

THE DOUBLE TAKE



A HOLLYWOOD MURDER MYSTERY

SCRIPT & SOUNDTRACK MUSIC
BY
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INTRODUCTION

The action takes place in Hollywood, California, in September, 1952. All the action is confined to the murder scene (the living room of screenwriter Adam Gardiner's home), and two jazz clubs, "The Green Dolphin" and "Blinky's Blue Note."

On stage left, the 1950's living room should reflect Hollywood success, but a slightly austere artistic taste. There are two matched sitting chairs, a lamp, a sofa, and a coffee table with faux candles (electric) facing the audience. An art deco hi fi cabinet dominates the stage left "wall".

"Blinky's Blue Note" and "The Green Dolphin" occupy the same space on stage right. One bar table and four chairs should be set on risers. The risers should be angled and placed so that one riser corner cantilevers over the stage. This is to convey the idea of a balcony, and for projecting dialogue to the audience. If possible, a railing should form a "V" on the two sides of the riser overhang. As the bar scenes change, a neon sign should advertise "Blinky's" or "Green Dolphin".

The play requires a minimum of 6 actors, three male and three female. These include:

Erica Gardiner, 27, a screenwriter's assistant, jazz singer

Mike Seagram, 46, LAPD detective, sax player

Simone Chevrier, 49, mother of Nicole

Nicole Chevrier, 27, an actress

Judd Gardiner, 44, a film company accountant, father of Erica

One or two actors can play the following minor roles:

Adam Gardiner, 47, screenwriter (never illuminated)

A cabbie/ Green Dolphin MC

An LAPD policeman (no dialogue)

Blinky (no dialogue)

Pete Mackenzie, FBI agent

The jazz songs in the script are an integral part of the drama. Professionally recorded to CD format, they can be played to cues in sequence during performances, and sung or lip-synced by actors. No production of "Double Take" without these copyrighted songs is authorized, nor is any use of text or music without written permission of Paul McKay or his agent. All rights reserved. C 2012

SONG LIST:

1. Count Me In
2. Here's Hopin'
3. Maybe It's Crazy
4. When You Wish Upon a Star (Harline/Washington)
5. Deepest Tie That Binds
6. Just Me and the Blues
7. Perce Neige
8. Green Dolphin Duel

INTERMISSION

9. Bijou
10. Tattooed Blue
11. Penny's Lucky Number
12. Over the Rainbow (H. Arlen/Y. Harburg)
13. Manouche Moon
14. Bohemian Boulevard
15. Mystery Wind

DOUBLE TAKE

PROLOGUE

"Green Dolphin" neon bar sign lights up. Female MC appears, announces:

"And now, in a Friday night tradition, the Green Dolphin proudly presents our very own gypsy jazz chanteuse: Erica!

(Recorded applause)

Erica Gardiner takes mike on cantilevered set, and sings (or lip syncs) vocal for "Count Me In" to audience. Applause. Neon light fades.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

Dark stage. Last minute of jazz song "Here's Hopin'" plays on hi fi at Gardiner home. Stops. Sound of record arm, needle hitting vinyl. Song starts over again. Sound of door opening (stage left), two voices laughing.

NICKY: *(laughing)* We left the hi fi on!

ADAM: God! There'll be a groove right down to the turntable...

NICKY: *(giggling)* I can't find the switch.

ADAM: *(warm laughter)* You're half smashed, darling. How 'bout candles instead?

NICKY: Mmmm. Romantic.

Match lit, light trails to centre stage, goes out.

NICKY: *(giggles)* Ooops!

Another match flares, two (electric) candles on table at centre left stage are lit. They throw enough light to show living room furniture, Adam in dinner suit, Nicky in '50's summer dinner dress. Adam shuts off record. Nicky drapes herself backward across stuffed chair, kicks off shoes into air, laughing.

NICKY: Gee - my feet feel like I could dance all night! *(dreamily)* But my eyelids want me to sleep like the dead. You feel like that?

ADAM: *(leans over, kisses her cheek)* Nope. What you need is champagne. We've still got to have our private toast...

NICKY: *(laughing)* You've got a one track mind tonight!

ADAM: *(kisses her again)* Yeah, with two station stops just ahead. First the champagne. Then, under cover of darkness and cool sheets ...

NICKY: *(she laughs, imitates a train)* Whooo-woo! It's been more than a week.

ADAM: I'll get the champagne and glasses. *(leaves stage left, chugging and wheeling arms like a train)*

NICKY: *(calls after him)* Then 12 days of sleepin' 'til the crack of noon, right? Rooster crows, we strangle it!

ADAM: *(offstage)* Right! Then put him in a soup pot for dinner!

NICKY: *(stretches luxuriously, murmurs to herself)* Mmmm. No more movie lot shots at 5 a.m.

Cork pops offstage. Nicky jerks to attention, shakes her head to clear it.

NICKY: Hey! You gonna take a century? *(she jumps up)* I know! Music! *(she goes to record player, jazz song "Maybe It's Crazy" comes on. She dances back to candles, humming, singing snatches of words. Adam comes with bottle and four glasses on tray.*

NICKY: *(murmuring)* Our song.

ADAM: Yeah.

NICKY: *(putting her arms around his neck)* C'mon, handsome. Let's dance.

ADAM: Only after we toast. *(He gives her glass, holds up his to her)* To my lovely Nicole, on the day her first picture premiered. Twice. With completely opposite endings!

(Both laugh. He drinks all in one draught, throws glass at wall. She laughs again, does same. He gives her second glass. He pours his own, hers, they clink glasses, drink, put back on tray. Then he takes her in arms, they dance slowly to the music.

NICKY: *(murmurs, words slightly slurred)* I love you, Adam. I could die happy, right now.

ADAM: Me too, darling. More than you know.

They dance, she falls behind beat, obviously about to pass out. She sings snatches of final chorus, "Maybe it's crazy, but I'm just a lazy..." Record stops. She passes out in Adam's arms. He carries her over to chair, lays her gently over chair arms. Gives tender kiss. Checks her

cheek with back of hand, then pulse. Song repeats.

Adam waywardly leaves from stage left briefly, returns, puts a sheaf of papers on top of the stereo. Checks his watch. Takes out packet, pours powder into his champagne glass, drinks in gulp. Repeats. Checks her pulse again. Lifts her eyelids. Kisses her tenderly. Takes gun from under other chair cushion, shoots Nicki three times in stomach. Staggeres to other chair, falls to knees before he makes it. Gun drops to floor.

Ten seconds later, front door opens. Figure in black coat, fedora and trousers comes stealthily to table, surveys scene. Adam is still weaving on knees, barely illuminated by candle lights.

ADAM: (sees figure, gets up, almost inaudible, very slurred speech) "My unfriendly witness"...

Figure grabs pillow, puts it over barrel, shoots him twice in stomach. Blast drives him backwards over chair onto floor, hidden from audience. Figure checks Nicky, puts smoking gun below her hand. Starts to leave, notices packet. Takes off glove, puts in finger, tastes. Pours rest of packet powder on Nicky's dress.

VOICE: (offstage) Hey! What the hell? Somebody got a gun in there?

Taxi driver comes in front door as figure disappears through kitchen door. On way by, figure sees papers, grabs them, knocks record player. Song skips to end. Seconds later "Maybe It's Crazy" starts again.

CABBIE: Hey! (no answer) Somebody here call a cab for L.A. Airport, 11:10 sharp? (steps further in, sees scene) Oh - Jesus Christ! Lookit the blood!

Candles (electric) fade. Lights out for ten seconds. Music stops.

