

To Catch a Cheat

by
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TO CATCH A CHEAT

Philip Deitz late thirties (Urbane)
Elisabeth McDowel late twenties
Corinne Jennery Parks thirty fiveish (well dressed)
Ron Parks mid thirties (slight build, athletic)
Billy Halloway Blustery
Cookie Halloway Ditsy (pretty, smart)
Helen Stanton (A woman in command) mid thirties
Mona thirty (Streetwise New Yorker)

A Penthouse apartment. Center Left, front door and intercom.
Up Right, Kitchen door. Up Right, French doors to terrace
w/desk in front. Down Right, Bar. Up Center. Bedroom door
and book case, w/hidden space & led red light.

(copywrite 6/5/2006)

ACT I
SCENE 1

(A man enters, mid-thirties well dressed followed by a woman, also in mid-thirties, attractive and well dressed. The only light is that which comes in from the hall.)

PHILIP.

Here we are, safe at last from prying eyes.

CORINNE.

As I enter your domain. The quintessential bachelor pad?

PHILIP.

I think you'll find it comfortable. Let me turn on the lights.

CORINNE.

Not yet.

(Taking his hand and placing it on her breast. Then putting her arms around him. They kiss.)

Something whispered to me that this night would hold possibilities.

(She moves away, just a little bit.)

PHILIP.

I think it may possess more than possibilities.

(He reaches out a hand to her and with the other pushes the door shut.)

I think it has sensational possibilities. Come with me. --- Trust me.

CORINNE.

I know what that means in the apparel industry.

PHILIP.

Do you?

CORINNE.

I only hope it means the same thing here.

PHILIP.

As a matter of fact here it gains something in translation.

CORINNE.

Oh! A man who speaks in tongues. How fascinating.

PHILIP.

Would you like a glass of wine or perhaps something stronger?

CORINNE.

Definitely, something stronger.

PHILIP.

What would you like?

CORINNE.

You seemed strong enough. Now. Pour yourself something but first point me to the powder room so I can slip out of something comfortable.

PHILIP.

Now, that doesn't require any translation. We'll dispense with the wine. Shall we?

(The sound of a door opening followed by that of a zipper.)

CORINNE.

What fast hands you have grandma.

PHILIP.

All the better to ---

CORINNE

I thought for a moment that you had, had a change of heart.

PHILIP.

Not even for a moment.

(The door closes. A small amber light in the book case goes on followed by light from the bedroom seen under the door.)

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2

(The lights come up to an empty room. Liz enters front door, places her things on desk and sets up lap top. Then she exits to kitchen. Liz enter front door reveal Philip seated at a small table. He is dressed in a robe and has a cup of coffee and is reading the paper. The bedroom door opens slightly.)

CORRINE.

I smell coffee.

PHILIP.

Made it myself. Would you care for a cup?

CORINNE.

Sell my soul for one.

(He rises heading for kitchen.)

PHILIP.

Not necessary. How do you take it?

CORINNE.

A drop of cream, please.

PHILIP.

Coming right up.

(He exits into kitchen. Corinne enters from bedroom, wearing a slip and holding a pillow in front of her. The slinky dress from the night before is on the floor just outside the door. She picks up the dress and moves back into the bedroom. Philip returns with cup of coffee and puts it down on the coffee table then turns and walks to the bedroom door.)

PHILIP.

You'll find some very comfortable robes in the closet ---

(Corinne steps into the door way before he gets there. She has the dress on.)

CORINNE.

Would you mind?

(Turning her back to reveal the opened zipper.)

PHILIP.

Yes I do if you don't mind my saying so. I had hoped ---

CORINNE.

Sorry darling. Got to run. Coffee?

PHILIP.

On the table. It's just that I thought maybe we could make a day of it.

CORINNE.

Never on a first date. Good coffee.

PHILIP.

I wouldn't call it a date. Not if you want to be precise.

CORINNE.

Precision is not a concern of mine. Although I do admire accuracy.

(She takes his face in her hands and kisses him. He attempts to put his arms around her but she pulls away.)

PHILIP.

I'll call you.

CORINNE.

No.

PHILIP.

No?

CORINNE.

I'll call you.

PHILIP.

You'll need the number.

CORINNE.

Got it off the phone in there.

PHILIP.

Right. How will I know it's you?

(Picking up her hand bag.)

CORINNE.

I'll ask for Berlitz.

PHILIP.

Precision.

CORINNE.

Accuracy

PHILIP.

Call soon. We don't want my French getting rusty.

(She leans to him and kisses him without touching him. He begins to move his hands to her, she pushes them away. The kiss lingers a moment. Then she pulls back goes to the door and opens it.)

PHILIP.

I don't know who you are. What your name, any thing about you.

CORINNE.

You know enough.

(She exits closing the door behind her. Philip crosses to a book case Opens case using hidden handle to reveal video equipment. He flips a few switches then crosses to chair in front of television set which faces up stage. Using remote control he turns on the TV. We hear bad but slightly too loud audio and are aware of the fact the there is picture. He uses remote control to mute sound as he reaches for the phone and dials. Intently watching the screen. Pause.)

PHILIP

Hello, it's Dietz. Phase one, like silk on glass. --- Yes she is. I thought you weren't going to ask. Didn't I tell you that that sort of conversation could create problems? --- Right. I'm just doing what I have to do. --- No she didn't mention you. --- Listen to me, either we keep to the bargain or all bets are off. --- Yes I have it. You don't get to see it. Never. The only person who will ever see that tape is her and then only if absolutely necessary. I am not in the business of producing pornography. --- I don't care. --- Phase two begins when she begins it. Unless she goes home and tells you all about --- I thought you wanted rid of her. --- Okay. He hangs up phone and exits into kitchen leaving TV on the light flickering around the room. He returns in a moment turns off TV crosses to book case, removes tape and labels it then places it on a shelf and closes book case part way. Then opening it again places a new tape in the machine and again closes book case.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

SCENE 3 (NIGHT TWO)

(Night The only light enters through the window. The sound of glass breaking. A figure enters dressed in black a small flashlight in his teeth and proceeds to the desk, opening and closing drawers. The sound of a key in the lock. The intruder is startled.)

RON.

Oh shit!

(He turns off flashlight, looking for a place to hide, he ducks behind the desk.)

I'm cooked.

(The door opens light from the door streams across the room. It will miss Ron and sweep up stage. He remains frozen. Then realizes that he has not been exposed.)

PHILIP.

Here we are at last, away from prying eyes.

(Philip and a woman are silhouetted in the door way.)

HELEN.

Is this what you referred to as the safest spot in town?

PHILIP.

To be sure. Step right in and I'll demonstrate.

HELEN.

I think I've had the demonstration.
(*Ron is cowering at desk.*)

HELEN.

Now I'm ready for the real thing.
(*They embrace; he leads her inside and closes the door.*)

PHILIP.

The real thing is ready for you. Would you like something,
anything?

HELEN.

I believe I have everything I need for now.

PHILIP.

How about just a little light?

HELEN.

Not necessary. I can find my way in the dark.

(*Sound of rustling clothing.*)

PHILIP.

So you can.

HELEN.

(*Stumbles into some furniture.*)

Oops

PHILIP.

Perhaps a more level playing field?

HELEN.

Perhaps. Lead the way. Lead me astray.

PHILIP.

Astray is my,

HELEN.

Middle name?

PHILIP.

What shall I call you?

HELEN.

Helen. We can save the pet names for later.

PHILIP.

Just see what comes up?

HELEN.

As it were. Now.

(*The sound of the bedroom door opening. The bedroom lights
come on. Some giggles apropos of the moment. The door
closes and the amber light in the book case goes on.*)

RON.

(*Sotto voce.*) This guy is unbelievable. I'd love to stick
around for the show, but.

(*Shining the flash light in the direction of the amber light.*)

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I wonder what that is.

(Crosses and exits through the front door. He does not see the light from the front door streaming in fall on Philip who is seated in a chair. He closes the door and exits.)

PHILIP.

Good night Ronnie, boy.

(The bedroom door opens, Helen is standing there. Philip rises and crosses to the door.)

HELEN.

I thought for a moment that you had, had a change of heart.

PHILIP.

Not even for a moment.

HELEN.

(Philip enters her embrace and the bedroom. The door closes.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

(When the lights come up, Philip enters from kitchen, he is dressed in street clothes. He crosses to and opens drapes. It is daytime. He crosses to and opens book case. Takes a tape from the machine. Then places another tape in the machine and exits into kitchen. The door bell rings. Philip enters from kitchen a coffee in hand and moves to the door. Catching the open book case out of the corner of his eye he changes course and crosses to it and closes it. The door bell rings again.)

PHILIP.

Just a minute, be right there.

(X's to door & peeps out.)

Hi Liz.

(As he opens the door.)

Why not use your key?

(Liz enters.)

LIZ.

I hate surprises Philip. Good morning?

PHILIP.

So far. Have you come to brighten it further?

LIZ.

I think so.

(Xing to kitchen and pointing at his cup.)

Coffee on?

(She drops her brief case and exits into kitchen.)

PHILIP.

I think so? What does that mean?

(From kitchen.)

LIZ.

I'll explain in a minute. Give a girl a chance to get comfortable, will you?

