouts outside*) Hot set. Nobody in until the newspapers take pictures... of me.
(*Exits*)

Effects lifts the sheet from Lorna and draws his knife from her chest. He tests the solid blade, then pulls the pin and pushes the blade into the handle. It is a trick knife.

EFFECTS

We sure fooled them again, Miss Vogelsang. Another fake suicide. Terrific plot twist. (*He crosses her arms over her chest*) Too bad you forgot to pull the pin on the trick blade like I showed you.

(MORE)

EFFECTS (cont'd)

(He throws the sheet back over her. He goes to the paintings, scrapes paint with the bloody knife to reveal a little white dog. He takes the painting, starts to exit, looks back at Lorna.)

Your dying scene is gonna be a real classic, Miss Vogelsang. Let's hope the film's not scratched.

THE END