Ten seconds later, two room lamps come up. Adam's feet visible behind chair. Nicky in same position. Cabbie sits on edge of chair.

SEAGRAM: *(yelling out door)* Check out back for a jimmed window. Get the glasses dusted for prints by breakfast. Press'll be all over this by noon. *(takes flask from vest, turns to taxi driver)*

Here, you need a shot.

CABBIE: *(takes long swallow, offers it back. Seagram motions him to keep it)* Thanks.

SEAGRAM: What'd ya see?

CABBIE: Thought I heard shots. Two. But muffled. I came in that door. There they were.

SEAGRAM: *(makes notes)* Two? You sure?

CABBIE: *(shrugs)* Two's all I heard. Muffled. *(nods to pillow on floor)* Looks like that pillow woulda done that.

SEAGRAM: How'd you happen by?

CABBIE: Got a dispatch. 2247 Alvarado. 11:10 sharp.

SEAGRAM: Goin'?

CABBIE: L.A. airport. Caller said there'd be an extra 20 bucks for gettin' here on the dot, and gettin' a plane by midnight.

SEAGRAM: When'd the call come in?

CABBIE: 'Bout six. Was waitin' for that tip all night.

SEAGRAM: Hear anythin' else?

CABBIE: (*Shakes head, pause*) But I mighta seen somethin.

SEAGRAM: (*motions him to take another drink*) What?

CABBIE: Just as I came in the door, somebody was slippin' out there. There was just candles. But I'm pretty sure it was a guy.

SEAGRAM: Whadja see?

CABBIE: Mustve been a guy. I woulda known a dame's legs. Had black pants, a coat, a fedora.

SEAGRAM: They make any noise? Opening a door or window?

CABBIE: Naw. Quiet as a cat.

SEAGRAM: (*dubious*) Anythin' else? You smell perfume, booze, cigarettes?

CABBIE: Naw. Nothin'.

SEAGRAM: You called us? From that phone?

CABBIE: Yeah. (*pause*) Sorry. Guess my prints'd be on it.

SEAGRAM: You turn the record player off?

CABBIE: Yeah. It was drivin' me nuts. "Maybe It's Crazy" over and over.

SEAGRAM: There's a bad scratch.

CABBIE: (*memory jolted*) That's right! The guy knocked it. Grabbing some papers, maybe?

SEAGRAM: Don't ask me. Tell me what you saw.

CABBIE: Guy scooped up papers. Then - pftttt! Less'n two seconds.

Seagram gives him sharp glance, makes notes, cabbie drinks. Cabbie steals glance at bodies.

CABBIE: World don't figure, eh?

SEAGRAM: What?

CABBIE: (*nods to scene*) They drink champagne, then put slugs in each other.

SEAGRAM: (*shrugs*) What's new? (*pause*) You're done.

Cabbie nods, hands flask to Seagram, leaves by front door. Seagram methodically checks scene: position of Adam's body, position of Nicky, tastes empty packet, inspects broken glass by wall, checks record player. Picks up manila envelope from floor beside record player. Reads address. Makes notes. Knock on front door.

JUDD: (*offstage*) Adam! Adam? You home?

More knocks. Seagram re-enters, opens door.

JUDD: What the hell? Who are you? Where's Adam?

SEAGRAM: (*flashes badge, blocks door*) Mike Seagram.

Detective. LAPD. Who're you?

JUDD: Adam Gardiner's brother. Where is he?

SEAGRAM: Who's the lady?

SIMONE: Simone Chevrier. Nicole Chevrier's mother. I got a call from the police. What's happened? Where's Nicky?

SEAGRAM: Ma'am, I'm afraid...

Simone rushes into room, gasps at Nicky, wheels to look at Seagram.

SIMONE: My baby???

SEAGRAM: ... she's dead.

Simone collapses, falls to floor. Judd races into room, see's Nicky, knees buckle, then kneels to revive Simone.

JUDD: Adam. Where's Adam?

SEAGRAM: Behind the chair.

Judd rises, looks behind chair, puts hand to mouth, sinks into chair, hangs head. Long silence. Seagram goes into kitchen, comes back with two glasses of water. Hands one to Judd.

JUDD: *(hollowly)* What happened? A robbery?

SEAGRAM: Maybe. It's a toney part of town. They keep a lot of money here?

JUDD: (*shakes head*) It's his house. She lives --- lived in Santa Monica. An apartment near her mother. (*pause*) He never kept much money here.

SEAGRAM: Art? Jewels?

JUDD: No.

SEAGRAM: Drugs?

JUDD: He'd never touch the stuff. (*buries head in hands*) Jesus! This is awful. Senseless...

Simone stirs, looks up at Judd, sobs. He goes and comforts her. Seagram hands her glass. She drinks.

SIMONE: (*trembling voice*) Who did it? Who killed my baby?

SEAGRAM: That's what I'm here to find out, ma'am. But if you're not up to answering questions now, we could do it later downtown...

SIMONE: No! I want you to find the killer, and find him fast. We'll do anything to help. What do you need to know?

SEAGRAM: You want to go into another room? Away from...?

SIMONE: No. Where's Adam?

JUDD: Dead. Behind the chair.

SIMONE: (*gasps, buries head in Judd's shoulder*) Oh, Judd. Not both of them?

Long silence while they console each other.

JUDD: What do you need to know, detective?

SEAGRAM: (*takes out notebook*) Just the basics for now. Age. Jobs. Family ties. Their relationship.

JUDD: My brother was 47. A screenwriter. We co-owned a movie investment company. I'm the accountant. We sold his screenplays, bought into other films, rented production equipment and set up locations. We were raised back east. Our parents are dead. No other brothers or sisters.

SEAGRAM: And his relationship to her?

JUDD: Well, they were...

SIMONE: Professional associates.

SEAGRAM: You sure?

SIMONE: Damn sure. Nicole was 27. Mr. Gardiner could have been her - was twice his age. She was an ascending actress. She finished her first film this morning.

Long pause.

SEAGRAM: She had a negligee in her purse, ma'am. They were drinking champagne...

SIMONE: I don't give a damn, detective. My daughter did not build her career from the casting couch! She made it on talent.

Awkward pause.

SEAGRAM: Okay. Was Gardiner involved in the picture she made?

JUDD: Wasn't his kind of film. But I set up a 28 percent interest. Adam was never on the set. Studios forbid it.

SIMONE: He did give her advice on acting. And recommended her for roles. But it was purely professional. He knew she had it.

SEAGRAM: The picture gonna make a million?

JUDD: It better. The studio strike just got squelched, so it finished on time and on budget.

SEAGRAM: But now the star's dead.

JUDD: That could go either way. You never know. It could play big as Nicky's only picture. Or drive 'em away.

SEAGRAM: The studio's covered by insurance for that?

JUDD: Yes. That's standard.

SEAGRAM: And the investors?

JUDD: (*uneasily*) Well, there'd be the same protection as the studios.

SIMONE: Detective, I'd like to leave now. If you've finished.

SEAGRAM: Sure. Just a few more. Where's her father?

SIMONE: (*coldly*) Dead and buried.

SEAGRAM: Pardon?

SIMONE: I mean - he's been out of the picture for twenty five years. I was just a kid in New York. He got me pregnant, then took off. I brought Nicky up alone. Haven't seen him since the Depression hit.

SEAGRAM: Your daughter have enemies?

SIMONE: Absolutely not. Everyone loved her.

SEAGRAM: Hollywood's a tough town. Lots of ambition. People get jealous, cross paths ...

SIMONE: Detective - are you saying another actress might have done this? That's absurd. Only a man could make that mayhem.