PHILIP.

Get as comfortable as you like. Just get in here and let's get going.

LIZ.

(Entering from kitchen with a mug in her hand.)

I offer you this appetizing morsel.

PHILIP.

And that would be?

LIZ.

A prospective client.

PHILIP.

You think so?

LIZ.

I think so. This guy is worried about his wife.

PHILIP.

She doesn't feel well?

LIZ.

He thinks she feels to --- well, and in the wrong places.

PHILIP.

More.

LIZ.

Any way, he thinks she's got to many gardeners working the grounds. Oh, and he's pretty hot to trot himself.

PHILIP.

Dysfunctional family?

LIZ.

Apparently they both function at peak levels. I'm telling you he's no slouch when it comes to demonstrating his digital dexterity. I barely said hello and my bra was opened. I didn't know if he was getting me a drink or drawing me a bath.

PHILIP.

Unless the wife is the one hiring me you can skip the rest of the introduction. But now I see what you meant by "I think so." The next question is. Does he want my help?

LIZ.

This is where the 'I think so' actually comes in to play. He wants you to tail her; you know like Sam Spade or something.

PHILIP.

Didn't you explain how we work it?

LIZ.

I tried, this guy's got arms like an octopus and his ears don't seem to work to well at all. So I set up an appointment. He should be here any minute.

PHILIP.

Then quick. Fill me in as much as you can.

LIZ.

Okay. Halloway. Billy. He's in real-estate and investments. She thinks she's a socialite. She's got a degree in theater, some school in the mid-west. He would rather throw money out the window than pay for something. If you know what I mean?

PHILIP.

That could work to our advantage.
(*Crossing to kitchen.*)

More coffee?
(*Exits.*)

LIZ.

Not yet. Do you want me to call down to the lobby, just in case the boob is just standing around waiting for us to come and get him?

PHILIP.

(From off.)

Give it another few minutes.

(Enters.))

What do you say to a hop in the sack? While we're waiting?

LIZ.

I don't know what it is that all those women see in you.

PHILIP.

Just kidding.

LIZ.

As long as I say no, you're just kidding. One of these days I'm going to say yes just to watch you reel your tongue back into your face.

(Laughs.)

PHILIP.

So this tight-wad wants the Sam Spade bit? I'll talk him out of that in a hurry. Go ahead, buzz down to the lobby, but I hope he isn't that stupid. Stupid people, stupid rich people are such a pain in the ass to deal with.

(Liz crosses to intercom pushes button.)

PHILIP.

They always know exactly what they want but in reality, they have no idea what the hell there doing.

INTERCOM. (V.O.)

Lobby.

LIZ.

Penthouse B. Is there a guy, looks kind of like a middle aged urban cowboy lurking around down there?

INTERCOM. (V.O.)

Perfect description. Does he belong to you guys?

LIZ.

Afraid so. Send him on up please? Thanks.

(Speaking to Philip.)

Don't even ask. It's not that long an elevator ride.

PHILIP.

I wasn't going to ask you anything. Listen, since this guy can't hear when you're around, just introduce us and then find an excuse to evaporate and let me handle him.

LIZ.

I'll think of some excuse don't worry. I'm not in wrestling kind of mood.

PHILIP.

One thing I forgot to ask. Did you get a look at the wife?

LIZ.

Not to worry dear boy. Saw a picture. It won't be a hardship case. On second thought you might consider giving the poor guy a discount.

PHILIP.

Sometimes and this is one of them you scare me just a little.

LIZ.

Good. I like keeping you on edge.

PHILIP.

Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you, our friend, Ronnie, managed to break in here last night. He doesn't know that I know and to that end, I let him slip out. But I sure would like to know how the hell he managed to get in here.

LIZ.

Fascinating.

PHILIP.

Maybe you could find out something while I talk to the cowboy.

LIZ.

He's not a real cowboy, believe me. Do you know which way Ronnie got in?

PHILIP.

The terrace door has a broken pane but we're eighteen stories up. You tell me.

(Door buzzer.)

LIZ.

I'll get it. Could make for an interesting day. A chance to rattle Ronnie's cage.

(Opening door.))

Mr. Halloway, won't you come in. Philip Dietz, I'd like you to meet

(Stopping to pick his hand off her and presenting it to Philip to shake.))

Mr. Billy Halloway. Philip Dietz.

(Philip takes his hand firmly allowing Liz to get her things and head back to the door.)

PHILIP.

A pleasure to meet you, sir.

BILLY.

Don't be so sure! Little lady, you're not leaving us?

LIZ.

Errands to run.

BILLY.

I do wish you'd stay. To comfort me in my hour of despair.

PHILIP.

Liz has assignments to carry out.

BILLY.

I just thought she might help lighten the load while you are off finding that scoundrel.

LIZ.

Gotta go.

(She exits.)

PHILIP.

See you later.

BILLY

You and she aren't, you know?

PHILIP.

Strictly business.

BILLY.

Good looking woman like that. Are you sure you're feeling all right?

PHILIP.

I'm feeling just fine thanks. Have a seat, won't you? Now how can I help you?

BILLY.

First of all.
(*Taking a seat.*)

Although you do come highly recommended and that young 'pretty' associate of yours seems very competent, I would like some assurances that you are as good as I have heard.

PHILIP.

If I don't produce, it doesn't cost you a penny. Except for certain modest expenses.

BILLY.

Modest?

PHILIP.

Five hundred dollars should cover it.

BILLY.

Five hundred bucks for film?

PHILIP.

No. There is no film. The money covers other expenses.

BILLY.

Let me get this straight. I give you five hundred dollars and you trail my wife around till you catch her and there are no pictures? No proof? You just come back to me one day and say "Mr. Halloway, you were right or maybe, you were wrong." Which I doubt. What then? Do I pay if I was right and not if I was wrong? Why don't you just give me a bill now and tell me I was right?

PHILIP.

Maybe you should give me a chance to explain how I work.

BILLY.

Maybe I should. Hey, you got anything to drink around here?

PHILIP.

Certainly, what would you like?

BILLY.

Bourbon.

PHILIP.

Of course. How do you take it? No let me guess. Straight, no ice?

BILLY.

Branch water.

PHILIP.

Tap water?

BILLY.

Sure. Why not? So get on with it. What's your plan? How much does it cost me if you catch her?

PHILIP.

(Fixing the drink.)

I don't catch her.

BILLY.

Say again. I don't know what the hell I'm doing here then.

PHILIP.

I don't catch her. I do her.

BILLY.

You what?

PHILIP.

(Handing him the drink.)

First of all let me tell you that if you think you're hiring some sort of Sam Spade detective agency. You're not. And after I finish explaining if you still want to do that, it's your option. It's just that, that option will probably cost you five times as much, possibly as much as twenty-five grand, take a lot more time and might even get messy. My way is simpler. Believe me.

BILLY.

Twenty-five grand? And you tell me you can get this done for five grand?

PHILIP.

Five hundred for expenses if I don't deliver.

BILLY.

Let's hear the plan.

PHILIP.

I seduce her.

BILLY.

You what? You, you're saying you're going to screw my wife and I'm going to pay you five grand to do it? You are an interesting character, do you know that? Let me ask you something. How does my giving you five grand to screw my wife help me?

PHILIP.

Let me answer your question with a question. What kind of help do you want?

BILLY.

What the hell do you mean?

PHILIP.

Do you want to find out if your wife is cheating?

BILLY.

God damn it I know she's cheating.

PHILIP.

And you're looking to divorce her?

BILLY.

All I need is proof.

PHILIP.

And a lawyer and money and time and your name in the paper?

BILLY.

What the? --- I never gave that much thought.

PHILIP.

I have. Which, by the way is how I got into this business? You can go out there and pay some private dick Twenty-five grand to shadow her around for a couple of weeks take some sleazy pictures which you then have to look at to prove it to yourself, which by the way hurts, no matter how pissed off you are. Then you still have to get a divorce lawyer and god knows how much that's going to cost you not to mention the alimony or property settlement.

BILLY.

Take the knife out will you. You know something? You make a pretty good drink.

PHILIP.

It's the water.

BILLY.

I was being polite. So, how does your scheme work?

PHILIP.

Ready for another.

BILLY.

Not at the moment, thanks. My head is spinning as it is.
Get on with it.

PHILIP.

It's simple, really. We arrange for your wife and I to meet,
casually, at a party or some function, for example and I take
it from there.

BILLY.

Take what?

PHILIP.

Boy meets girl. That sort of thing. You fill me in on a few
details about her likes and dislikes, maybe we arrange for
Liz to meet her and find out some things about her and then I
go to work.

BILLY.

And that work being?

PHILIP.

You insist on making this hard on yourself, don't you?

BILLY.

I don't think so. I just want to know what it is I'm letting
myself in for.

PHILIP.

It may not be what you want to hear.

BILLY.

Try me. I may be tougher than you think.

PHILIP.

I get her to come back here. Where, quite possibly, we make
love. A scene which is captured on video tape.

BILLY.

Oh. --- That's all?

PHILIP.

It should be enough.

BILLY.

And you send me the video tape.

PHILIP.

Not on your life. If all goes according to plan, which I add, it generally does.

