

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Top of show. Charley, hidden in his bedroom just shot himself. No one can know what has happened because Charley is the deputy Mayor of NY. Chris, in crisis mode, is talking to Dr. Dudley on phone. Ken is simultaneously panicking and desperately trying to guide Chris through the phone call.

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RUMORS

*above the front door looks out onto a wooded backyard. A large window in the Stage Right wall overlooks a yard and the driveway beyond. Headlights of approaching cars may be seen through this window.*

*AT RISE: It is about eight-thirty at night on a pleasant evening in May.*

*CHRIS GORMAN, an attractive woman, mid-thirties, paces anxiously back and forth, looking at her watch, biting her nails. SHE is elegantly dressed in a designer gown. SHE looks at the phone, then at her watch again. SHE seems to make a decision and crosses to the cigarette box on the coffee table. SHE takes out a cigarette, then puts it back.*

CHRIS. Oh, my God!

*(Suddenly, Charley's bedroom door opens on the second landing and KEN GORMAN, about forty, dressed smartly in a tuxedo but looking flushed and excited, comes out to the rail. THEY BOTH speak rapidly.)*

KEN. Did he call yet?

CHRIS. Wouldn't I have yelled up?

KEN. Call him again.

CHRIS. I called him twice. They're looking for him . . . How is he?

KEN. I'm not sure. He's bleeding like crazy.

CHRIS. Oh, my God!

KEN. It's all over the room. I don't know why people decorate in white ... If he doesn't call in two minutes, call the hospital.

CHRIS. I'm going to have to have a cigarette, Ken.

RUMORS

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KEN. After eighteen months, the hell you are. Hold onto yourself, will you?

*(HE rushes back in, closes the door behind him. SHE returns to pacing.)*

CHRIS. I can't believe this is happening. *(SHE crosses to the cigarette box. The PHONE rings.)* Oh, God! *(SHE calls out.)* Ken, the phone is ringing. *(But HE's gone. SHE crosses to phone and picks it up.)* Hello? Dr. Dudley? . . . Oh, Dr. Dudley, I'm so glad it's you. Your service said you were at the theatre.

*(Charley's bedroom door opens, KEN looks out.)*

KEN. Is that the doctor?

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* I never would have bothered you, but this is an emergency.

KEN. Is that the doctor?

CHRIS. *(Into the phone.)* I'm Chris Gorman. My husband Ken and I are good friends of Charley Brock's.

KEN. Is that the doctor?

CHRIS. *(Turns, holds phone, yells at Ken.)* It's the doctor! It's the doctor!

KEN. *(Angrily.)* Why didn't you say so? *(HE goes back in, closes the door.)*

CHRIS. *(Into the phone.)* Dr. Dudley, I'm afraid there's been an accident ... I would have called my own doctor, but my husband is a lawyer and under the circumstances, he thought it better to have Charley's own physician ... Well, we just arrived here at Charley's house about ten minutes ago, and as we were getting out of our car, we suddenly heard this enormous —

*(KEN suddenly comes out of the bedroom)*

KEN. Don't say anything!

CHRIS. *(To Ken.)* What?

KEN. Don't tell him what happened!

CHRIS. Don't tell him?

KEN. Just do what I say.

CHRIS. What about Charley?

KEN. He's all right. It's just a powder burn. Don't tell him about the gunshot.

CHRIS. But they got the doctor out of the theatre.

KEN. Tell him he tripped down the stairs and banged his head. He's all right.

CHRIS. But what about the blood?

KEN. The bullet went through his ear lobe. It's nothing. I don't want him to know.

CHRIS. But I already said we were getting out of the car and we suddenly heard an enormous – what? What did we hear?

KEN. *(Coming downstairs.)* We heard ...

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* Just a minute, doctor.

KEN. *(Thinks, coming downstairs.)* We heard ... we heard ... we heard ... an enormous – *thud!*

CHRIS. Thud?

KEN. When he tripped down the stairs.

CHRIS. Good. Good. That's good. *(Into phone.)* Dr. Dudley? I'm sorry. I was talking to my husband. Well, we heard this enormous *thud!* It seemed Charley tripped going up the stairs.

KEN. *Down!* Down the stairs.

CHRIS. *Down* the stairs. But he's all right.

KEN. He's sitting up in bed. He'll call him in the morning.

CHRIS. He's sitting up in bed. He'll call him in the morning.

KEN. *You!*

CHRIS. *You!* He'll call *you* in the morning.

KEN. You're very sorry you disturbed him.

CHRIS. I'm very sorry I disturbed you.

KEN. But he's really fine.

CHRIS. But he's really fine.

KEN. Thank you. Goodbye.