SEAGRAM: Maybe. Your daughter ever get involved with a bad crowd? Drugs?

SIMONE: Never! She barely drank. She never ran with the wrong people. I made sure of that.

SEAGRAM: Reason I ask is... *(long pause, studies her carefully)* there's heroin powder all over her dress. And on the glasses we sent out for prints.

SIMONE: That's impossible. Never. Nicki turned her back to anybody who took drugs or sold them.

JUDD: She's right. Adam, too. He led the fight in the studios to keep drugs out.

SEAGRAM: Maybe I'm wrong. Sorry. One last question: what's the relationship between you two?

SIMONE: We are professional acquaintances, detective. And - intimate friends. That's why we both came after the police phoned me. We plan to be married at Christmas.

SEAGRAM: I see. Okay, thanks. I may have more questions, but we can do that later. (*leads them to door*) The bodies will be at the morgue in an hour. But there's no need for you to identify them there. I'll take care of the papers.

SIMONE: And - Nicki's burial?

SEAGRAM: There'll have to be an autopsy first, ma'am.

SIMONE: No! I won't have her mutilated even more!

JUDD: Detective, that would be obscene...

SEAGRAM: I'm sorry, folks. Two people are dead. The wounds aren't self-inflicted. That means homicide - and an autopsy. Which may help me find the...

Pounding on door.

ERICA: (*offstage*) Uncle Adam! Uncle Adam! Are you there? It's Erica!

Simone and Judd exchange shocked glances.

SEAGRAM: Who's Erica?

JUDD: My daughter. But...

More knocking. Seagram opens door, blocks entrance. Flashes

badge.

ERICA: (*offstage, panic-stricken*) The police? Oh, God - is it true? Where's Nicky? Where's Uncle Adam?

SEAGRAM: Is what true?

ERICA: The radio. Said Nicole Chevrier's been shot on Alvarado. This is the only place she knows out here. What's happened?

Seagram lets her in. She takes two steps inside, sees Simone and Judd, draws sharp breath, freezes.

ERICA: (*to detective*) What are they doing here? What's going on?

JUDD: Erica, honey, we've got some terrible...

SIMONE: (*snarls at Seagram*) The radio! Their bodies aren't even cold and your men have leaked it to the radio.

ERICA: (*screams*) What bodies? (*she runs past them, takes in scene, detective grabs her, pins her arms as she sinks to floor and sobs*)

Nicky! Oh God! It's Nicky? That's what's left of her...?

She sobs, shoulders wracking, for half a minute. Detective gives her flask, she takes belt. She sobs...

She was so sweet and beautiful. There was nobody like her...

More sobbing. She takes another belt.

Where's Uncle Adam?

Pained silence.

SEAGRAM: He's dead too. Behind that chair.

ERICA: Oh, God no! (*buries her head in Seagram's shoulder, cries, then wipes tears away*) Who did it?

Seagram says nothing. Erica looks at Judd, then long, bitter stare at Simone.

ERICA: (*louder*) Who did it?

SEAGRAM: That's what I'm here to figure out.

JUDD: It looks like a robbery, honey.

ERICA: (*to detective*) Is that true?

Seagram shrugs, offers her flask. She pushes it away.

What was stolen? (*looks at Seagram, Judd, Simone*) What was stolen?

SEAGRAM: Nothing that I can tell. Her purse had \$1,000 cash. His wallet had over three grand. She's wearin' a pearl necklace. Your father says there was no paintings or other valuables...

SIMONE: One thousand ..?

ERICA: (*ignoring her*) How would he know? He hasn't been in this house in two years. My father and Uncle Adam barely spoke.

JUDD: (*lamely*) Now, honey. That's not true. You've had a bad shock. We all have...

SIMONE: And their company affairs are hardly any of your business, Erica. Particularly at a moment like...

ERICA: Is that because you've made them *yours*, you bitch?

JUDD: Erica!

Long silence. Erica defiantly stares down Judd and Simone.

SEAGRAM: (*to Erica*) How'd you get here?

ERICA: Taxi.

SEAGRAM: Okay, folks, it's been a bad night. Why don't you two go home? I'll call when the autopsy's done, so you can make funeral arrangements. I'll give Erica a lift home in my car.

JUDD: But her apartment is on our way.

ERICA: I'm not spending a second with those two.

SEAGRAM: She's a big girl. You two go. (*He ushers them out, closes door firmly, swishes flask.*)

SEAGRAM: There's about two shots left. You wanta split 'em?

Erica nods. She takes drink. He takes one.

SEAGRAM: This is a bloody one. I don't want you to go closer. But they're both dead. I'd say just after 11.

He slides over a chair, she slumps into it.

Can I ask you some questions? (*she nods yes*)

Were Nicky and your uncle lovers? (*she nods yes*)

For how long?

ERICA: Nearly a year.

SEAGRAM: Your father and Simone knew that?

ERICA: Yeah. But they didn't like it. I mean, Simone didn't. He went along.

SEAGRAM: Why not?

ERICA: Simone's a gold digger. Nicky's her meal ticket. She - and the studio - figured the fastest way to the jackpot was for Nicky to be the next Paulette Goddard. But *stay* a virgin - onscreen and off.

SEAGRAM: So Nicky and Gardiner kept it secret?

ERICA: Not to anyone with eyes. They adored each other. They couldn't hide it.

SEAGRAM: They ever fight?

ERICA: Little stuff. Nothin' that stuck.

SEAGRAM: They had a lot of dough on 'em.

ERICA: Uncle Adam always carried a roll. But \$1,000 cash is a lot for Nicki. Simone kept her on an allowance.

SEAGRAM: She was 27.

ERICA: Simone's a studio dragon. She negotiated all the contracts, and signed Nicki over to the agent Drew Van Klassen. That bastard gets 49 per cent, plus expenses. Simone keeps 25 per cent, plus expenses. My father keeps the accounts. Nicki gets what's left.

SEAGRAM: So there'd be no percentage in them doin' somethin' like this?

ERICA: No. And they always work the percentages.

SEAGRAM: You're a brainy dame. College?

ERICA: (*nods*) I get around.

SEAGRAM: You and Nicki were close.

ERICA: (*stiffens slightly*) We were always together before the war.

SEAGRAM: And then?

ERICA: The studio decided she was the girl next door. That every G.I wanted to come home to. She went on location in Culver City. I went to college at Stanford. Simone liked it that way.

SEAGRAM: Tell you what. I'll make a deal. You sit tight on that chair, and I'll see if I can find somethin' to drink.

ERICA: Sure. There's bourbon. Top cupboard, second from right.

Seagram goes into kitchen, comes back with bottle, gives to Erica. She takes belt, hands to him. He offers her cigarette, she smokes.

SEAGRAM: Simone doesn't like you. And vice versa. You didn't

want Nicki in pictures?

ERICA: (*shakes head*) It wasn't that. She was beautiful, talented. Uncle Adam knew that. But Simone and Van Klassen got her shit scripts. They were making her into just another B lot blonde.

SEAGRAM: And you think pictures should be "art"?

ERICA: (*snaps*) I think they should say something about reality. But this town can't stand that.

SEAGRAM: (*grins*) You got it there, sister. Public wants cops like me to be smart as Bogart, tough as Cagney, and honest as Abe Lincoln. On six grand a year.

ERICA: (*laughs*) Yeah.

SEAGRAM: You see much of Nicki after college?

NICKI: Sure. Couple times a week. We'd see movies, go to the beach. Buy clothes. But she was on her way up. Busier all the time.

SEAGRAM: And you?