BILLY.

Generally?

PHILIP.

It has been my experience, that when a spouse seriously thinks that the other half is cheating, their instincts are usually accurate.

BILLY.

Really?

PHILIP.

Scout's honor.

BILLY.

And the tape.

PHILIP.

I will be the only one to ever see the tape.

BILLY.

Why you. Are you some kind of ---

PHILIP.

Pervert? No, I only check to make sure that there is something actually on the tape. Just in case the lady in question does not believe me.

BILLY.

How the hell does that work? Not to mention that she might not come back here with you. Who the hell are you? Some kind of Don Juan?

PHILIP.

I'm no Don Juan, but I am good at what I do. After our little tryst, I inform the lady of the existence of the tape and present her with your demands. Although once the lady demanded to see the tape.

That was rather awkward for a moment. We still see each other from time to time and she did offer to buy a copy of the tape. Which I declined to sell her. After the final arrangements of any agreement are seen to, the tape is erased and that's the end of it.

BILLY.

What if she doesn't believe you?

PHILIP.

I arrange for her to see a snippet of what is on the tape. Just to convince her.

BILLY.

You're pretty much of a rat, aren't you?

PHILIP.

You might say that. But, a charming and resourceful one, who gets the job done.

BILLY.

This is not exactly what I had in mind; it's more like asking somebody to sleep with my wife just to prove that she would do it. It's a big step. You don't mind if I take some time to think it over.

PHILIP.

You have my number. Think it over and give me a call.

BILLY.

And show up here with the money?

PHILIP.

Or just mail a check. I can get all the information and background from you over the phone. Then I go to work and keep you informed.

BILLY.

(Standing up.)

Every step along the way.

PHILIP.

No. I will inform you if I have had any success.

(Taking his arm and moving him toward the door.))

So think it over and let me know if you would like to employ my services.

Have a nice day.

(Opening the door for him.)

BILLY.

Thanks for the time. I'll think it over.

(Sotto voce as he exits.)

Employ his services!

PHILIP.

You know where to reach me.

(Closing the door.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 5

(The next day. Lights up, the room is empty. The front door opens and Liz enters. She crosses over to the book shelf which conceals the video equipment then to the kitchen and bedroom doors, listens at both and returns to the book case. After looking behind several books she freezes as the bedroom door opens. She grabs a book off a shelf and opens it as if reading. Philip enters.)

PHILIP.

(Taking notice of the book.)

What are you reading?

LIZ.

Oh, just something I picked up.

PHILIP.

Not very interesting, I take it.

LIZ.

What makes you say that?

(Closing the book notices that it is upside down.)

Oh, just approaching it from a different angle.

PHILIP.

It really doesn't matter with that volume though, does it?

(Liz looks down at the book and sees it for the first time.

Jumping back as it drops from her hands.)

"The Kama Sutra." A very old and valuable copy. I wish you wouldn't just toss it around like that. You can borrow it if you like.

LIZ.

No, that's all right I have a copy.
(*Picking the book up.*))

Not as old as this but ---

PHILIP.

Or were you playing detective?

LIZ.

I don't want to see your dirty pictures.

PHILIP.

You want to see how the operation works. Not unless of course you want to come into the business.

LIZ.

I'm already in the business.

PHILIP.

You just work for me but I could use a partner.

LIZ.

What do you need with a partner?

PHILIP.

Liz, have you ever thought about the business from the other angle? Don't women need to protect themselves against cheating spouses to.

LIZ.

What kind of a girl do you think I am?

PHILIP.

A great secretary and a damned good detective.

LIZ.

And that's exactly what I want to be, a detective.

PHILIP.

I didn't mean to offend you. You must know how much easier it is for women to ---

LIZ.

What? For women to what?

PHILIP.

Seduce willing men. As opposed to what I have to go through to earn a buck.

LIZ.

Is this where I get to feel sorry for you?

PHILIP.

Do you think that what I do is easy? Because it's not. Just because a woman is playing around doesn't mean that she'll do it with just any one. Some times I have to put forth a tremendous effort ---

LIZ.

Come off it Philip. You're having the time of your life. You used to be a good detective until you discovered your new calling, sorry Philip, I'm not interested. And I don't own a copy of that book.

PHILIP.

You really should pick one up.

LIZ.

Mother was right.

PHILIP.

Men are all alike?

LIZ.

You should be a detective.

PHILIP.

Business is business and I had to ask. I can't keep this going by myself you know.

(Crossing to the kitchen.)

I'll probably be out all day.

LIZ.

Fine with me I have lots of work to keep me busy. Especially with the way you terrorize a file cabinet. Didn't they teach the alphabet where you went to school?

PHILIP.

I have more important things to occupy my mind.

(He exits.)

LIZ.

The "Kama Sutra"

(She takes the book back off the shelf.)

What the hell is all the fuss about?

(Opens the book. Looks at a page. Turns the book upside down and sideways.)

Really?

(She closes the book and puts it back on the shelf. The door bell rings. She crosses to the door.)

Hello?

COOKIE. (O.S.)

Philip Deitz?

LIZ.

Yes.

COOKIE. (O.S.)

Are you sure? I thought you were a man.

(Philip enters from kitchen.)

LIZ.

This is his office.

(Looking out the peep hole.)

Do you have an appointment?

COOKIE. (O.S.)

No.

PHILIP.

(Sotto voce.)

Who is it?

LIZ.

Who are you?

COOKIE. (O.S.)

Mrs. Billy Halloway. Who are you?

PHILIP.

I'll go out this way.

(Exits into kitchen.)

LIZ.

I am an associate of Mr. Deitz.

COOKIE. (O.S.)

Good, then I want to come in and talk to you.

LIZ.

(Opening the door.)

How did you get up here Mrs. Holloway?

COOKIE.

*(Hello, thank you for seeing me without an appointment.
(Producing a business card.)*

LIZ.

I'm Elizabeth McDowell. I'm pleased to meet you Mrs. Halloway.

COOKIE.

You can call me Cookie? I found this in my husband's jacket pocket.

LIZ.

Pardon?

COOKIE.

Cookie. Please, just call me Cookie.

LIZ.

Fine and you can call me Liz.

COOKIE.

Is there something I can do for you Mrs. Hal ---

COOKIE.

Cookie, please. This.
(Referring to the card.)

"Philip Deitz, Discrete inquires." An address and phone number and no other information.

LIZ.

That's our card.

COOKIE.

What sort of discrete inquiries, I thought. My husband is a very nice man and I believe he loves me. Most of the time, I think he believes that I love him. Which as it happens, I do. I thought some more. Then I decided to act. So here I am and I am asking you, Liz. What sort of things does Mr. Dietz do his discrete inquiring about?

LIZ.

We are a detective agency.

COOKIE.

I think I figured that out. What I want to know is? Are you detecting anything for my husband?

LIZ.

I can't divulge that sort of information.

COOKIE.

Could you divulge not knowin' my husband?

LIZ.

I don't quite understand you.

COOKIE.

Do you know my husband?

LIZ.

I am not at liberty to say.

COOKIE.

Which is what I would expect to hear from someone who can not divulge their client's identity? So I will assume that my husband has hired you to do some discrete inquiries.

LIZ.

You can't do that.

COOKIE.

I can assume anything I want. I don't know how you run this business but let me tell you how I run my business.

LIZ.

I don't know anything about your business.

COOKIE.

Yes you do. Because, my business happens to be, my marriage. And my marriage appears to be at stake. So, what I want to know, is, how Philip Dietz is involved in my business. My marriage.

LIZ

I can neither confirm nor deny any professional relationship with any individual ---

COOKIE.

My husband is a jerk.

LIZ.

Yes, well ---

COOKIE.

Let me finish. A jerk, but a lovable jerk. A jerk who loves me and sometimes thinks that No that's wrong. He always thinks that he is about to lose me, one way or another.

No matter what I do or say, he can't seem to understand that I love him because, I love him. And that's why I'm here. Somehow this has to end; people can't stay together without trust. So, once again. Has my husband hired you to spy on me?

LIZ.

Can I say something here?

COOKIE.

Just answer the question.

LIZ.

No. --- Your husband has not hired us.

COOKIE.

Then what was he doing with this damn card?

LIZ.

That question may be more difficult to answer.

COOKIE.

Then, he's been here?

LIZ.

To be honest Mrs. Halloway ---

COOKIE.

Cookie! And please, do be honest.

LIZ.

He was refereed to us.

COOKIE.

That's all I needed to know.

(Turning for the door.)

Thank you.

LIZ.

Cookie.

COOKIE.

Mrs. Halloway.

LIZ.

He did not engage the firm Mrs. Halloway

COOKIE.

(Turning to confront Liz.)

That's a relief. He thinks I'm running around but you and he are not engaged. I feel much better.

LIZ.

Mrs. Halloway ---

COOKIE.

Cookie! Exactly, what kind of discrete inquiries does this card refer to?

LIZ.

Coffee?

COOKIE.

Why not?

FADE TO BLACK

SCENE 6

COOKIE.

(Entering from kitchen door.)

You're kidding me.

LIZ.

(Entering behind Cookie.)

No, I'm not.

COOKIE.

There are women who actually fall into that trap?

LIZ.