CHRIS. *(To Ken.)* Where are you going?

KEN. *Him! Him!* Thank him and say goodbye.

CHRIS. Oh. *(Into phone.)* Thank you and goodbye, Doctor ... What? ... Just a minute. *(To Ken as HE goes upstairs.)* Any dizziness?

KEN. No. No dizziness.

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* No. No dizziness ... What? *(To Ken.)* Can he move his limbs?

KEN. *(Irritated.)* Yes! He can move everything. Get off the phone.

CHRIS. *(Yells at Ken.)* They got him out of *Phantom of the Opera*. *(Into phone.)* Yes, he can move everything ... What? *(To Ken.)* Any slurring of the speech?

KEN. NO! NO SLURRING OF THE SPEECH.

CHRIS. *(To Ken.)* Don't yell at me. He'll hear it. *(Into phone.)* No. No slurring of the speech.

KEN. I've got to get back to Charley. *(KEN starts to back into Charley's room.)*

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* Any what? *(To Ken.)* Any ringing of the ears?

KEN. I can't believe this ... No. Tell him no.

CHRIS. *(Into phone.)* Yes. A little ringing in the ears.

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Ken, not able to keep the secret about Charley shooting himself any longer fesses up to Lenny and Claire.

RUMORS

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LENNY. I never voted for him.

CLAIRE. Yes, you did. By proxy. We were in Bermuda.

LENNY. I don't believe it. A goddam proxy new member spreads rumors about my best friend? Who does he play tennis with?

CLAIRE. He doesn't play tennis. He's a social member. He just eats lunches there.

LENNY. ... This son of a bitch is a non-playing proxy social new member who just eats lunches and spreads rumors? What does he do for a living?

CLAIRE. He sells BMW's

START SIDE 2

*(Charley's bedroom door opens and KEN steps out.)*

KEN. Did anyone else get here yet?

CLAIRE. Not to speak of, no.

LENNY. Is anything wrong?

KEN. *(Coming downstairs.)* Why? Does anything seem wrong to you?

LENNY. You mean aside from the fact there's no food, no guests, no host, no hostess, and that you and Chris only appear one-at-a-time and never together. Yes, I'd say something was wrong.

KEN. Okay. *(HE's looking at the floor, thinking.)* Okay, sit down, Len, Claire.

*(LENNY and CLAIRE sit. HE sits in the chair opposite.)*

KEN. All right, I can't keep this quiet anymore ... We've got a big problem on our hands.

LENNY. *(To Claire.)* Aha! What did I just say, Claire?

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RUMORS

CLAIRE. You just said, "Aha!" What is it, Ken? Tell us.

KEN. Charley ... Charley, er ... Charley's been shot.

CLAIRE. *WHAT???*

LENNY. *SHOT???*

CLAIRE. Oh, my God!

LENNY. Jesus Christ!

CLAIRE. Don't tell me this!

LENNY. I can't catch my breath.

CLAIRE. Please don't let it be true.

LENNY. *(Wailing.)* Charley, Charley, no! No, Charley, no!!!

KEN. Take it easy, he's not dead. He's all right.

CLAIRE. He's not dead?

LENNY. He's all right?

KEN. He's alive. He's okay.

LENNY. Thank God, he's alive!

CLAIRE. Where was he shot?

KEN. In the head.

CLAIRE. In the *head*? The *head*? Oh, my, God, he was shot in the *head*!!!

KEN. It's all right. It's not bad. It's a superficial wound.

LENNY. Where did the bullet go?

KEN. Through his left ear lobe.

CLAIRE. The ear lobe? That's not too bad. I have holes in my ear lobes, it doesn't hurt.

LENNY. I saw this coming, I swear. The truth, Ken, did *she* do it?

KEN. Who?

LENNY. Myra, for crise sakes. Who else would it be?

KEN. Why would Myra shoot Charley?

CLAIRE. You don't know what's going on?

LENNY. You haven't heard?

KEN. No. What's going on?

CLAIRE. Charley's been having a hot affair with someone.

LENNY. It's not hot. You don't know if it's hot. Nobody said it was hot. (To Ken.) It's an affair. A plain affair.

KEN. (To Lenny.) Who told you this?

LENNY. Nobody told me *that*. What I heard was that Myra was having a thing.

KEN. A thing with who?

LENNY. A man. A guy. A fellow. A kid. Who knows?

CLAIRE. Someone else told me it was Charley who was having the affair.

KEN. What someone else?

LENNY. Some bitch at the club named Carole Newman.

CLAIRE. She is *not* a bitch. And she only told me what Harold Green told her.

KEN. Who's Harold Green?