NICKI: I worked for Uncle Adam. Script research. You know, checking whether there really was a Fremont Street in San Francisco when the earthquake hit.

SEAGRAM: Boyfriends?

NICKI: Nobody's under the porch light right now.

SEAGRAM: Why not? You're a looker.

NICKI: Thanks. But beauty's in the eyes of the beholder. Both ways. You married?

SEAGRAM: (*startled*) Was. Before the war.

NICKI: And?

SEAGRAM: She found some shore boy while I was flyin' a P-41 in the Pacific.

NICKI: Ouch.

SEAGRAM: (*takes belt, hands bottle to her*) Yeah, ouch.

They light new cigarettes.

SEAGRAM: You've been straight with me Erica. Can I be straight with you?

ERICA: You mean about Nicky and my uncle?

SEAGRAM: Yeah. (*pause*) They into dope?

ERICA: No way. Never. Neither of them would touch the stuff. My uncle tried to clean cocaine out of the studios. Why?

SEAGRAM: Nicki's dress is covered in heroin powder. It was in their champagne glasses.

ERICA: That's all wrong. (*thinks*) Whoever broke in?

SEAGRAM: (*shakes head*) Doesn't figure. Why would they waste it? And force them to drink it before they were killed? Then leave all that cash? (*pause*) Unless somebody was after something else. Got any

ideas?

Erica shakes head. Long silence. Seagram gives her sharp glance.

SEAGRAM: There was an empty manila envelope. On the carpet by the record player.

ERICA: *(gives him puzzled look)* What was in it?

SEAGRAM: Nothin'. It was addressed to Senator Richard Nixon. Care of Rose Mary Woods, Whitier, California.

Erica stiffens, says nothing.

SEAGRAM: That mean somethin'?

ERICA: *(folding her arms)* No. Why should it?

SEAGRAM: I don't know. I'm askin' you.

Erica says nothing, takes drink. Awkward silence.

SEAGRAM: Any reason they might want to kill themselves?

ERICA: *(draws in sharp breath)* No! They were in love. Just radiant together.

SEAGRAM: Still, most people in this town have somethin' on the side. I find the pieces.

ERICA: Not them. Uncle Adam was the only man Nicki ever fell for. He loved her like he loved his work. He was uncorruptible.

SEAGRAM: Nobody is.

ERICA: (*snaps*) Speak for yourself.

SEAGRAM: No bad debts? No blackmail? No skeletons?

ERICA: None. If you find any, I'll buy you a quart of this at your favourite bar.

SEAGRAM: That'd be Blinky's. Just south of Malibu.

ERICA: I'd of never figured jazz.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. I blew tenor sax for army and airforce shows when we were fightin' in the Pacific. So you know Blinky's place! You a jazz girl?

ERICA: Sure. But gypsy jazz, like they play in Paris. Or that raw, wild blues by Ray Charles. Sometimes I sing at another club....

SEAGRAM: Oh yeah? Which one...

ERIC: (*cutting him off*) Forget I mentioned it. (*awkward pause*) It's just amateur stuff. But hey, I heard Charlie Parker might be comin' out west.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Heard that too. With Gillespie on trumpet.

Both smoke, trade bottle.

SEAGRAM: Listen, Erica. I've gotta ask a rough one.

ERICA: Ask.

SEAGRAM: Nobody broke in. Nobody stole anything. A cabbie

got here as the shots were fired. He came in the open door and saw Nicky and Gardiner just like they are now. Nobody touched a thing. She had three in her, he had two in him. None were self-inflicted. One gun was underneath her hand, another under his.

Tell me how that's not a double suicide?

ERICA: (*stands, throws glass against wall*) NO! That's impossible! Somebody must be framing them!

She breaks down and sobs. He grabs her shoulders, shakes her very hard.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? Then maybe it was *you* the cabbie saw slidin' out the back when he came in?

ERICA: (*gasps*) He saw someone? Then that must have been the murderer!

Seagram shakes her hard again.

SEAGRAM: Where were you tonight, you griffin' little bitch! You know the house inside out - bourbon, top cupboard, second on the right. You knew them better than anybody. So where were you at eleven o'clock?

He wrenches her wrist, puts his head up behind her ear. They struggle, Erica breaks free, snarls at him in fury.

ERICA: Keep your dirty paws off, mister. You don't know shit, so you're tryin' to twist somethin' out of me. Well, you can take this to the bank: I'd sooner kill *myself* than put a bullet in Nicky. It amounts to the same thing.

Pained silence. Both gasping, staring each other down.

SEAGRAM: (*shouts*) Where? At 11?

ERICA: In my apartment. Ask my cat.

SEAGRAM: (*long pause, studies her hard*) Okay. (*pause*) Sorry. It's been a lousy night. The bourbon went to my head. I'll give you a lift home.

ERICA: Not a chance. I'm callin' a cab.

SEAGRAM: Okay. (*pauses, exhaling hard*) I can't leave 'til the morgue car gets here anyway.

Lights out.

END OF ACT 1, SCENE 1

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Stage dark. "Green Dolphin" neon sign lights up. Erica at mike, sings "Deepest Tie That Binds". Lights fade. "Blinky's Blue Note" sign lights up. Seagram alone at table, at corner behind rail on risers. Seagram finishes sandwich, coffee as he reads newspapers. A stack of them is on one chair. He dials phone at table.

SEAGRAM: Larry. (*listens*) I know. They're crawlin' all over the precinct, too. Keep Gardiner's house sealed. Put a guy front and back. (*listens*) No. I'll work outa here. I don't, a swarm'll be on me every move I make. And it'll be on the front pages next day. (*listens*) They got squat. The Herald had her cut in half by machine guns. Tommorrow it'll be Al

Capone climbed outa his coffin and did it ...

Judd strides to table in fury, slams newspaper down on table. Spreads out so Seagram can see headline.

SEAGRAM: (*hanging up*) Later, Larry. Mornin' Mr. Gardiner. I'm sorry...

JUDD: Look at this shit, Seagram! Can you imagine what it's like reading this (*slams fist on paper*) when they're not even buried yet? Simone's convinced the funeral might have to be out of state.

SEAGRAM: She's right. It'd be a circus.

JUDD: Then do something! This is trash.

SEAGRAM: Sure. But I can't shut 'em down. There's the U.S. constitution.

JUDD: Screw the constitution. What about the truth?

SEAGRAM: That word ain't in it.

Long pause.

Look, Gardiner. I'm sorry about the press. I could count the guys that ain't scum on one hand. They make my life hell, too. But nobody knows I'm here. Nobody knows you're here. That's the only way I can work.

JUDD: (*sitting down*) Oh.

SEAGRAM: (*nodding "down" to lower floor*) I'm a regular. Sometimes I sit in on sax with the house band. This table's my other

office. Blinky lets me use it mornin's, off hours. Bar's open 4 to 4 am. *(pause)* But I can get you a drink.

Judd shakes head.

I'll fill you in on what we got so far, then I've got some more questions. Okay?

Judd nods.

The morgue puts the death at between 10:30 and 11:30 Friday night. That's from the wounds, the drugs, stomach contents. The cabbie got there at exactly ten after 11. Heard shots. So they both...

JUDD: A cabbie heard shots? Somebody was there?

SEAGRAM: Yeah. He was inside half a minute later.

JUDD: He see anything? *(pause)* The thieves?

SEAGRAM: Thieves? What makes you think there was more than one person?

JUDD: *(stumbling)* Hey, Seagram. I didn't mean it like that. It was just a figure of speech...

Seagram gives him curious stare.