Enough of them to provide a very comfortable living. Philip insists that a lot more men would dive headlong into it.

COOKIE.

With him?

(Peels of laughter from both women)

LIZ.

No, not with him. With a woman who would be willing to do what he does?

COOKIE.

That's an interesting thought.

LIZ.

How?

COOKIE.

Just interesting. So,
(*Looking around the room.*)
this is where it all happens? Somewhere in this room is a
hidden camera.

LIZ.

There are no cameras in here. At least I don't think so.

COOKIE.

Are you telling me that you don't know where the camera is?

LIZ.

(*Crossing to the bedroom door.*)
The cameras are in there.

COOKIE.

In there?

LIZ.

The bedroom.

COOKIE.

An office bedroom. How convenient. You said cameras?

LIZ.

Three, there are three cameras.

COOKIE.

Like a sitcom? Who does the editing?

LIZ.

Nothing like that.
(*Stopping suddenly.*)

I shouldn't be telling you all this. It suddenly feels
creepy.

COOKIE.

What does he do with the tapes. I'll bet he's got some
library. Between you and me, are any of them any, you know,
good?

LIZ.

I've never seen any.

COOKIE.

Haven't you ever been, just a little curious?

LIZ.

No.

COOKIE.

He must keep them around here somewhere.

LIZ.

He doesn't keep them. Well that's not true. He only keeps them for a short time. Until he no longer needs them to ---

COOKIE.

To blackmail some woman who is stupid enough to fall for this set up.

LIZ.

Philip insists that it's not blackmail. He calls it leverage
(The door bell rings.)

COOKIE.

I hope it's him. I've got a piece of my mind all wrapped up and ready to deliver.

LIZ.

Suppose it's your husband?

COOKIE.

Even better. I'll unload the whole damned package on him.
(Crosses to the door. She opens the door before Liz can even move to stop her. Corinne Jennery Parks is standing at the threshold.)

LIZ.

Oh, shit.

COOKIE.

Hello!

LIZ.

Damn!

CORINNE.

Where is he? Where is that rotten S.O.B.?

COOKIE.

Philip Deitz?

CORINNE.

Who are you? The secretary?

LIZ.

No, she's not. Mrs. Parks.

CORINNE.

That leaves you.

LIZ.

I'm Elizabeth McDowel.

COOKIE.

His associate.

LIZ.

Shut up Cookie.

CORINNE.

The associate and the cookie. How nice.

(She sits.)

Where is Philip? And where are the,

(Pause.)

COOKIE.

Video tapes?

LIZ.

Cookie!

(To Corinne.)

I don't know what you're talking about.

COOKIE.

You are a pro. Very cool.

CORINNE.

My husband, the weasel, told me all about the tapes. So I'm here to get them. This business is finished. When my lawyer gets his hands on them, both of you and your boss will be in for one hell of a law suit.

COOKIE.

I don't work here.

CORINNE.

(Breaks down and begins to sob.)

I shouldn't have come here. I'm just making a bigger fool of myself.

LIZ.

Can I get you something to drink?

COOKIE.

I recommend the coffee?

CORINNE.

(Now sobbing uncontrollably.)

No, thank you.

(Stops sobbing' just like that. Then speaks to Cookie.)

You don't work for these people?

COOKIE.

No. I found their business card in my husbands pocket.

CORINNE

I have to have that tape.

COOKIE.

Let me ask you something?

CORINNE.

Damn it!

COOKIE.

You actually fell into their trap? You really had no idea that this was a --- No, of course you didn't. But why the hell. I mean, take me and my husband.

CORINNE.

If this is going to be a long story ---

COOKIE.

I was just wondering ---

CORINNE.

Listen, Cookie? Is that your real name?

COOKIE.

Yes it is. My parents actually named me Cookie.

CORINNE.

Hi, Cookie, I'm Corinne Jennery Parks. Nice to meet you.

COOKIE.

Hi, Corinne. Cookie Halloway.

CORINNE.

Halloway? Did you ever think of what your life would be like had you married a guy named Cutter.

LIZ.

That's funny.

COOKIE.

Once dated a fellow named Terry Sheet.

CORINNE.

Are you kidding?

COOKIE.

Of course I'm kidding. Don't you think that I've heard them all?

CORINNE.

Pretty insensitive of me and stupid. Wasn't it? I'm sorry.

COOKIE.

John Doe is the one I hear most.

CORINNE.

Hey, you're all right. I like you.

COOKIE.

Enough to answer my question?

CORINNE.

Ron, that's my husband, likes to refer to what we have as an open marriage. Although he thinks it should only be open on one end. I thought, foolishly, that it would get old for him and that he would settle down. That didn't happen. It just got to the point where I decided to open the other end.

COOKIE.

Why should he? He had his cake and ate it to.

CORINNE.

And I did the baking. Now I have to get my hands on that tape ---

LIZ.

I'm afraid that is out of the question.

COOKIE.

Liz, do you mind if I ask you something?

LIZ.

Not at all.

COOKIE.

Do you people investigate the wives of your clients?

LIZ.

I don't get you.

COOKIE.

Do you check on them first, you know, to see if they might actually be innocent.

LIZ.

In this business, nobody is innocent.

CORINNE.

Including the husbands.

LIZ.

Especially the husbands. Although I will admit that some of them are just plain stupid. Some of them swear that their wives are fooling around just because they are.

(To Cookie.)

I had to pry your husbands hands of me just to talk to him.

COOKIE.

Billy? I knew he was cheating on me, that rat. And with you no less.

LIZ.

Not with me. And he didn't hire us. At least not yet.

CORINNE.

How do you figure into the scheme of things? Do you handle the lesbian wives?

LIZ.

No. No! We don't handle those kinds of cases.

COOKIE.

Just straight forward Adultery? Did you know that Corinne here was in an open marriage? That her husband has been doing the same thing as she has.

CORINNE.

Just this once, I told you.

LIZ.

Really? Why?

CORINNE.

To get even, maybe. All I got was, I don't know what I got. Believe me I would undo it, if I could.

COOKIE.

That's why she wants the tape. Don't you see.

LIZ.

I think I do. You think that will prevent the divorce? Save your marriage.

CORINNE.

No. But it will save me from financial ruin.

COOKIE.

What? No big settlement?

CORINNE.

Believe me I'm being backed into a corner. I can't afford to have that tape made public. I would be ruined. In any case, I'm ruined.

COOKIE.

How would you be ruined.

CORINNE.

You have no idea who I am, do you.

COOKIE.

Should I?

LIZ.

You should. Corinne Jennery Parks? The Jennery Charitable Trusts.

COOKIE.

I'll be damned.

CORINNE.

And I'll be ruined.

LIZ.

That's how it's supposed to work.

COOKIE.

What do you mean?

CORINNE.

It's blackmail.

LIZ.

Not if lawyers do it.

COOKIE.

Do what? What is it? How is it blackmail? And what is it if a lawyer does it?

CORINNE.

Negotiating. Lawyers, call it negotiating. Any one else who tries the same approach is practicing blackmail.

COOKIE.

Is that true.

LIZ.

Pretty much so, in these cases.

COOKIE.

Let me see if I have all this right. No. I can't have it right.

CORINNE.

Why not?

COOKIE.

Because I don't have it at all. I have no idea what the hell is going on. At least I'm not sure. Your boss seduces married women?

LIZ.

Yes.

COOKIE.

Records the whole thing on tape?

LIZ.

Yes.

COOKIE.

And then uses that evidence to secure a divorce for the husband?

CORINNE.

Wrong.

LIZ.

Haven't you been paying attention?

COOKIE.

I thought I was.

CORINNE.

The divorce is not the issue.

LIZ.

The money, the property, the settlement are the issues.

COOKIE.

Not just divorce ---

CORINNE.

Divorce and in some cases, poverty.

COOKIE.

You're kidding. They go that far?

LIZ.

Some of them, unfortunately, do.

CORINNE.

Some women, I'll bet are devastated, ruined.

COOKIE.

And this is what you do for a living? You seemed like such a nice person.

LIZ.

I am. --- I was.

CORINNE.

You are. I can tell. I have a sixth sense about these things.

LIZ.

You do?

COOKIE.

You do?

CORINNE.

I do.

COOKIE.

We need to talk. Why not turn the tables on them?

CORINNE.

My sixth sense told me you were the one.

COOKIE.

Which one?

CORINNE.

Did you ever feel, I don't know. Like the minute you meet certain people. Listen to me. I don't know how, but I think we are a matched set. And somehow the tables, we will turn.

COOKIE.

I know one thing. The wheels are turning. And when these wheels turn they go somewhere.

CORINNE.

We need a plan?

LIZ.

Ladies. I've got the plan.

COOKIE.

What plan?

CORINNE.

Our plan? The plan we need. I suspected.

LIZ.

Cards on the table?

CORINNE.

Cards on the table.

LIZ.

Cards on the table.

CORINNE.

Deal.

LIZ.

First, let me say this. I like my boss. He's a good person to work for ---

CORINNE.

But?

LIZ.

Ethically, this isn't where I want to be. What I want to be.

COOKIE.

What do you want to be?

CORINNE.

Let her finish. What, do you want to be?

LIZ.