LENNY. (Quickly.) Some goddamn proxy new social member who doesn't even play tennis. Comes to the club to eat lunches and spread rumors.

CLAIRE. Well, it seems to me Charley's the one who's having the affair if Myra was hysterical enough to shoot him.

KEN. Listen to me, will you, please? Myra didn't shoot him. Charley fired the gun. He tried to kill himself. It was attempted suicide.

CLAIRE. SUICIDE???

LENNY. Jesus Christ!

CLAIRE. Oh, my God!

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Enter Ernie (a psychoanalyst) and his wife Cookie (a TV Cooking show host). Ken, Chris, Lenny & Claire are desperately trying to hide the secret of Ken's unfortunate "Accident"

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RUMORS

LENNY. Yes! We're ready, we're ready!

*(CLAIRE smiles and opens the front door. CHRIS and LENNY break into loud LAUGHTER.*

*ERNIE and COOKIE are at the door. ERNIE is in his early fifties, in a tux and carrying a gift box. COOKIE is in her forties, wears a god-awful evening gown. SHE carries a sausage-like cushion under her arm.)*

START HERE

CLAIRE. Cookie! Ernie! It's so good to see you.  
*(Hugs them both.)*

CHRIS. Oh, God, that is so funny, Lenny. You should have been an actor, I swear.

CLAIRE. Everybody, it's Ernie and Cookie.

LENNY. *(Still laughing.)* Hi, Ernie. Hi, Cookie.

CHRIS. *(Waves, laughing.)* Hi, Cookie. Hi, Ernie.

ERNIE. Hello, Chris. Hello, Lenny.

CHRIS. *(To Lenny.)* So go on with the story. What did Mr. Gorbachev say?

LENNY. *(After an awkward silence.)* Mr. Gorbachev? ... He said, "I don't know. I never ate cat food before."

*(There is much forced LAUGHTER.)*

ERNIE. Sorry we're late. Did we miss much?

CHRIS. You have *got* to get Lenny to tell you the story about Mrs. Thatcher and the cat food.

*(LENNY shoots Chris a dirty look.)*

ERNIE. *(Laughs.)* It sounds funny already. Heh heh heh.

COOKIE. Everyone looks so beautiful.

RUMORS

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CLAIRE. Cookie, I am cr-azy about the dress. You always dig up the most original things. Where do you find them?

COOKIE. Oh, God, this is sixty years old. It was my grandmother's. She brought it from Russia.

CLAIRE. Didn't you wear that for Muscular Dystrophy in June?

COOKIE. No. Emphysema in August.

CLAIRE. *(Looking at the cushion.)* Oh, what a pretty cushion. Is that for Charley and Myra?

COOKIE. No, it's for my back. It went out again while I was dressing. *(SHE opens the pretzels, easily.)*

ERNIE. You all right, honey?

COOKIE. I'm fine, babe.

CHRIS. You and your back problems. It must be awful.

COOKIE. It's nothing. I can do everything but sit down and get up.

ERNIE. Hey, Lenny, is that your BMW? *(HE laughs.)* Looks like you put a lot of miles on in two days.

LENNY. A guy shoots out of a garage and blind-sides me. The car's got twelve miles on it. I've got a case of whiplash you wouldn't believe.

COOKIE. *(Crossing to other side of the room.)* Oh, I've had whiplash. Excruciating. My best friend had it for six years.

END HERE

*(LENNY nods sardonically. SHE picks up the Steuben gift box.)*

COOKIE. Oh, this looks nice. Who brought this? *(SHE turns it to see the label but loses control and drops*

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Cookie has a major back spasm, Ernie is catching on that something is being covered up and insists he be told. Chris, Lenny and Claire try to spontaneously make up a story about a "surprise" to cover up the real story of Ken shooting himself.

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## RUMORS

*it.*) Oh, my God ... Did I break anything? (*SHE shakes the box. It RATTLES.*) What was it?

LENNY. Steuben glass.

COOKIE. Oh, don't tell me! Lenny! Claire! ... I'm so sorry.

ERNIE. It was an accident, honey. (*To Lenny and Claire.*) We'll replace it, of course.

LENNY. Sure, if you want. I don't care.

CHRIS. What about a drink, everyone?

ERNIE. I'll have something.

CHRIS. What do you want?

CLAIRE. I'll get it.

LENNY. (*Getting up.*) I'm right near the bar.

ERNIE. You're all going to get me a drink? Such friendly people. I'd love a bourbon, please.

(*CHRIS crosses to the bar.*)

COOKIE. I should have let what's-her-name pick it up. Moo Loo.