SEAGRAM: Okay. Sure. *(pause)* The cabbie didn't have anything sure, 'cept pinning the time. Oh. There was one other thing: someone had booked that cab to get there at 11:10.

JUDD: *(genuinely shocked)* You're kidding? Who?

SEAGRAM: Don't know. Maybe your brother. The cabbie said the fare was to LA airport. I checked. Someone named Gardiner had two seats booked to Mexico City that night. Paid in advance.

JUDD: They were skippin' town.

SEAGRAM: (*zeroing in*) Now why'd you say that, Gardiner? Maybe it was just a business trip. Or a vacation. Why "skippin' town"?

JUDD: (*lamely*) I don't know. It was just the first thing... just another figure of speech.

SEAGRAM: Your full of those, aren't you Gardiner? You think your brother had a reason to skip town?

JUDD: No. No. That's not what I was sayin'...

SEAGRAM: He and you fighting about business?

JUDD: No. Not at all. We were just about to set up a new...

SEAGRAM: A new what?

JUDD: (*nervous*) Ah. Well, set up a new kind of - reorganize the investments. But it had nothing to do with Friday night.

SEAGRAM: Sure. So just fill me in.

JUDD: Well - are you saying I'm a suspect or something, Seagram? Because like I said, it had nothing to do with...

SEAGRAM: That's not what I'm saying, Gardiner. But look. You want me to solve this quick. The book says I gotta go through his business and personal stuff. So does my chief. And the DA.

JUDD: Well, sure then. Okay. *(pause)* Financing movies is a crap shoot on a rollercoaster. Fifteen per cent make what 75 per cent lose. Ten per cent break even.

SEAGRAM: The ponies at Santa Anita are a better bet.

JUDD: *(nods)* Your odds get way better if you're tied into everything: the script, the acting, set locations which affect production costs, the financing, promotion. You've got control. That why studio bosses like Mayer and Zanuck stay bosses.

SEAGRAM: Makes sense.

JUDD: Yeah. But remember, it's a rollercoaster. Even they blow big dough some times on the way down. A scripts' no good. They don't promote it enough. Peoria can't get the plot. The studio starlet gets pregnant during...

He breaks off, looks at Seagram quickly.

SEAGRAM: During the shoot. Then what happens?

JUDD: *(lamely)* Well, that could be it.

SEAGRAM: For the picture? Or her career?

JUDD: Maybe both.

SEAGRAM: Was she pregnant?

JUDD: Nicky? No way.

SEAGRAM: How do you know that?

JUDD: (*lamely*) She would have told Simone. (*pause*) Nicky knew the score: every studio contract has a morals clause.

SEAGRAM: Meaning?

JUDD: They could rip up her contract. But she wasn't that kind of girl!

SEAGRAM: (*boring in*) What kind of girl?

JUDD: (*stammers*) She'd get married first!

SEAGRAM: Before she had sex with a man, you mean?

JUDD: Yes.

SEAGRAM: So she was a virgin at 27? And you know she wasn't pregnant because she didn't tell her mother?

JUDD: (*firmly*) Yes.

SEAGRAM: Cut the shit, Gardiner. She had a diaphragm in her purse on Friday night.

Pained silence.

Was she pregnant?

JUDD: (*head in hands*) I don't know. I don't think so. There wasn't any sign.

SEAGRAM: But you knew she was having an affair with your brother. For the last year.

JUDD: Yeah. We knew.

SEAGRAM: So you both lied to me, Gardiner. Why?

JUDD: The publicity. Simone said if the press found a sex angle, Nicky's name'd be smeared forever. The murder coverage was bad enough.

SEAGRAM: Then she figured that out in a split second on Friday night. When I asked you what Nicky was doin' with your brother.

Judd says nothing.

SEAGRAM: And if she's that smart, she'd also know that a pregnant Nicky would kill her picture. And your chunk of it.

Judd says nothing.

SEAGRAM: That's startin' to look like a motive to me, pal.

JUDD: (*snaps*) Yeah? Well don't forget Adam had a chunk of that picture too! You think he didn't know what would happen if he got her pregnant?

SEAGRAM: (*backing off*) Right. That makes sense. Sorry, Gardiner. But don't lie to me again. It makes me suspicious.

JUDD: Okay.

SEAGRAM: (*takes out notebook, writes*) Tell me about your brother. You were raised back east?

JUDD: Long Island. Our parents died in a car accident. 1924. I was

seventeen. Adam was nineteen. He joined a stage company. Acted. Wrote reviews. Kicked around. Went to Spain in '36. Carried stretchers. Took a bullet in the leg.

SEAGRAM: And then?

JUDD: He came back and wrote a novel about the Spanish civil war. In the hospital. It was good, but Hemingway published his first. The Dorothy Parker crowd liked him, so he came out to Hollywood to write screenplays. They drank themselves to death. He worked instead.

SEAGRAM: No wife? No kids?

JUDD: He was married to pictures, Seagram. Except for something that blew up when he was twenty, Adam never found a girl he was serious about.

SEAGRAM: Until Nicki.

JUDD: Yeah. And look how that ended up. He should have stuck to movies.

SEAGRAM: You were close?

JUDD: When we were kids. He paid my way out west when I got out of commerce school. Said Internal Revenue'd put him in jail if he didn't get his books straightened out. That was true. He barely knew or cared where a nickel came from or went.

SEAGRAM: That's why he carried cash.

JUDD: Yeah. So we went in together. He made the money. I re-invested it, kept the taxes down, and we split the profits.

SEAGRAM: But things got tense? In the business.

JUDD: Well, he never liked Simone. Instant they met, there was something. It happens. And we didn't agree on politics.

SEAGRAM: Politics? Who does?

JUDD: (*laughs, easing up*) Yeah. Well, like I said: he volunteered in Spain. The fight to end fascism. When he got back, he was with the left crowd in New York, then out here. He wrote for some damn good war films.

SEAGRAM: His leg kept him stateside while we fought the Japs and Germans?

JUDD: Yeah. (*taps thick glasses*) Bad eyes saved my skin. What saved yours?

SEAGRAM: (*acidly*) A P-41 engine and my buddies flyin' cover over Okinawa.

JUDD: (*embarrassed pause*) I did help set up a flight simulator for B-17 bomber crews in Culver City. Trained a few thousand pilots on it. Ronald Reagan recorded sound tracks over maps of Tokyo. He got exempted for his eyes too.

SEAGRAM: Yeah?

JUDD: (*laughs*) Reagan was terrified of flying. Still is. Won't go up in one. But everybody remembers him as the R.A.F flyboy in "International Squadron."

SEAGRAM: I hate war movies. The hero shit.

Uncomfortable pause.

JUDD: Reagan's head of the Screen Actors Guild. That's what I meant about politics.

SEAGRAM: I'm not followin'.

JUDD: You know, the blacklist. Cleaning commies out of Hollywood. The Hollywood Ten.

SEAGRAM: (*shrugs*) Never paid much attention.

JUDD: It divided the town. Still does. The studios were dead set against unions. So they got California's biggest anti-commie, Richard Nixon, to lead the Hollywood hearings. Dutch Reagan and his agent lined up a bunch of stars to name names for the blacklist, and vote down a studio strike.

He pauses.

The ones who wouldn't kiss Nixon's ass were "unfriendly witnesses". Adam never got called, but he fought the blacklist. He found out Reagan was an FBI informant. He despised Reagan, Nixon, Van Klassen - that whole crowd.

SEAGRAM: And you?

JUDD: (*shrugs*) I know Dutch. Met him in Culver City. The nicest guy you'd ever want to meet. Know Nixon, too. (*laughs*). Now he's runnin' as Ike's vice-president.