A private detective, not a bed room snoop.

CORINNE.

Perhaps a board room snoop?

LIZ.

I'd like that much better.

COOKIE.

Good. What about our situation? What about the plan?

LIZ.

A little back ground first. This morning, Philip offered me a partnership in the firm.

COOKIE.

So?

CORINNE.

Cookie!

COOKIE.

I'm sorry. I'll just shut up and pay attention.

LIZ.

Philip didn't intend to offend me, although a lesser detective might have taken offense. What he offered me was an opportunity to explore the other side of the coin.

COOKIE.

Other side of what coin?

LIZ.

Working the same sort of , how shall I put it? Deception?

COOKIE.

On husbands?

CORINNE.

How the other half, divorces.

LIZ.

I turned him down. Then I started thinking. Some of the men we help out are creeps. Not all of them. But a lot of them are guilty of the very thing they accuse their wives of doing. I began to feel a little more uncomfortable about what I am involved in here. And then, you two showed up. Which brings me to an important moment in my life.

COOKIE.

Very interesting.

CORINNE.

Let her finish.

LIZ.

Your husband was a bit of an influence in my decision.

COOKIE.

Mine?

LIZ.

His hands are like ass magnets.

COOKIE.

He's always been like that. He really is harmless, though.

CORINNE.

About more men falling for this ---

LIZ.

Exactly. I have decided to take him up on his offer.

CORINNE.

You what?

COOKIE.

What about the plan?

CORINNE.

Could you actually do that sort of thing?

COOKIE.

What about the plan?

LIZ.

That is the plan.

CORINNE.

To join him in this despicable business?

COOKIE.

How is that our plan?

LIZ.

I get control of this facility.

COOKIE.

So?

CORINNE.

So, listen to her. You get the secrets, the keys as it
where, to the whole operation ---

LIZ.

Exactly. We turn the tables on the men.

CORINNE.

Sweet revenge. Ronnie, are you ever going to be sorry.

COOKIE.

How do we turn the tables?

LIZ.

We use the same methods employed by Philip.

COOKIE.

We video-tape husbands being unfaithful to their wives?

CORINNE.

Exactly.

COOKIE.

With who?

CORINNE.

With women, who else?

COOKIE.

What women?

CORINNE.

Oh, you're right. What women?

LIZ.

Us.

COOKIE.

Us?

LIZ.

Us.

CORINNE.

As in us? Not you? I was thinking in terms of you doing
the, ah, ah,

LIZ.

Dirty work? No. This would have to be a joint effort.

COOKIE.

I'm not so sure I understand, completely.

LIZ.

We will all have to contribute, something to the cause.

COOKIE.

I'm not sure about that.

LIZ.

We merely have to get the men on tape exposing their
willingness ---

COOKIE.

I've never heard it referred to like that before. Willie
usually just calls it ---

CORINNE.

Cookie? I don't think that's what she meant. Am I right?

LIZ.

Yes. A very different kind of exposure.

CORRINE.

I'm ready for a little exposure.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 7

(It is 9:00 AM the following day. Liz enters switches on the lights and closes the door crosses to open the curtains. She crosses to the kitchen and out pops Philip with a mug and the morning paper.)

PHILIP.

Hi, Liz. There's a fresh pot on. Help yourself to some coffee. Sorry, no mocha this morning. Just plain old Colombian.

LIZ.

You're very chipper this morning.

PHILIP.

I took the night off, in a manner of speaking. Got to bed and asleep early, woke up feeling like a new man. What do you think? Do I look like a new man?

LIZ.

I'm not quite sure yet. But I have a premonition that you might be right.

PHILIP.

Premonition?

LIZ.

Just a hunch. Oh, by the way I think this might be a good time to look over your schedule for the week. What with it being Monday and all.

PHILIP.

First, premonitions? And now this.

LIZ.

And now what?

PHILIP.

You read my mind. You're one hell of an assistant, Liz.

LIZ.

Oh, that? Well as I said it is Monday and we really should do this every Monday morning. Don't you think?

PHILIP.

Absolutely. Let's get right to it.

LIZ.

(Taking an appointment book out of her briefcase.)

Let's see now.

PHILIP.

What's up for today?

LIZ.

Nothing on the agenda for this morning, so I thought maybe we could spend some time together.

PHILIP.

Sorry, Liz but aren't you the one who insisted on us keeping this on a professional level?

LIZ.

Mr. Deitz?

PHILIP.

Relax. Please? Though I think you can call me Philip, all the time.

LIZ.

I thought that we could get caught up on some of the paper work. You know expenses, reports. That sort of thing.

PHILIP.

I don't have any business appointments this morning?

LIZ.

That's correct.

PHILIP.

I have the morning off and I hate paper work. I have an assistant, a very capable one at that. One who is well paid and can easily handle all that boring business. So I am leaving.

LIZ.

I have one more thing.

PHILIP.

Not now. I don't have time.

LIZ.

I have been mulling over the offer.

PHILIP.

What offer? You're not thinking of leaving?

LIZ.

Some detective! Your offer, you dope.

PHILIP.

In that case you're in charge. If I have any appointments
this afternoon, you take them.

(Tosses her the keys.)

LIZ.

I said I was thinking about it.

PHILIP.

Good enough for me. I'm taking the day off. Don't give away
the store.

LIZ.

Where are you going?

PHILIP.

Out. See you tomorrow.

(He exits.)

LIZ.

See you tomorrow.

(She picks up the phone and dials.)

Hello, Cookie? It's me. Philip just left. I've got
everything we need to get things organized. See you as soon
as you can get here. Call Corinne ... Good.

(She hangs up the phone and exits the apartment.)

BLACKOUT

ACT II

SCENE 1

*(Some days later. Next day. Cookie, Corinne and Liz in the
room.)*

CORINNE

Okay, let's get to work. Where are those keys?

LIZ.

There are no discs.

CORINNE

Let me have those keys I'll have a look for myself.

LIZ.

Not a chance.

COOKIE

We made an agreement.

LIZ.

This is a business and it's secrets, other than what you need to know are not free for the taking.

COOKIE

You said you wanted to help us.

LIZ.

I'm not going to blow the whole thing up. I still want there to be an agency here when we're done.

CORINNE

Are you going to continue with this after we're done?

LIZ.

Not this business but the agency. Hell we've got a very wealthy clientèle to serve.

LIZ.

Now about the plan.

COOKIE

The plan?

CORINNE

The plan Cookie.

COOKIE

Oh, yeah. The plan. How does it work again?

CORINNE

When do we start? That's what I want to know.

LIZ.

There has been a slight alteration.

CORINNE

I liked it the way it was. You trap Cookie's husband in the bed room. Cookie traps my husband in the bedroom and we all smile all the way to divorce court.

COOKIE

I'm a little uneasy about that part of the plan.

CORINNE

This is no time to turn soft, Cookie.

COOKIE

I'm not turning soft. I know everyone thinks that I'm ditsy and easy, but ---

LIZ.

We don't think you're easy. Do we Corinne?

CORINNE

We don't think you're easy. Or ditsy.

COOKIE

Oh, I am ditsy you know. But I'm not stupid. And I don't feel comfortable ---

LIZ.

You don't have to feel uncomfortable. That's why the change in the plan. I always knew that the entire apartment was wired for sound but these keys have shown the place in a whole new light. The whole thing is rigged with night vision cameras.

CORINNE

Including the bathroom.

COOKIE

I used the bathroom!

CORINNE

So did I.

LIZ.

Not the bathroom.

COOKIE

Well that's better. I mean after all.

LIZ.

That would be an invasion of privacy.

CORINNE

What do you call cameras in the bedroom?

LIZ.

All we have to do is get the men to show their willingness to go into the bedroom and we've made our case.

CORINNE

Do you really think showing that my husband would jump into the sack with just anyone is going to work.

COOKIE

I'm not just anyone you know.

CORINNE

Not what I meant. Sorry, but you are a little ditsy. I'll give you that.

LIZ.

When we get Cookies husband on tape with his hands glued to my ass ---

COOKIE

That's just a bad habit ---

LIZ.

Enough with the ditsy.

CORINNE

You better know what you're doing. Meanwhile I've got to get ready for my date with Philip. Bye now.
(*She exits.*)

LIZ.

Now I've got to prepare myself for Billy. Don't worry, he's not exactly my type.

COOKIE

What's that supposed to mean? You don't think he's good enough?

LIZ.

No! He's not my type means, maybe he's perfect for you but he's not my type. That's all. We can't take this personally.

COOKIE

Sorry. I keep forgetting. You're going to screw my husband for my benefit

LIZ.

It is for your benefit and no I'm not going to screw him. Not literally that is.

COOKIE

That is what I meant. You go girl. Screw baby screw. Screw him to the wall. But remember I still want what's left.

LIZ.

You're a romantic at heart.

COOKIE

I'd better get going. See you in about three hours. Ronnie is waiting for me.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

(Helen Stanton comes charging through with Liz following.)

LIZ.

You can't barge in here and turn the place upside down. This is private property.

HELEN

I don't care who's property it is. I want that tape. And you're going to give it to me.

LIZ.

I don't know where it is.

HELEN.

I know it's here somewhere.

LIZ.

It's not.

HELEN.

