

WHIT. (*Comes in as before with JESS.*) Mildred, it's Rodney—

MILDRED. What about him?

JESS. He's dead.

WHIT. It wasn't a bee sting. It was a—

MILDRED. Dart from a blowgun, I know.

JESS. (*Toward MILDRED, front of bench.*) Of course you knew. It's your kind of murder.

MILDRED. It may be the kind of murder I'd think up, dear, but not the kind I'd commit. No, I'm not the murdering type.

JESS. Neither are we.

MILDRED. One of you must be. Or both. I was thinking just now and—

WHIT. And?

MILDRED. (*Rises and crosses to JESS.*) Nothing. It's just that I had an idea— (*Grabs JESS' bag.*)

JESS. Give me that.

MILDRED. After I search it.

WHIT. (*D. to JESS' L.*) Let her have it, darling. She can't use your Master Charge here.

JESS. (*As MILDRED turns to desk and goes through purse.*) I knew she was a murderer but I had no idea she was a purse-snatcher.

MILDRED. (*Taking out lipstick which JESS used in the dream as a blowgun.*) Aha, just as I thought.

JESS. It's not your shade.

MILDRED. Think you can fool an old hand like me, dear? Take that. (*She blows through the end of the lipstick. WHIT and JESS exchange looks.*)

WHIT. She's completely crackers.

JESS. If you're hungry, there's food in the kitchen.

MILDRED. It's just a lipstick.

JESS. Surprise! Surprise!

MILDRED. (*As JESS takes lipstick and returns it to bag.*) Then how did you do it? Where's the blowgun?



JESS. (*Sits on settee.*) We might ask you the same question.

WHIT. (*Crosses to JESS.*) Yes, how did you do it?

MILDRED. Me?

WHIT. If it wasn't either of us, it's got to be you. (*Sits.*)

MILDRED. Either of you? Why not both of you?

JESS. You honestly think we'd go around killing people? Why don't you go away somewhere?

MILDRED. (*Sits on bench.*) Oh, no, I'm not falling for that line. I'm staying right here where I can keep an eye on you.

WHIT. And we're staying right here where we can do ditto.

JESS. (*After a pause during which they stare at each other.*) How long before one starves to death?

WHIT. I'd die of thirst long before.

MILDRED. (*Rises and crosses above desk.*) I, for one, am not going to waste time. There's money to be made out of this situation and I'm going to get it. I'll break into magazines with this one. (*Sits at desk chair and puts paper in typewriter.*) Serial rights and then movie rights. My biggest moneymaker. I think I'll call it "A Night of Horror."

JESS. It isn't over yet.

WHIT. (*To JESS.*) Is she going to finish it in jail?

MILDRED. (*Has tried to type.*) Damn typewriter doesn't work.

JESS. You are old-fashioned, Mildred. It's electric.

MILDRED. Oh, thank you. Where's the button? Ah. (*Turns it on. It hums. She is about to type.*)

WHIT. Go ahead. Don't let us disturb you.

MILDRED. (*Raises finger, then stops and looks at them.*) You seem a little overanxious for me to start. Of course. Ingenious!

JESS. What now?

MILDRED. Electricity. The typewriter is rigged to electrocute me.

WHIT. (*At the end of his patience.*) Well, really!

MILDRED. (*Rises.*) You thought I'd fall for that? With the ingenious murders I write?

JESS. (*Rises and moves above desk.*) This has gone too far. Even if we were guilty, we'd never think up anything as stupid as that.

MILDRED. Stupid, dear? One of my best murders was the electric heater in the bathtub.

JESS. Here, I'll type for you. (*Stands by typewriter as MILDRED fades.*) Whit, darling?

WHIT. Yes, dear.

JESS. By some odd chance, you didn't rig this, did you?

WHIT. Jessica!

JESS. Just asking. (*Types.*) M-a-r-t-i-n-i. There, Mildred. (*Returns to settee and sits.*) It's all yours.

MILDRED. (*Sits at typewriter.*) Well, it was a good idea.

JESS. Use it sometime.

Stop here.

Whit and Jess continue below. This may be used for second callbacks.