SEAGRAM: Your brother a commie?

JUDD: Naw. He just wanted to make great pictures. Some of those

lefties were the best writers. And actors. Like Melvyn Douglas. He hated Nixon for smearin' Douglas's wife in that 1950 Senate race.

SEAGRAM: That put a wedge between you and your brother?

JUDD: Yeah. You could say.

SEAGRAM: No business problems?

JUDD: No. Nothing like that.

SEAGRAM: What's this company reorganization about then?

JUDD: Oh, that. Well, like I said, it's a rollercoaster business. If you get wise to something coming, you consolidate. It was just shifting company money into certain new properties.

SEAGRAM: How much?

JUDD: How much? Well, I don't really want to go into too many...

SEAGRAM: The DA'll give me a search warrant for those records in an hour. That'll put the press onto it.

JUDD: (*instantly*) A couple of million.

SEAGRAM: What's a couple?

JUDD: Four.

SEAGRAM: Four million. You're "re-organizing" four million. That have anything to do with your friend whose the friend of Nixon?

JUDD: (*lamely*) Van Klassen? Well, yeah. But financially they're

sound investments. Practically no risk.

SEAGRAM: That's not the way your brother would have seen it, though. Right?

JUDD: Right.

Long pause.

SEAGRAM: Okay, Gardiner. That's it for now. I get the full autopsy report this afternoon. (*checks watch*) The bodies will be released to you and Simone after that. My advice? Wait for me to fix it so they're delivered in an unmarked car. That'll keep the press out of it.

JUDD: Thanks.

SEAGRAM: I've got to see the company records. Will I need a search warrant?

JUDD: (*reluctantly*) No.

SEAGRAM: One last thing. Your brother's bad leg. It bother him?

JUDD: Yeah. Sometimes he couldn't sleep. His doctor gave him some drug. Knocked him out.

SEAGRAM: The doc?

JUDD: Last I knew, guy named Morton in Pasadena.

SEAGRAM: (*writes down*) Thanks. Call me about the funeral.

JUDD: Yeah. Okay. Thanks.

Judd leaves. Lights out. "Green Dolphin" neon light comes up. Erica at mike, sings gypsy jazz version of "When You Wish Upon a Star". Lights out.

"Blinky's" neon sign lights up. Seagram makes notes, dials phone.

SEAGRAM: Larry. Everythin' still tight? *(listens)* Good. I need another 24 hours. Screw the DA. Whadya got? *(listens)* There's no mix up? What about the ones that broke against the wall? *(listens, writes notes)* Okay. The girl: what and how much? Enough to kill? *(listens)* But no heroin? *(listens)* How 'bout him? *(listens)* Jeez. Whadya think? *(listens)* Ballistics? *(listens)*

Seagram slurps coffee, eats sandwich, flips through notebook.

Okay. I got a list: First. Get right to Judd Gardiner's office. He'll be showin' up inside the hour. He's waived a warrant. Soon as you get inside, seal it and start diggin'. Get somebody to find a doctor named Morton in Pasadena for Adam Gardiner's files. And find out whose runnin' Richard Nixon, and where he gets all his dough....

Simone enters from behind, presses thumb to cut off phone.

SIMONE: I am enraged, detective.

SEAGRAM: *(hanging up phone coolly)* I can tell.

SIMONE: You and your pathetic police force are a disgrace. *(she slams down paper)* Look at this gutter trash! And instead of chasing my daughter's murderer, you're stumbling down a blind alley that has nothing to do with the case! When I leave here, I'm going straight to the district attorney.

SEAGRAM: There'll be a lineup.

SIMONE: Not for me, detective.

SEAGRAM: Uh huh. (*lights cigarette*) The blind alley. You mean Judd's company reorganization?

SIMONE: Yes, as a matter of fact. He just told me about your inquisition.

SEAGRAM: About a block away, I bet.

SIMONE: You think you're clever? You're way over your head.

SEAGRAM: (*shrugs*) Sink or swim. That's life, Ethel Landry.

Stunned silence.

SIMONE: (*faltering badly, sinking into chair*) I - who did you..?. Are you drunk, detective?

SEAGRAM: (*laughs*) Nice try, Ethel. (*flips notebook*) Ethel Landry. Born September 12, 1903. Brooklyn. Married, June 12, 1925. To one Jerome Putzner. Blood type E. Same as yours.

SIMONE: (*laughs*) How amusing, detective. Another bungling...

SEAGRAM: Daughter Nicole Chevrier born, September 3, 1925. Brooklyn General. Blood type E. Father unidentified. Named changed from Ethel Landry to Simone Chevrier in Carson City, Nevada, 1934. California driver's licence number...

SIMONE: Stop it. You've proved beyond any doubt that you know how to waste time, detective. That's all irrelevant.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? You took the trouble to lie about it.

SIMONE: Cut to the chase. Is Judd a suspect? Am I?

SEAGRAM: Your lies are adding up -

SIMONE: To nothing. Neither of us had a motive to kill Nicky, and neither had the opportunity.

SEAGRAM: I'm listening.

SIMONE: If it's money you think I'm after, killing Nicky would hardly increase my income, would it? And Judd and I were at a film premier Friday night from 9 to past 11. The Orpheum on Santa Monica Blvd. Dozens saw us. Would you like a list?

Pause. Seagram writes notes.

SEAGRAM: So why the lies?

SIMONE: I've made a new life in California, Mr. Seagram. My mistakes are behind me. I want to keep it that way. And I (*voice falters*) don't want my daughter smeared.

SEAGRAM: Sounds fair. But no more lies.

SIMONE: No more lies.

SEAGRAM: Their joint company. It's worth what?

SIMONE: (*exasperated*) Four million. But I'm telling you, that has nothing to do with the murders. You're wasting time.

SEAGRAM: How do you know if you don't know the murderers?

SIMONE: Well, how could it? You said nothing was stolen. No one broke into Judd's office. And it couldn't have been us.

SEAGRAM: Okay. But I've got some basics to cover. Your daughter have a will?

SIMONE: Yes. I'm the beneficiary. But it only amounts to what she made on this picture. After expenses, it might be \$25,000. She was signed to four more. That might have made her a quarter million. Gross.

SEAGRAM: Okay. What about life insurance?

SIMONE: Yes. For \$50,000. And yes, I'm the beneficiary. However, you should know that policy was cross-assigned to her for the same amount.

SEAGRAM: (*writing*) Adam Gardiner. He had a will?

SIMONE: We don't know. But Judd is his only relative.

SEAGRAM: The company. They both owned 2 million worth?

SIMONE: Actually, no. Legally, Adam held most of the company assets. They both took an annual draw, and split annual profits.

SEAGRAM: Any pre-decease agreement?

SIMONE: I don't know. Judd never told me. You'd have to ask him.

Seagram writes notes. She waits impatiently.

SEAGRAM: Erica. She spits nails about her father and you.

SIMONE: She's a bitter young woman.

SEAGRAM: Why?

SIMONE: She never forgave her father for his divorce.

SEAGRAM: Were you the...

SIMONE: Cause? No, detective. The bottle was. That woman and Erica are both quite - unstable. Both have a history of psychiatric problems.

SEAGRAM: (*nodding*) But your daughter and Erica were close.

SIMONE: Yes. As a matter of fact, I met Judd through them. When Judd and I got, involved - that's when the obsession started.

SEAGRAM: What obsession?

SIMONE: Erica demanded Nicky. Wanted to be inseparable. They're both quite striking, but Nicky always drew the quality boys. Especially once her career took off. Erica was - unnaturally jealous.