So, you do know.

LIZ.

Now I think you had better get control of yourself and face reality. Sit down, please?

HELEN.

I'm exhausted. I can't sleep.

LIZ.

Can I get you something?

HELEN.

My reputation? But I'm afraid that's gone.

LIZ.

Mrs. Stanton.

HELEN

I feel so helpless. So stupid.

LIZ.

Mrs. Stanton, I can't explain right now but if you could give me a little time

HELEN.

And if I refuse to leave?

LIZ.

I'll have to assume that you are incapacitated in some way and gently yet firmly assist you to the elevator. And don't doubt that I can do it.

(The door bell rings. Liz gives Helen a sharp look. Helen grabs her purse and crosses to the bedroom and exits. Liz opens the door. Billy Holloway is standing there. A big smile on his face.)

BILLY.

You said to come right on up, so I did.

LIZ.

Mr. Holloway, won't you come in.

BILLY.

Billy. Please, call me Billy. Where's Philip? I got the message to come so here I am. Don't you look nice ---

(He reaches out to her. She evades his grasp.)

--- this afternoon.

LIZ.

Mr. Deitz is out of the office.

BILLY.

Ain't you gonna offer me a drink?

LIZ.

He won't be back today.

BILLY.

Now that's too bad. Maybe, you can help me. Liz, ain't it?

LIZ.

Yes it is. The drink you asked for would be Bourbon, am I right?

BILLY.

And branch water but I know you ain't got any so I guess tap water will have to do.

(She crosses to kitchen door.)

LIZ.

I'll be right back, We're out of ice. Have a seat Mr. Halloway.

BILLY.

I said to call me Billy.

(Liz exits into kitchen. The bedroom door suddenly opens and Helen enters.)

Stop the music.

(She is composed and speaks with a slight but affected accent.)

HELEN

Oh, excuse me I didn't know Liz had company.

BILLY.

Not company exactly. Sort of business, you might say.

HELEN.

Sort of business? What is sort of business?

BILLY.

Afraid I can't help you there, pretty lady. I'm waiting to find out myself.

HELEN

Sounds very mysterious. Mister? Sorry I didn't get your name.

BILLY.

Excuse me. Billy,
(Extending his hand.)

Billy Halloway and sad to mention but some other lady already has my name. That doesn't mean it might not be available soon though.

HELEN

Is that so. And how am I supposed to interpret that remark?

BILLY.

Are you being a little coy with Billy?

HELEN

No. Coy is not my style. I prefer the direct approach.

BILLY.

Are you saying that you don't know what kind of business they run here?

HELEN

I'm pretty sure I do. I wonder if you know exactly ---
(*Liz enters.*)

LIZ.

Helen? I'm sorry Mister Halloway.
(*To Helen.*)

Have you been out here long?

BILLY.

Not actually. Although I did manage to introduce myself to the lovely lady but I am afraid ---

HELEN

I am so sorry ---

LIZ.

Mister Halloway

BILLY.

Billy, if you please.

LIZ.

Billy, I'd like you to meet Helen Stanton.

BILLY.

The pleasure, hopefully, is not all mine, Miss Helen.

HELEN

That remains to be seen I expect. I've got to run. Liz, thanks for the tour and were on for dinner don't forget.

LIZ.

Of course.

BILLY.

Not leaving so soon are you?

LIZ.

Would you like me to validate your parking stub?

HELEN.

Oh, I'm not driving. Not in this town. I'll take a taxi.

BILLY.

You'll never get a cab this time of day in this part of town. My car is just out front. I'd be happy to drop you.

LIZ.

I thought you wanted to see Philip?

BILLY.

I thought he wanted to see me. But since he isn't here I thought I could help out this here little lady in distress.

LIZ.

She isn't exactly in distress. Are you Helen?

HELEN.

Not exactly. Although a gallant offer like this doesn't come along every day. If Mister Halloway is willing to drive me --

BILLY.

The name is Billy, sugar and I don't drive. Jensen drives. I just tell him where to drive to. That's how it works. You tell me and then I'll tell him.

HELEN.

Easy as that?

LIZ.

Actually, I'm not doing anything the rest of the day I'd be happy to ---

HELEN.

No, no. Don't bother, we'll talk at diner I wouldn't want to distract you while you're driving. Besides Billy and I can have a nice chat while Wilson does the driving.

BILLY.

Jensen.

HELEN.

That's right.

BILLY.

Times a waistin'. Now where did you say you needed to go?
(He opens the apartment door and holds it for Helen.)

HELEN.

Well I guess I'll be leaving. See you at dinner.

LIZ.

You betcha.

BILLY.

I wouldn't bet a hundred dollars on that.
(They exit.)

LIZ.

What the hell happened here.
(A noise on the balcony catches her attention. She crosses to the doors and peers out. She turns to the desk and removes a gun and opens the doors. Whoever she is talking to is obviously on the floor of the balcony.)

What the hell are you doing there? Get up. Put your hands on your head and come in here. Slowly!

RONNIE.

Hi. Liz isn't it? Hi!

LIZ.

Mr. Parks, you're not going to make a habit of this are you?

RONNIE.

Of what? What habit?

LIZ.

Breaking in here.

RONNIE.

I had a meeting with Philip this morning and I accidentally locked myself out on the balcony, that's all. He must have thought I left. Didn't he mention it?

LIZ.

He never mentions things that haven't happened. He's funny that way. He didn't have any appointments this morning. Now tell me, how the hell did you get onto the balcony?

RONNIE.

I told you ---

LIZ.

You lied. Another bad habit you've got. We know you broke in here before. Philip saw you.

RONNIE.

He couldn't have.

LIZ.

Don't lie to me again. It's all on tape.

RONNIE.

That's impossible.

LIZ.

We know you were here and it's not impossible. What makes you think it's impossible?

RONNIE.

Because it was pitch black. He couldn't even see me let alone tape me.

LIZ.

Infrared cameras. Now get over there and sit down.

RONNIE.

Infrared? Who the hell are you people.

LIZ.

(Waving the gun.)

I said sit, while I decide what to do with you.

RONNIE.

You can't do anything to me.

(Responds to the gun and has a seat.)

What can you do call the cops?

LIZ.

I could shoot you're sorry ass and then call the cops. So now maybe you want to tell me how you got onto the terrace.

RONNIE.

I don't have to tell you anything honey.

LIZ.

I'm not your honey you jerk.

RONNIE.

Be careful or I'm liable to give you the spanking you deserve.

LIZ.

How about if I just drop kick you once and then you can spend the rest of your life playing leapfrog with the other eunuchs

RONNIE.

Listen. We don't have to be hostile to one another. After all we're on the same side. I hired you people didn't I? All I want is good look at that video. So why don't you put the shootin' iron down missy and have a seat next to 'Old Ronnie' and we can watch it together. You might find it stimulating.

LIZ.

Listen to me 'Old Ronnie' 'honey' you just make yourself as comfortable as you can while I decide what happens next.

RONNIE.

I'll tell you what's going to happen next. You are going to show me that tape or I'll sue you and your boss for unlawful imprisonment. All I want is a look at that tape. That tape which is my property.

LIZ.

Ronnie, you have been nothing but a pain in the butt since Philip took your case. I personally had a bad feeling about you but he is or rather was the boss and so took you on as a client. That was your good news. I am now a partner. That is your bad news. Your worse than bad news is this. I will personally kick your smarmy ass down the stairs if you are not out of here five seconds.

RONNIE.

I just want to make an offe ---

LIZ.

Four seconds. --- Three seconds. --- Two --- seconds

(He bolts for the door. Leaving it open as he flees.)

And by the way, you'll find a refund check in the mail when you get home. It'll be in a bright yellow envelope.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

(Later that afternoon. Liz and Philip are present.)

LIZ.

And down the hall he went like I was chasing him with a gun.

PHILIP.

Which you were, by the way. So do you know how he got onto the balcony?

LIZ.

According to him, or the evidence?

PHILIP.

Which is more amusing?

LIZ.

Both are amusing. His story was that you accidentally left him out there after a meeting.

PHILIP.

Original. Stupid but original. And the evidence told a different story, which is?

LIZ.

First. He happened to find us because he's having an affair with a woman in the building. I know this because being a better detective than you think I am, I asked the door man. Then it's two and two. He uses that relationship to gain access to the roof. He somehow managed to bolt a steel box containing repelling gear to the side of the building above the balcony. I saw the stuff out there after he took off.

PHILIP.

Why is it we never found out about this?

LIZ.

He would then go up to the roof haul the stuff back up and lock it back in the box.

PHILIP.

Did you dismantle the box.

LIZ.

Me detective not mechanic. Besides by the time I got up to the roof he had already pulled the gear up and locked the box.

PHILIP.

Ronnie has suddenly become a more interesting client.

LIZ.

He's not a client any more remember. I fired him.

PHILIP.

Did you mail that check?

LIZ.

Not yet.

PHILIP.

Good. Don't.

(The door buzzer sounds. Liz crosses to the intercom.)

LIZ.

Hello!

INTERCOM

There are some people down here who want to come up.

LIZ.

Who are they

PHILIP.

He got what he paid us for.

INTERCOM

You want all their names?

LIZ.