CHRIS. Mai Li ... Here you go, Ern. (*Gives Ernie his drink.*)

COOKIE. Where's Ken?

CLAIRE. Ken? Ken's with Charley.

COOKIE. And Myra?

CLAIRE. Myra's with Ken ... They're waiting for Myra to get dressed.

COOKIE. (*Grabbing the back of a chair and screaming.*) Ooooh! Ooooh! Ooooh!

CLAIRE. What is it?

COOKIE. A spasm. It's gone. It's all right. It just shoots up my back and goes.

ERNIE. You all right, poops?

## RUMORS

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COOKIE. I'm fine, puppy.

LENNY. Listen, maybe we should all sit outside. It's such a beautiful evening.

ERNIE. (*Smiles.*) Okay. Okay, you kids, what's going on here?

CLAIRE. What do you mean?

ERNIE. You think I don't notice everyone's acting funny? Three people want to get me drinks. Chris wants me to hear this funny story. Lenny wants to get us all outside. Everyone creating a diversion. Why? I don't know. Am I right?

CHRIS. No wonder you're such a high-priced doctor. OK ... Someone's going to have to tell them.

LENNY. Tell them what?

CHRIS. About the surprise.

LENNY. What surprise?

CHRIS. The surprise about the party.

COOKIE. What surprise about the party?

CHRIS. Well, I think it's the cutest thing, isn't it, Claire?

CLAIRE. Oh, God, yes.

CHRIS. Tell them about it.

CLAIRE. No, you tell it better than I do.

COOKIE. I'm sorry. I think I'm going to have to sit down.

CHRIS. I'll help you.

LENNY. I'll do it.

CLAIRE. I've got her.

*They all help to awkwardly lift Cookie to the sofa, while she winces, wails and screams*

COOKIE. The cushion. I need the cushion.

START HERE

LENNY. Here it is. (*HE puts the cushion behind her back.*)

ERNIE. You all right, chicken?

COOKIE. I'm fine, Pops ... So what's the big surprise about?

CHRIS. Well ... Charley and Myra decided ... because they were going to have their closest friends over to celebrate their tenth anniversary ... they weren't going to have any ... servants.

COOKIE. (*Nods.*) Uh huh.

CHRIS. No Mai Li, no anybody.

COOKIE. (*Nods.*) Uh huh.

CHRIS. Isn't that terrific. No help. Just us.

COOKIE. Why is that terrific?

CHRIS. Because!! We're all going to pitch in. Like in the old days. Before money. Before success. Like when we were all just starting out. Those were the best times in our lives, don't you think?

COOKIE. No, I hated those times. I love success.

CHRIS. But don't you find these are greedier times. Lazier, more selfish. Nobody wants to work anymore.

COOKIE. I work fourteen hours a day. I cook thirty-seven meals a week. I cook on my television show. I cook for my family. I cook for my neighbors. I cook for my dogs. I was looking forward to a relaxed evening. (*SHE reconsiders.*) But I don't want to spoil the fun. What do we have to do?

CLAIRE. We have to cook.

COOKIE. You mean all of us cooking in the kitchen together?

CHRIS. Everyone except Charley and Myra. Claire and I told them to stay up there and relax. We'll call them when we're ready.

COOKIE. What are we going to make?

CLAIRE. It's all laid out. Roast ham, smoked turkey, duck and pasta?

ERNIE. Roast ham? Duck? ... That's too much cholesterol for me.

LENNY. Ernie, we didn't come here to live longer. Just to have a good time.

COOKIE. I just don't understand why we're all wearing our best clothes to cook a dinner.

CLAIRE. That's not your best clothes. It's a fifty-year-old Polish dress.

COOKIE. A sixty-year-old Russian dress.

ERNIE. The dress is hardly an issue worth arguing about.

COOKIE. I didn't say we wouldn't cook it.

ERNIE. She didn't say we wouldn't cook it. Why is everyone getting so worked up about this?

CLAIRE. All right, Ernie, let's not turn this into group therapy, please.

ERNIE. This is nothing like group therapy, Claire. You, of all people, should know that.

LENNY. Oh, terrific. Let's just name all the people in your Thursday night group, Ernie, heh?

COOKIE. Why are Ernie and I being attacked? We just walked in the door.

CHRIS. Please lower your voices. We're going to spoil the surprise for Charley and Myra.

ERNIE. What surprise? It was their idea.

COOKIE. Listen, I don't want to take the blame for ruining this party. (*To the Group.*) I'll do all the cooking myself and Ernie'll do the serving.

ERNIE. Honey, no one's asking you to do that.

CHRIS & CLAIRE. If she wants to do it, let her.  
Sure. Why not? Fine with us.