SEAGRAM: Sorry?

SIMONE: She wanted Nicky herself.

SEAGRAM: You're saying Erica's a lesbian?

SIMONE: (*with distaste*) I'm sure I don't know. But she's never had a boyfriend. What does that tell you?

SEAGRAM: So when your daughter and Adam...

SIMONE: I told you Friday night. That was strictly professional.

SEAGRAM: Listen, lady. Next lie I hear out of you, I walk. You want me to find her killer, play it straight. Your daughter had a diaphragm in her purse.

SIMONE: (*bows head*) But that won't get into the papers?

SEAGRAM: No. You think Erica was jealous of Adam and Nicky?

SIMONE: Frankly, yes. I think it enraged her.

SEAGRAM: Enough to kill somebody?

SIMONE: I wouldn't want to say that. But she's a very bitter girl. And very smart.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. (*thinks*) Couple more questions. Erica said Adam and Judd had barely spoken for two years. That the politics thing?

SIMONE: Yes. Adam was idealistic. Sometimes to the point of being a fool. He condemned Judd for working with Dutch Reagan and Richard Nixon's people.

SEAGRAM: And you?

SIMONE: I couldn't care less.

SEAGRAM: (*checks notes*) What about you and Adam? Judd said you rubbed each other the wrong way from day one. How come?

SIMONE: (*snaps*) Judd said that? Sometimes his mouth moves

without the nerves attached to his brain. Adam and I were always very civil.

SEAGRAM: Even when your daughter became his lover?

SIMONE: *(stands bolt upright)* Mr. Seagram! My daughter is not on trial here. She's dead. *(stalks out, voice faltering)* Maybe you could remember that!

Seagram checks watch. Writes notes for a half minute. Picks up phone.

SEAGRAM: Blinky? You can bring her now.

Blinky enters escorting Erica by arm.

SEAGRAM: Hello, Erica. We can do this here, or at the precinct station. Your choice.

ERICA: Some choice.

SEAGRAM: Thanks, Blinky. *(Blinky leaves)* Sit down. You want a drink? *(she shakes head)* Look, I'm sorry about the other night. I was outa line.

ERICA: No kidding.

SEAGRAM: I won't get rough again. Especially not in my favourite jazz joint. So sit down. *(she sits)*

You were right about Judd and Simone. There's a lotta shit there. Money. Politics. They stink. But they've got no motive. To them, Nicky's *not* worth more dead than alive. And they've got a crack alibi.

ERICA: So where does that leave you?

SEAGRAM: At *your* alibi. You told me you were in your apartment at 11 on Friday night.

ERICA: So what?

SEAGRAM: So that's a lousy alibi. Girl looks like you doesn't read "War and Peace" on Friday nights, curled up with her cat.

ERICA: Prove it.

SEAGRAM: Don't fight me on this, Erica. I'm tryin' to solve two murders, or a double suicide.

ERICA: Well, you're lookin' in the wrong place. I had nothin' to do with it. And they didn't kill each other.

SEAGRAM: Then tell me where you were.

She says nothing.

SEAGRAM: Okay. We'll come back to that. (*pause*) What else you know about Adam's company stuff? And all this politics shit.

ERICA: It's not shit. It's a question of - character. Like who fought in the war and who weasled their way out of it.

SEAGRAM: You mean like Judd? (*grins*) And Ronald Reagan?

ERICA: Then you know about the flight simulator in Culver City.

SEAGRAM: Little bit.

ERICA: Uncle Adam was furious. My own father wangled a draft exemption, then charged the air force a fortune to train pilots on equipment he'd already used for a movie. And written off against taxes. My uncle wouldn't take a cent.

SEAGRAM: Shit.

ERICA: Reagan enlisted in the "Army/Airforce First Motion Picture Unit". He was riding a desk on D-day, and making a sound track for Disney the day they bombed Hiroshima. Nixon *did* serve in the Pacific - setting up officer's tents and kitchens behind the action.

Then it was the blacklist: a Nixon and Reagan combo. Then smearing Senator Helen Douglas. Now Nixon's headed for the White House. Van Klassen's got Reagan runnin' "Democrats for Ike", and has mob guys runnin' the actors guild. My uncle knew exactly how dirty they were. (*pause*) And are.

SEAGRAM: Your father's mixed up with Nixon's backers?

ERICA: To his armpits.

SEAGRAM: Who's got the proof?

ERICA: Uncle Adam was working on it. He told me he'd written some out in a screenplay. He had tons of notes.

SEAGRAM: Jesus, Erica. That might be what was stolen. They missed the manila envelope.

ERICA: (*dubious*) He normally never kept that stuff at Alvarado.

SEAGRAM: Then where?

ERICA: (*shrugs*) Who knows?

Seagram gives her a sharp glance. Makes notes.

SEAGRAM: You're not gonna tell me?

Erica says nothing.

What about where you were Friday night?

Erica says nothing.

SEAGRAM: Look. You gotta work with me on this. This is big. And dirty. I need you to get it solved.

She says nothing.

SEAGRAM: Erica. I'm willing to trust you. I know you were straight with me about the drugs and Judd and Simone. But I can't get to the next stage unless you give me an alibi. I just can't.

Erica says nothing.

SEAGRAM: Okay. I tried. (*pause*) I know you didn't kill Nicki.

ERICA: (*alerted*) How come?

SEAGRAM: Because she's alive. I've got her stashed in the police infirmary. No one put real bullets in her.

Erica gasps. Lights out. "Blinky's" sign up, "Green Dolphin Duel" plays in darkness. House lights up as Intermission begins.

END OF ACT 1

INTERMISSION

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Neon sign for "Green Dolphin" lights up. Erica at mike, sings "Just Me and the Blues". Light fades.

Stage dark. "Perce Neige" plays. Lights up on Adam Gardiner's living room. Seagram in chair smoking, making notes. The scene setting is the same. No bodies. Room cleaned up. Music stops. Seagram glances at record player absently. Phone rings.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? (*listens, checks watch. Knock on door*) That's it. Bring her now. Make sure nobody knows. Not even the DA. Then go to the "Green Dolphin" club. Ok? (*hangs up, goes to door*) Come on in.

Erica enters.

ERICA: It's not even dawn. What gives?

SEAGRAM: Nicky'll be here in a coupla minutes. I figured the press'd still be snorin". They are. (*pause*) I want you here. But my ground rules.

ERICA: Which are?

SEAGRAM: You can meet her. But not a word about the case. You just watch and listen and say nothin'. If she's innocent like you say, we'll find out.

ERICA: (*subdued*) Okay. It's gonna hit her, coming back here.

SEAGRAM: There's no other way. (*pause*) You gonna tell me where Gardiner kept his scripts?

ERICA: After. You gonna tell me how all those papers printed she

was murdered? You cops knew she wasn't.

SEAGRAM: After.

Knock. He opens, Lieutenant comes in with trembling Nicky in handcuffs.

SEAGRAM: (*scowling*) Larry. No need for that. Take 'em off.

Handcuffs removed. Erica and Nicky see each other.

NICKY: Erica! Oh, Erica. Help me! Adam's dead and they're saying I must have done it!

She breaks into sobs, Erica rushes to her. Comforts her, strokes her hair. Leads her to chair. Seagram nods to Larry, who leaves as Nicky's crying subsides. She looks up at Erica, imploring.

ERICA: This is detective Seagram. He's handling the case. Do what he says. I can't say anything. Tell him the truth.

Nicky nods, says nothing.

SEAGRAM: I'm sorry Miss Chevrier. Adam Gardiner's dead. You were here. This has to be done.

Nicky says nothing.