How many are there?

INTERCOM

Lets see there's three women and one man and he don't look so good.

(Just then Ron appears hanging upside down outside the terrace door.)

LIZ.

Just give me one name.

INTERCOM

She wants one name.

(Billy's voice, shouting.)

Halloway, Billy Halloway.

LIZ.

What should I do?

(Spotting Ron she points to him as she speaks.)

Oh my God!

PHILIP.

Relax. Just tell him to let him come up.

LIZ.

(Pointing to the terrace doors again.)

You don't understand he's there.

PHILIP.

I know he's there the doorman said he was there, I heard him say that he's there. Tell him to send him up.

LIZ.

Send them up.

INTERCOM

All of them?

LIZ.

He's outside there. Yes, no. Just Mr. Halloway.

PHILIP.

(He turns and sees Ron hanging.)

What the ---

LIZ.

I was trying to tell you.

PHILIP.

You were?

(He runs over and draws the drapes.)

He'll keep. Let's get the other mess straightened out. Now who is coming up here with Billy?

LIZ.

Just Billy. You said send him up.

PHILIP.

That's probably best but who was with him?

LIZ.

I imagine we'll find that out in a minute or so. What should we do about Ronnie?

PHILIP.

(Taking a peak out through the drapes.)

I don't think he'll be going any where for a while. Looks like he got his lines tangled.

(Loud knocking on the front door?)

LIZ.

He can't be here that fast.
(Crosses to door and checking peephole.)
There's a woman out there.

PHILIP.

What woman?

LIZ.

I don't know. Never seen her before. No, I think I recognize her from the building. Yeah she's a tenant.

PHILIP.

Well open the door and see what she wants.

LIZ.

Okay.
(She opens the door.)

MONA.

(In a REAL New York accent.)
Where is he? Is he dead? Did I kill the son of a bitch or not?

LIZ.

Hold on a minute. Who do you think you are lady?

MONA.

I don't think who I am. I am who I am. And I want that son of a bitch what's two timing me with that rich bitch wife of his. Telling me he don't love her no more. That lyin' bastard, lyin' mountain climbing two timing bastard. Well his mountain and his social climbing days is over. You hear me? Now where is he? I hope he's dead.

PHILIP.

Are you by any chance looking for Ron Parks?

MONA.

That's him. Tell him to come out and face me like a man. If he's alive, which I hope he ain't.

PHILIP.

He's alive. Well at least I thought so last time I checked. But I'm not so sure this is a good time ---

MONA.

Oh! It's a good time all right ---

LIZ.

Why don't you have a seat and calm down a lit ---

MONA.

Calm down? Who me? This is as calm as it gets sugar. Now let me at that son of a bitch

(Door bell rings.)

Who's that? I don't want no one else in here.

PHILIP.

I'm afraid you don't get to make that decision.

MONA.

Don't go near that door or I'll blow your freekin head off.

(Liz and Philip both freeze and assume an aggressive posture.)

I mean if I had a gun.

(Liz turns to open the door.)

If I had a gun I blow your freekin head off.

BILLY.

(Entering with Helen, Cookie and Corinne following.)

This is a bad situation you created here Mr. Deitz.

COOKIE

Who on earth is this lady?

MONA.

Don't you worry about who I am, honey. I'm just looking for somebody is who I am. So your the Jennery bitch, are you.

(Liz grabs her from behind and plunks her down in a chair.)

MONA.

You leave me alone ---

PHILIP.

Everybody! Please why don't we all just unburden our feet and pull up a chair. Every one please.

(A calmness sweeps over the room.)

Now. Now that I have every one's attention, allow me to present

(He walks to the drapes and opens them. Revealing Ron hanging in a tangle, dishevelled and bleeding.)

Ron Parks.

MONA.

He's still alive?

CORINNE

He's alive but he doesn't look so good. Close the drapes and lets see what he looks like in another twenty minutes.

BILLY.

He looks like a train wreck.

COOKIE

The poor man. Somebody ought to help him.

BILLY.

He's all right. Look his eyes are moving and didn't he just wave at us?

PHILIP.

Maybe we should check and see how badly he's hurt.

MONA.

Let him rot out there. Better still let me out there alone with him. I'll take those twenty minutes.

LIZ.

He could be seriously hurt?

CORINNE

(To Mona.)

And just who the hell are you?

MONA.

I used to be the two timing son of a bitches girlfriend. Until I found out he was two timing me with his witch wife.

CORINNE

What makes you think you can call me a witch and get away with it.

MONA.

Your the witch?

(Very calm and almost lady like.)

Well at least he has better taste than I thought.

CORINNE

Don't try to make nice with me.

MONA.

After all when a guy marries for money you can usually expect some homely dork ---

CORINNE

Homely dork. Why you cheap piece of goods I ought to clean the floor with you. But you want to know something? I think you should go out there with him and we'll see which piece of trash survives.

PHILIP.

(He gets every one attention, whistles, yells, whatever it takes.))

Everybody back to neutral corners. I think I, as the unwitting host to this galla event am about to demand an explanation for these antics.

BILLY.

I offered this lady a lift and before you know it I am accosted by her and this other woman after being led around town on a wild goose chase ---

COOKIE

And what exactly were you chasing I'd like to know.

HELEN.

He was chasing me is what he was chasing.

LIZ.

He was supposed to be chasing me.

COOKIE

That's right.

BILLY.

What the hell are you talking about. I wasn't chasing any body.

LIZ.

Bullshit. You were about to start drooling all over me when Helen came out of the bed room.

PHILIP.

Drooling? None of this makes any sense.

HELEN.

Yes it does it makes a lot of sense. I think.

(Ron begins tapping on the door.)

PHILIP.

Would someone tell him to stop that. I'm trying to get to the bottom of all this.

MONA.

I'll make him stop. Just let me at him.

CORINNE

What are you so angry about? After the divorce he's all yours. I never want to see him again. Not even all bloodied up like that.

MONA.

Who wants him if he ain't got any money.

CORINNE

He'll have plenty of money if I have to buy him off.

LIZ.

You won't have to. Will she Philip?

PHILIP.

Now I admit I have no idea what's going on.

LIZ.

The whole house of cards is tumbling down.

BILLY.

Mr. Dietz, I don't know about any house of cards but I've had enough of these goings on. I'm taking my wife and I'm clearin' outta here.

COOKIE

You aren't taking anybody and clearin' out of anywhere. Not right now you're not. Now sit your but down and listen.

LIZ.

I know that there is no tape of Corinne.

CORINNE AND HELEN

No tape?

PHILIP.

What makes you sure there is none of Corinne?

HELEN.

Maybe there's not one of me?

PHILIP.

How do you know that I don't have a private stash?

LIZ.

Of your all time favorites?

HELEN.

That's disgusting.

LIZ.

Because, there is no stash of oldies but goodies.
Apparently, ladies and gentlemen, assuming that Ron can hear
me through the door.

RONNIE.

(Shouting.)

A little louder please.

COOKIE

Somebody open the door and get him down.

CORINNE

I'll open the door.

(She does so.)

But he stays trussed up like the hog he is.

LIZ.

As I was saying, Philip has been true to his word and always
destroys the evidence when the deal is complete.

HELEN.

Well aren't we just the most trustworthy, sweetest little
rat.

BILLY.

An honest man in a, in a dishonest profession.

RONNIE.

You're gonna stand there and tell me that there is no
evidence of you and Corrine ---

LIZ.

Of him and anybody.

CORINNE

Do you mean this is all a scam? That you never recorded any
of this little rendezvous That it was all just a
fabrication?

PHILIP.

Not entirely true. You see Ronnie wasn't the first bone
headed client who wasn't satisfied with the results alone.

Others also for perverse or perverted reasons would attempt to acquire the discs and so I thought it best to destroy them as soon as I felt confident of the success of my mission.

CORINNE

That's what I was to you? A mission to be accomplished and then forgotten, erased from all memory?

PHILIP.

Not from all memory. Not from my memory.

CORINNE

And how many others do I share that honor with?

RONNIE.

This is getting really sappy. How about my divorce? The settlement?

MONA.

Oh shut up you dope.

CORINNE

(To Mona.)

Something you ought to consider Miss Mona.

(To Ronnie.)

I've just had a thought. You can have the divorce and a settlement. Here are my terms. As long as you stay with Miss Mona here. You two do deserve each other. As long as the two of you stay together there will be enough money for both. I'll have my lawyers draw up the papers.

MONA.

What's that supposed to mean? We deserve each other. I don't deserve him. Nobody deserves him.

(Turning on Ron.)

You conniving two timing miserable ---

BILLY.

Looks like you've got your work cut out for you son. I think they both hate you now.

(Crosses up to book case.)

RONNIE.

Somebody please cut me down.

LIZ.

Looks like this could take a while anybody want coffee?

(She heads to the kitchen.)

HELEN

(Following Liz into the kitchen.)

Want a hand in there? I hate soap operas.

PHILIP.

Why don't we cut him down? I'm getting a stiff neck looking at him.

MONA.

Sure, cut him down. He's nothing but a pain in my neck to. Let's get him in here where I can get my hands on him.

COOKIE

If you hate him so much why don't you just let him hang there and get on with your life.

MONA.