LEN. If it makes her happy, she can clean up, too.

COOKIE. (*Struggling to her feet.*) Okay, then it's settled. Just give me forty-five minutes. I promise you this is going to be the best dinner party we ever had.

← END SIDE 4



DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Glen and Cassie are in a heated marital spat over a suspected "other woman". The plot thickens as yet another layer of complexity is introduced with the anticipation of it erupting at any moment.

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RUMORS

RUMORS

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GLENN. What is this thing lately with divorce? Where does that come from? I don't look at you sometimes because I'm afraid you're thinking you don't like the way I'm looking at you.

CASSIE. I don't know what the hell you want from me, Glenn. I really don't.

GLENN. I don't want *anything* from you. I mean I would like it to be the way we were before we got to be the way we are.

CASSIE. God, you suffocate me sometimes ... I want to go home.

GLENN. Go home? We just got here. We haven't even seen anyone yet.

CASSIE. I don't know how I'm going to get through this night. They all know what's going on. They're your friends. Jesus, and you expect me to behave like nothing's happening.

GLENN. Nothing is happening. What are you talking about?

CASSIE. Don't you fucking lie to me. The whole goddam city knows about you and that cheap little chippy bimbo.

GLENN. Will you keep it down? Nothing is going on. You're blowing this up out of all proportions. I hardly know the woman. She's on the Democratic Fund Raising Committee. I met her and her husband at two cocktail parties, for God sakes.

CASSIE. Two cocktail parties, heh?

GLENN. Yes! Two cocktail parties.

CASSIE. You think I'm stupid?

GLENN. No.

CASSIE. You think I'm blind?

GLENN. No.

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RUMORS

CASSIE. You think I don't know what's been going on?

GLENN. Yes, because you don't.

CASSIE. I'm going to tell you something, Glenn. Are you listening?

GLENN. Don't you see my ears perking up?

CASSIE. I've known about you and Carole Newman for a year now.

GLENN. Amazing, since I only met her four months ago. Now I'm asking you to please lower your voice. That butler must be listening to everything.

CASSIE. You think I care about a butler and a bleeding cook? My friends know about your bimbo, what do I care about domestic help?

GLENN. I don't know what's gotten into you, Cassie. Do my political ambitions bother you? Are you threatened somehow because I'm running for the Senate?

CASSIE. *State Senate! State Senate!* Don't make it sound like we're going to Washington. We're going to Albany. Twenty-three degrees below zero in the middle of winter Albany. You're not *Time's* Man of the Year yet, you understand, honey?

GLENN. *(Turning away.)* Oh, boy, oh, boy, oh boy!

CASSIE. What was that?

GLENN. *(Deliberately.)* Oh-boy, oh-boy, oh-boy!

CASSIE. Oh, like I'm behaving badly, right? I'm the shrew witch wife who's giving you such a hard time. I'll tell you something, Mr. *State Senator*. I'm not the only one who knows what's going on. People are talking, kiddo. Trust me.

GLENN. What do you mean? You haven't said anything to anyone, have you?

START SIDE 5

CASSIE. Oh, is that what you're worried about? Your reputation? Your career? Your place in American history? You know what your place in American history will be? ... A commemorative stamp of you and the bimbo in a motel together.

GLENN. You are so hyper tonight, Cassie. You're out of control. You've been rubbing your quartz crystal again, haven't you? I told you to throw those damn crystals away. They're dangerous. They're like petrified cocaine.

*(CASSIE is looking through her purse.)*

END SIDE 5

GLENN. ... Don't take it out, Cassie. Don't rub your crystal at the party. It makes you crazy.

*(SHE takes out her crystal. HE grabs for it.)*

GLENN. Put it away. Don't let my friends see what you're doing.

CASSIE. Fine. Don't let my friends see what you're doing.

*(The guest room door opens. LENNY comes out onto the balcony.)*

LENNY. Glenn! Cassie! I thought it was you. How you doing?

KEN. *(From inside the guest room.)* I'm feeling better, thanks.

LENNY. Not you, Ken. It's Glenn and Cassie.

GLENN. *(Big smile.)* We're fine. Just great. Hi, Len ... Cassie, it's Len ... Cassie.

CASSIE. *(A quick nod.)* Leonard.

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Cassie is in the powder room formulating a plan to get back at Glenn. Suddenly, she opens the door and her femme fatale plan of revenge becomes obvious.

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START HERE

→ GLENN. Oh, she's fine. She's just in there trying to figure some way to get back at me. She'll come up with something.

*(The powder room door suddenly opens and CASSIE stands there with one arm extended up the door. Her hair is brushed over one eye. SHE looks sexy as hell, with a malevolent grin on her face. EVERYONE turns to look at her.)*

GLENN. Yeah, she's got one.