WHIT. Oh, my God!

JESS. What's the matter, darling?

WHIT. Then it's you.

JESS. I was thinking the same thing about you.



WHIT. Why did you do it?

JESS. I didn't.

WHIT. You must have. I didn't.

JESS. Of course you did. There's no one else but me and I didn't do it. *(Starts to cry.)*

WHIT. *(Crosses to her.)* You're suffering pangs of remorse. That's good for you.

JESS. *(Sits on settee.)* I am not crying because of any pangs.

WHIT. Then why?

JESS. Because this is the first time you've ever kept anything from me.

WHIT. *(Sits beside her.)* I haven't kept a thing from you.

JESS. What do you call six murders? Nothing? Our whole marriage is over. It was based on trust and understanding and mutual faith and now you have lied to me.

WHIT. I could say the same thing about you.

JESS. No, you couldn't. I'm innocent.

WHIT. So am I.

JESS. I don't believe you.

WHIT. Look at me. Look at this face. *(Takes her face in his hands and turns it to him.)*

JESS. I always liked that face—even the peculiar parts of it.

WHIT. What peculiar parts?

JESS. Well, your nose isn't what it should be and one eye is different from the other.

WHIT. I like that. Here I've never complained about you all these years through every one of your hair colors.

JESS. I was only trying to please you.

WHIT. You've always known when I was lying. Now, look at me. I didn't commit those beastly murders.

JESS. *(Suddenly very happy.)* I believe you. Oh, Whit, darling, I believe you.

WHIT. Now, tell me something.

JESS. What?

WHIT. Why did you commit them?

JESS. *(Starts crying again.)* I didn't. I didn't. I swear on our next royalty check.

WHIT. Honestly?

JESS. Cross my heart and hope to . . . *(Looks up toward Heaven.)* No, I take it back. I didn't say that.

WHIT. Then, if we didn't do it and there's no one else here except dead people, we've finally come upon the perfect crime.

JESS. I always said it could be committed.

WHIT. We should celebrate.

JESS. The wine. *(Points to opened bottle MILDRED had brought in.)*

WHIT. Excellent. *(Rises and goes to it.)* I hope it's a good year.

JESS. *(Blows her nose with handkerchief from bag.)* I do feel rather a fool having suspected you, darling.

WHIT. Think nothing of it. I suspected you. *(Pours wine into glasses set above settee.)*

JESS. What are we going to do now? Sit here drinking until the launch comes?

WHIT. We'll be delightfully tipsy.

JESS. How can I keep a happy outlook on our work after tonight?

WHIT. *(Sits and gives her glass.)* This might help.

JESS. It's bound to.

WHIT. *(As they raise their glasses in a toast.)* To our greatest mystery—yet to come. *(They drink.)*

JESS. *(With a grimace.)* Oh, this wasn't a good year at all.

WHIT. It wasn't even a good month.

JESS. Do you think it was made from grapes or onions?

WHIT. Bitter and acrid, that's what it tastes like. Where have I heard that before?

JESS. You wrote it in "The Poisoned Corpse." Remember?

WHIT. That's right. The wine was bitter and acrid.



*(They slowly turn to each other as the truth dawns on them.)* JESS.

JESS. Whit.

WHIT. The murderer knew we'd drink this.

JESS. Damn!

WHIT. Don't be upset, darling. We're going together.

*(Neither of them is really horribly upset by what has happened and they take it quite calmly.)*

JESS. It's not that, but we don't know who did it.

WHIT. That is rather upsetting.

JESS. It's like turning the last page of a mystery book and having it say, "Guess who?"

WHIT. *(Yawns as the poison takes effect.)* Perhaps we'll find out in the great library in the sky.

JESS. *(Yawns.)* Do you think they'll have all our books?

WHIT. Bound in gold leaf.

JESS. And we'll pick up the *Times* and be at the top of the best seller lists every Sunday morning.

WHIT. *(As they grow more tired, he takes her hand.)* Heavenly.

JESS. Exactly.

WHIT. But I can't wait. I want to know who it is now.

JESS. So do I, darling.