I guess cause after all the rotten things he's done I actually love him.

CORINNE

Take him. He's your's with my compliments and best wishes. As for you Ronnie, to you I wish a speedy recovery. Because I have a strong suspicion that as soon as you're well enough Mona will have her revenge.

MONA.

I already had it. Say you ain't such a bad broad after all. Now what about that settlement?

CORINNE

You're a cute one you are. Isn't she cute Ronnie?

PHILIP.

Billy give me a hand and we'll cut this poor dope down.

BILLY.

Why not.

(As he crosses to the terrace he drops the Kama Sutra in Cookie's lap.)

Take a gander at this honey. If you like it I'll get you one of your own.

COOKIE

I love picture books.

BILLY.

This ones a pop up book.

COOKIE

I love pop up books.
(Turning to Corinne.)

Don't you love pop up books.

MONA.

I think that's a different kind of pop up book honey.

BILLY.

Her name is Cookie not Honey.

MONA.

What do I know? I just like calling people honey. It sounds funny. Besides didn't you just call her Honey?

COOKIE

That's because I am his honey but my name is Cookie.

(By this time Billy & Phillip have cut Ronnie down and he stumbles into the room and sits.)

MONA.

(Moves to Ron's side.)

So honey do you think she means it?

BILLY.

Maybe first you should ask how he is.

MONA.

I know how he is. He ain't dead, that's how he is.

How do you feel honey?

RONNIE.

Not so hot if you want the ---

MONA.

Do you think she means it?

RONNIE.

You didn't really try to kill me?

MONA.

Na! It was just a warning. Don't cheat on me ever again.

CORINNE

If you take him and yourself out of my sight now and forever I'll have the agreement drawn up tomorrow.

PHILIP.

I guess she means it. Let me show you to the door.

COOKIE

That's all right me and Billy will help them out. Were going out to the bookstore any way. C'mon Billy.

BILLY.

You heard the little lady. Come on sport I'll help you to the elevator.

RONNIE.

Corinne, I just wanted to say ---

CORINNE

Just shut up and get out or the deals off.

(Mona shoves Ron from behind and out the four of them go.)

MONA.

Don't you know how to leave well enough alone.

(As she exits.))

Now lets go up to the roof and collect your toys.

PHILIP.

I thought they'd never leave.

(Looking around the room and indicating that no one else is present.))

Speaking of alone ---

CORINNE

(Liz and Helen enter from kitchen.)

I thought Cookie and Billy where very entertaining.

HELEN.

My favorites where Mona and Ronnie. Now that's what I call entertainment. You've got love, suspense, intrigue and violence.

PHILIP.

I'll have to have them over for dinner some time.

HELEN.

You better make it soon. How long do you think the two of them are going to last?

LIZ.

I wouldn't give them six months.

PHILIP.

Speaking of dinner ---

LIZ.

I think we have things to think about other than dinner.

PHILIP.

Probably true but right now I happen to be hungry. What do you say Corinne?

LIZ.

How are you going to pay for dinners from now on is the question you should be asking.

PHILIP.

Excuse me.

HELEN.

I guess he expects to continue doing what he's been doing.

LIZ.

Not if I have anything to say about it.

CORINNE

Philip?

PHILIP.

Corinne?

CORINNE

How do you intend to support yourself in the future?

PHILIP.

I haven't given it much thought but right now business is booming and I have a new partner to help me.

CORINNE

I wouldn't count on that if I were you.

LIZ.

Corinne has made a very generous offer.

PHILIP.

What kind of offer?

LIZ.

Handling security and background checks for a charitable trust.

CORINNE

Exactly.

PHILIP.

You would just walk out?

HELEN.

And leave all this?

LIZ.

This business appears to have outlived it's usefulness.

PHILIP.

This business is doing just fine. If it has to it will survive your betrayal.

LIZ.

You don't get it at all.

HELEN.

Some detective. He doesn't have a clue.

CORINNE

There's a hammer over your head and you don't see it.

LIZ.

Come on Philip, look at the clues and take a hint. Your done. We will see to that.

PHILIP.

Give me back the keys. I think were done here.

CORINNE

I think you're done here. Think about what you've done to yourself. Is this any way for a grown man to live. You can't possibly have any self respect left after how you've acted. And I thought you might want to change. Somehow redeem yourself. Or maybe this is who you really are.

PHILIP.

The truth? Do you want the truth?

CORINNE

It wouldn't hurt and we all might find it refreshing.

PHILIP.

The actual truth? Three years ago when I accidentally stumbled onto this idea it seemed as though I had the world in my hands. But, after a short time in what appeared a paradise of getting paid to enjoy life it got boring.

LIZ.

That's not the way you explained it to me. All "Kama Sutra" all the time. Was more the impression I got.

PHILIP.

We'll it kind of got to the point of being work. But the money was certainly good. Kind of and endless vicious cycle. You might say that I was hooked. Now I really don't know what to do. I have bills to pay, a rather large overhead. Come on Liz, you don't want to run out on me. OK maybe we'll drop the sleaze act and get back to real detective work. We can do that if that's what you want. And we'll all live happily ever after?

HELEN.

All of you live happily ever after. How nice and I get divorced with nothing to show for it. Done in by you and your ways of doing business.

(Ronnie slowly lowers himself down to the terrace.)

LIZ.

Not exactly. Mr. Stanton gets his divorce but no evidence.

CORINNE.

I'm going to be paying Ronnie and Mona for who knows how long. And there is always the thought of being found boring by Mr. Dietz.

HELEN.

I guess that applies to me also. What do you mean no evidence?

LIZ.

There are no tapes. No evidence.

CORINNE

Why you sweet wonderful girl.

LIZ.

It wasn't me.

PHILIP.

Me. At first I just destroyed the tapes and then I stopped recording.

HELEN.

Why?

PHILIP.

Turns out I only needed them once. Back in the beginning and realized that they were too dangerous to keep. So they ceased to exist.

(Ronnie collapses onto the terrace.)

HELEN.

(Looking out onto the terrace.)

Somebody should call 911.

CORINNE

You should have put your money on six minutes?

LIZ.

The eternal optimist that's me.

RONNIE.

(Entering as he rises to his feet, in worse shape than before.)

Keep your money get the divorce. It isn't worth the trouble.

LIZ.

(To Corinne.)

Well, it looks like you're safe.

CORINNE

What do you know he's finally come to his senses.

PHILIP.

Are you going to be all right. Have a seat I'll get you a drink.

RONNIE.

No! That's okay. I have to go and say good bye to Mona. Or maybe I'll just skip it. On second thought I'll have that drink.

PHILIP.

Coming right up.

LIZ

Looks like the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

CORINNE

Their's or our's?

(The women exit.)

RONNIE.

What the hell am I supposed to do now. After the divorce I've got nothing left.

PHILIP.

I wouldn't say nothing exactly. We still have some added value from my meager endeavors. With your help that is.

RONNIE.

What help? What added value?

PHILIP.

You're the marketing guy. I am the product provider.

RONNIE.

What the hell are you talking about?

PHILIP.

The discs.

RONNIE.

The discs? What discs? The discs? There were discs? Before I fell I thought I heard. There are discs?

PHILIP.

Lots of them.

RONNIE.

Corrine?

PHILIP.

Can't use that one.

RONNIE.

Why not?

PHILIP.

Look at what she's done to you. I don't want any part of that. But we can market a whole library's worth.

RONNIE.

We'll make a fortune. The hell with Corrine's tapes.

PHILIP.

Partners?

RONNIE.

Partners? Lookout porn world here we come.

(The door opens Helen stands in the open doorway.)

HELEN

Oh, by the way, Liz asked me to return these.

The keys to the realm. And one more thing. She said to tell you that the key to the vault isn't on this ring. Oh, by the way if my husbands lawyer want's to call you as a witness think about the District Attorney and the word extortion.

(Tosses Philip a set of keys.)

Oh one more thing don't bother looking for the key to the vault, or the discs that used to be in it.

PHILIP.

No! Where did she ---

HELEN.

You might try the incinerator. Gotta run.
(She exits.)

BLACKOUT.

THE END

PHILIP.

It's simple, really. We arrange for your wife and I to meet, casually, at a party or some function, for example and I take it from there.

BILLY.

Take what?

PHILIP.

Boy meets girl. That sort of thing. You fill me in on a few details about her likes and dislikes, Movies or music she likes that sort of thing. For instance what books does she read?

BILLY.

Read? What books? I don't know. That romance stuff. Pop up books, she likes pop up books.

PHILIP.

Never mind. Maybe we arrange for Liz to meet her and find out some things about her and then I go to work.

BILLY.

And that work being?

PHILIP.

You insist on making this hard on yourself, don't you?

BILLY.

I don't think so. I just want to know what it is I'm letting myself in for.

PHILIP.

It may not be what you want to hear.

BILLY.

Try me. I may be tougher than you think.

PHILIP.

I get her to come back here. Where, quite possibly, we make love. A scene which is captured on video tape.

BILLY.

Oh. --- That's all?

PHILIP.

It should be enough.

BILLY.

And you send me the video tape.

PHILIP.

Not on your life. If all goes according to plan, which I
add, it generally does.

BILLY.

Generally?