*(CASSIE crosses to the sofa, sits on the arm next to Lenny, practically leaning on him.)*

CASSIE. Please forgive me, everyone. I know I behaved badly tonight.

*(SHE smiles right at Lenny. HE smiles back, then looks away.)*

CASSIE. No, I really did ... and I apologize. I've had – well, I've had a rough day today, and I'm just not here tonight.

LENNY. That's okay. Neither are Charley and Myra.

CASSIE. *(Smiles at Lenny.)* That's funny. That's truly funny, Lenny. I can never think of anything funny. How do you do that?

LENNY. *(A bit flustered.)* I don't know ... I just ... *(Sees CLAIRE glaring at him.)* Can I get up and get you a glass of wine?

CASSIE. Why? Do I look like I need one?

RUMORS

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CLAIRE. Who is she getting back at, Glenn, you or me?

GLENN. *(Without looking at her.)* All right, Cassie, cut it out.

CASSIE. What do you mean, sweetheart.

GLENN. You know what I mean. Push your hair back up and sit on a chair.

CASSIE. *(Smiles at Glenn, then to Lenny.)* Do you know what he's talking about, Len?

CLAIRE. Excuse me. I'm going up to get Charley's gun.

ERNIE. Cassie, everyone here is your friend. Why don't you and I go out on the terrace and have a nice, quiet talk?

COOKIE. *(To Ernie.)* You do and you'll have a back worse than mine.

CASSIE. Oh, my goodness, I see what you're thinking. That is really incredible. Because the exact same thing happened to Glenn and me last week at a cocktail party for the Democratic Fund Raising Committee. There was the nicest woman there – very attractive, very sweet, very refined – and because sometimes I can feel so silly and so insecure, I thought she was coming on to Glenn. They got up to dance and they were as close as freshly-laid wallpaper.

GLENN. Okay, Cassie, I think we're going.

*(The INTERCOM on the phone buzzes.)*

KEN. *(Holding his chest.)* Excuse me. I must have eaten too quickly.

CHRIS. That was the intercom, Ken. Not you.

← End Side 6

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Glenn, in panic mode, rushes in the front door and announces the Police are outside. Everyone now starts to panic. They simultaneous peek out the window and discuss how and what to say to the cops.

RUMORS

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Do I know you? ... I see ... Well, hold on, please.  
(Covering the phone.) I don't think it's her.

COOKIE. Well, who does it sound like?

LENNY. Meryl Streep.

COOKIE. Meryl Streep? Why would Meryl Streep call here?

LENNY. I didn't say it *was* Meryl Streep. But you know how she sounds in the movies? Like she always does the character perfectly but it's not really her. That's how she sounds.

COOKIE. Like she's not Meryl Streep?

ERNIE. Now we're playing "Trivial Pursuit!" This is not a game show. Ken, will you please get Glenn?  
(Grabbing the phone from Lenny.) Hello? ... Somebody went to get Glenn ... Hello? ... (HE hangs up.) She hung up. She must have gotten suspicious.

KEN. Quiet down everyone. I hear something!

CLAIRE. I'll bet it's the Concorde landing in London.

KEN. It's a car coming up the driveway.

(HEADLIGHTS flash on the window.)

CLAIRE. Maybe it's Myra.

LENNY. Maybe it's Harry and Joan from Venezuela.

(The front door opens quickly and GLENN rushes in holding a bloody hanky to his nose.)

GLENN. We got trouble. Oh, God, have we got trouble.

KEN. What is it?

GLENN. The police. It's a police car.

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LENNY. (Loudly, pointing at Ken.) Okay! I warned you! I *told* you we should have called the police. Now look what's happened. The police came.

KEN. Who could have called the police?

CLAIRE. Maybe it was Myra.

CHRIS. Maybe it was Charley.

LENNY. Maybe it was Cassie. (To Glenn.) You were fighting with her, weren't you? Did she use the phone in my car?

GLENN. Not to call. She hit me with it.

LENNY. She broke my phone? My new phone in my new car?

ERNIE. Will everybody calm down. We've got to figure out what to say when they come in.

COOKIE. (Looking out the window.) They're trying to talk to Cassie. She won't roll down the windows.

LENNY. My windows? They're going to bust my windows? I'm going to take my car home in an envelope.

ERNIE. (To Glenn.) Why did you leave her out there in the car? She's in no condition to answer police questions.

GLENN. She's in good enough condition to smash my nose ... Goddam, I got blood on my shirt.

LENNY. And you're running for the State Senate? I wouldn't let you run for Chinese food.

CHRIS. What's wrong with you people? I've got a six-year-old child at home who behaves better than we do.

LENNY. Fine! Then get him over here and tell *him* to talk to the police.

KEN. Take it easy, Len. She's been doing her share. She's the one who called Dr. Dudley.

LENNY. EVERYBODY CALLED DR. DUDLEY. HE'S IN THE YELLOW PAGES IN CHINA!!

START SCENE 7



CLAIRE. Maybe Dudley called the police.

*(The TELEPHONE rings.)*

ERNIE. It's the phone again.

LENNY. He's right. He guessed it was the phone twice in a row. This genius is going to save our lives.

ERNIE. *(Picking up the phone.)* Hello? ... Yes? ... Just a minute, please. *(To Glenn.)* Glenn, it's for you. *(Announcing to the Group.)* It's the same woman who called before.

GLENN. *(Crossing to the phone.)* What same woman?

CLAIRE. She wouldn't say. Maybe it was Myra, maybe it was Meryl Streep.

GLENN. Meryl Streep?

CLAIRE. You know how she sounds in the movies? Like she always does the character perfectly, but it's not really her? That's how this person sounded.

LENNY. *(At the front door, looking out.)* We've got two policemen coming in, she's giving us a resume of the party.

COOKIE. *(Looking out the window.)* Oh, oh. They're walking over here.

GLENN. *(Into phone.)* Hello?

COOKIE. *(Hobbling away from the window.)* They're on the way over.

GLENN. *(Into phone.)* Oh, hi. How are you? ... No, it's not a cold, it's a telephone injury.

KEN. Now listen. The thing we can't do is let them see Charley. We can't let him downstairs or them upstairs.

GLENN. *(Into phone.)* I tried talking to Cassie, but she's very upset.

ERNIE. *(Gesturing importantly.)* Above all, no false statements. We must keep within the law. This above all, agreed?

LENNY. *(Mocking Ernie's gestures.)* Yea! To thine own self be true. Wherein the hearts of better men -- are you fucking crazy? They're outside the door.

GLENN. *(Into phone.)* Of course I think you should talk to her, but I can't get her out of the car.

KEN. They're going to ask about the gunshots. What do we tell them about the gunshots?

GLENN. *(Into phone.)* All right, I'll call you back in fifteen minutes. Are you at the nine-one-four number?

LENNY. Kill him! Somebody kill him! Choke him with the telephone wire.

*(The DOORBELL chimes.)*

END SCENE 7

CHRIS. I'm very serious about this, but I'm not going to be able to hold my bladder.

ERNIE. All right, I've got it. We tell them we never heard the gunshots.

CLAIRE. You mean lie to them?

LENNY. What happened to "this above all?"

ERNIE. It won't work tonight. Maybe some other time.

CHRIS. If you let me go to the bathroom, I promise I'll come back.

GLENN. *(Still on the phone.)* Listen, I know you're a good friend. And I thank you for all your wonderful support.

LENNY. Leave him here. Let's run for our lives and leave that schmuck for the cops.

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Officer Welch questions everyone.

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GLENN. Me? Yes. I put some drops in tonight and the cap fell off. Most of the bottle went in.

WELCH. May I have your name, sir?

GLENN. My name?

WELCH. Yes, sir.

GLENN. You mean, my name?

WELCH. Yes, sir ... Is there a problem with giving me your name?

GLENN. I'm sorry. I just can't see you very well.

WELCH. You don't have to see to talk, sir. The drops didn't go in your mouth, did they?

KEN. Officer, I feel you're being unnecessarily abusive to these people. If you're going to ask any more questions, you'll have to tell us what this is all about.

WELCH. Yes, sir. I will ... Can you please tell me who owns the BMW outside?

CLAIRE. It's my husband's car.

WELCH. And what is his name, please?

KEN. You don't have to answer that, Claire.

CLAIRE. His name is Len. Leonard Ganz.

WELCH. And where is Mr. Ganz now?

KEN. *(Like in court.)* I object.

WELCH. *(Annoyed.)* I ain't a judge! This ain't a court! I don't have a gavel! I just want to know where the man is.

KEN. You still haven't told us what this is about, so we're still not telling you where Mr. Ganz is.

WELCH. I don't know why I always have trouble in this neighborhood ... Okay ... *(Consulting his notebook.)* At approximately eight-fifteen tonight, an auto accident occurred on Twelfth and Danbury. A brand new red 1990 Porsche convertible with New York license plates, smashed into the side of a brand new BMW four-door sedan. Now,

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we know it wasn't the BMW's fault because the Porsche was a stolen car. Stolen at eight-fifteen tonight right off the dealer's lot. The man and the Porsche got away. Now do you know who that brand new Porsche belonged to?

CLAIRE. How would I know?

WELCH. It belonged to Deputy Mayor Charles M. Brock. Purchased today as a gift from his wife, Myra. A surprise wedding anniversary present.

CLAIRE. Surprise hardly says it.

KEN. Aha! So, you're here to investigate the car accident?

WELCH. That's right. Now if Mr. Ganz is here, I'd like to speak to him. And if he's not here, the police department would like to know where he is.

KEN. I see ... Do you think you could wait outside for one moment, officer?

WELCH. Why?

KEN. Mrs. Ganz is my client. I would like to consult with her before any further questioning. It's within my rights.

WELCH. ... One minute. That's all you get.

*(WELCH motions to PUDNEY and THEY BOTH go out the front door.)*

KEN. All right; we don't have much time. One of us has to be Lenny.

ERNIE. What are you talking about?

KEN. The man doesn't even know about the gunshots. He just wants to ask Lenny about the accident. But Lenny can't be Lenny because we need Lenny to be Charley in case he wants to ask Charley about the new car, and we

START SIDE 8

END SIDE 8

DESCRIPTION OF SCENE: Lenny "comes clean" and tells Officer Welch the story of what happened! And oh! what a story it is.

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START SIDE 9

completely toasted ... And then I smell the perfume. The perfume I could never resist ... I loved her in that moment with as much passion and ardor as the night we were first newlyweds. (*Rising. To Welch.*) I tell you this, not with embarrassment, but with pride and joy for a love that grows stronger and more lasting as each new day passes. We lay there spent, naked in each other's arms, complete in our happiness. It's now eight o'clock and outside it's grown dark. Suddenly, a gentle knock on the door. Knock knock knock. The door opens and a strange young man looks down at us with a knife in his hands. Myra screams. (*HE begins to act out the story.*) I jump up and run for the gun in my drawer. Myra grabs a towel and shields herself. I rush back in with the pistol, ready to save my wife's life. The strange young man says in Spanish, "Yo quito se dablo enchilada por quesada en quinto minuto." But I don't speak Spanish and I never saw Rosita's son, Romero, before, and I didn't know the knife was to cut up the salad and he was asking should they heat up the dinner now? So I aimed my gun at him, Myra screams and pulls my arm. The gun goes off and shoots me in the ear lobe. Rosita's son, Romero, runs downstairs and tells Rosita and Ramona, "Mamasetta! Meela que paso el hombre ay baco ay yah. El hombre que loco, que bang-bang"—the crazy man took a shot at him. So, Rosita, Ramona and Romero leave in a huff. My ear lobe is bleeding all over Myra's new dress. Suddenly we hear a car pull up. It's the first guests. Myra grabs a bathrobe and runs downstairs to stop Rosita, Ramona and Romero, otherwise we'll have no dinner. But they drive off in their Alfa Romeo. I look out the window, but it's dark and I think someone is stealing my beautiful old Mercedes, so I take another shot at them. Myra runs down to the basement where we keep the cedar

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chest. She's looking for the dress she wore last year for Bonds for Israel. She can't find the light, trips down the stairs, passes out in the dark. I run downstairs looking for Myra, notice the basement door is open and afraid the strange-looking kid is coming back, so I lock the door, not knowing that Myra is still down there. Then I run upstairs to take some aspirin because my ear lobe is killing me from the hole in it. But the blood on my fingers gets in my eyes and by mistake I take four Valium instead. I hear the guests downstairs and I want to tell them to look for Myra. But suddenly, I can't talk from the Valium, and I'm bleeding on the white rug. So I start to write a note explaining what happened, but the note looks like gibberish. And I'm afraid they'll think it was a suicide note and they'll call the police and my friend Glenn Cooper was coming it would be very bad for his campaign to get mixed up with a suicide, so I tore up the note and flushed it down the toilet, just as they walked into my room. They're yelling at me, "What happened? What happened?" And before I could tell them what happened, I passed out on the bed. And that's the whole goddam story, as sure as my name is ... (*HE opens his robe to expose the monogram "CB" on the pajamas.*) ... Charley Brock.

WELCH. (*Crossing to Lenny.*) I buy it. I buy the whole thing. You know why I buy it? I buy it because I liked it! I didn't believe it, but I liked it! I love my wife, too, and that's why I want to get home early ... (*Crossing to the front door.*) ... Sorry to bother you, folks. Take care of that ear, Mr. Brock, and happy anniversary.

(*WELCH and PUDNEY leave. The OTHERS turn and look at Lenny.*)

END SIDE 9