SEAGRAM: I want you to retrace what happened. Exactly.

NICKY: But I can't! It's too horrible!

SEAGRAM: You have to.

NICKY: I can't.

ERICA: Nicky. Do as he says. It's the only way to clear you.

Nicky hangs head, but nods weakly.

SEAGRAM: You came home before 11, right? *(she nods)* Who drove? *Nicky whispers, "Adam".*

You came in the front door? *(she nods)* Was it locked? *(she nods)*

Anybody inside? *(she shakes head no)* You sure? *(she nods)*
Anybody arrive after? *(she shakes head)* You sure? *(she nods)*

Then what happened?

NICKY: *(bare whisper)* I sank into that chair. Adam went to get champagne. We drank a toast. That's all I remember.

SEAGRAM: You were found in the other chair. Covered in blood.

NICKY: *(puts head in hands, sobs)* I don't remember!

Erica strokes her hair from behind chair. Seagram gives her sharp look. She removes hand.

SEAGRAM: Then we'll do it the hard way. *(He goes to Nicky, takes her arm.)* Come on. *(leads her firmly to door)*

You came in. Who locked the door behind you?

NICKY: *(thinks hard)* Nobody. We couldn't find the lights. So Adam lit candles. Then I fell into the chair.

SEAGRAM: Which one? (*she points to chair*). Then what?

NICKY: Then he got the champagne. (*thinks*) Four glasses. On a tray. The first two we threw against that wall.

SEAGRAM: Why?

NICKY: I'd just finished the 'Peoria takes' on my first movie. I'd been on the set six weeks. We were celebrating.

SEAGRAM: You were lovers?

Nicky looks to Erica. Erica stays impassive. Nicky nods.

SEAGRAM: Then what?

NICKY: We had two more glasses...

SEAGRAM: Who poured?

NICKY: (*startled*) Adam.

SEAGRAM: Then what?

NICKY: (*sobs*) Then I told him I loved him! He said he loved me. That's the last thing I remember. (*she sobs, Erica steadies her shoulder*)

SEAGRAM: The record player was on. But the record was scratched all to hell.

NICKY: (*remembering*) That's right! I put it on while he was in the kitchen! We danced to one song.

SEAGRAM: Which one?

NICKY: "Maybe It's Crazy."

Long pause. Seagram makes notes. Studies both of them carefully.

SEAGRAM: Are you pregnant?

NICKY: *(sobs)* Yes. *(Erica stiffens, Seagram notices)*

SEAGRAM: *(in split second)* Who knew that?

NICKY: No one. I just found out Friday afternoon. I was going to tell Adam that night. That's why I was so happy.

SEAGRAM: Did you tell your mother?

NICKY: Never! She'd be the last.

SEAGRAM: Judd?

NICKY: No. He'd just tell her.

SEAGRAM: Erica?

NICKY: No. *(looks at Erica)* I wanted to tell Adam first.

SEAGRAM: You plan to get pregnant?

NICKY: No. I almost always used... a diaphragm. But a few times...

SEAGRAM: *(goes to her, draws her out of chair)* Okay. Show me exactly where you stopped dancing. *(Nicky shows him)*

Then what?

NICKY: (*thinking hard*) I was so tired. All I heard was music. Then it was like I was swept away. (*gasps*) Then I felt stings in my stomach. Then I woke up under a police guard.

SEAGRAM: Headache?

NICKY: (*nods*) The worst I've ever had.

SEAGRAM: You never saw anyone else? (*she shakes her head firmly*) The phone ring? (*she shakes head*)

SEAGRAM: About the baby. Did Adam want one?

NICKY: (*subdued*) I don't know. He said it would be my choice mostly.

SEAGRAM: Why?

NICKY: The studio would kill my contract.

SEAGRAM: You sound like that wouldn't ruin your life.

NICKY: The studio's *not* my life. It's my mothers'. Pretty girls are a dime a dozen in this town. I wanted to act in good pictures. The studio didn't.

SEAGRAM: You ever fight with Adam?

NICKY: A little bit. Just silly things.

Long pause. Seagram thinks. Makes notes.

SEAGRAM: Whadyou think about Erica?

NICKY: *(startled)* What do you mean? She's my best friend.

SEAGRAM: Anything more?

NICKY: More? What does that mean?

SEAGRAM: Were you lovers?

Erica jumps up, turns her back to Seagram. Nicky looks at her, then Seagram.

NICKY: *(decisively)* No, detective. It's not that way. She's just my best friend.

SEAGRAM: Sorry. I had to ask. And I've got one more tough one. Look at me. *(Nicky looks at him, Erica turns to watch. Seagram drapes Nicky over chair arms)*

This is where the cabbie found you, unconscious. There was a Smith and Wesson .38 on the floor, there, underneath your hand. Adam was shot with that .38. Twice. The bullets match the gun. You said you saw nobody. The cabbie arrived as two shots were being fired. I don't see how anybody could have shot him except you.

NICKY: *(looks to Erica, buries head in hands)* That's all I remember. But I'd never have shot Adam. Never.

Long silence.

SEAGRAM: The blood all over you. It came from an actors gun. Fired paint pellets. It was by Adam's body.

Nicky gives bewildered look. Erica remains impassive.

SEAGRAM: *(to Nicky)* Somebody booked two tickets to Mexico City for late Friday night. Under the name of Gardiner. Why were you going?

NICKY: Mexico City? That's crazy! We were driving to Atascadero in the morning. To Adam's ranch in the foothills.

Erica stiffens, Seagram gives her sharp glance.

SEAGRAM: Where in Atascadero?

NICKY: I don't know. I'm terrible at directions. I've only been there twice.

SEAGRAM: *(to Erica)* Where in Atascadero?

Erica says nothing. Seagram makes note.

SEAGRAM: *(to Nicky)* Who knew that?

NICKY: No one. Absolutely no one.

SEAGRAM: Not even Erica?

NICKY: No. Adam said not to tell a soul.

SEAGRAM: Twelve days. Your suitcase wasn't here Friday night.

NICKY: It's still packed at my apartment. We were going to pick it up Saturday morning on the way out of LA.

Long silence.

SEAGRAM: Nicky, I'd like to clear you. Everything you've told me adds up. Right down to the record player. That's better than your mother, Judd, and Erica. But Adam's dead: I can only figure one motive, with three explanations. You've ruled the first one out.

ERICA: Which is?

SEAGRAM: (*boring in on Nicky*) You and Adam had a fight. Maybe you were both drunk and drugged. Maybe it was about the baby. He pulled the fake gun, trying to scare you. You shot him with the .38. But the champagne glasses and the record tell me there was no fight.

ERICA: Number two and three?

SEAGRAM: Somebody staged it all. Since I know you didn't fire the paint bullets into yourself, either you somehow got Adam to do it when he was drunk and drugged, then you shot him...

Nicky's hand flies to mouth. Erica gasps.

Or *Erica* killed Adam. Then she fired the fake bullets into you so you could claim self defense. That's who the cabbie saw in a man's clothes.

ERICA: (*scornfully*) And the motive either way?

SEAGRAM: *You* booked the plane to Mexico under Gardiner. You and Nicky are lesbian lovers. Adam found out.

NICKY: That's all wrong! We've never...

ERICA: You're pathetic, Seagram. Too dumb for words.

SEAGRAM: Then give me an alibi. And the missing screenplay

and notes about Nixon's crowd. I need a motive for somebody else.

Phone rings. Seagram picks it up.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? Whadya find? (*listens*) No chance she's wrong? (*listens*) Okay. Get ahold of Atasquadero highway patrol. Adam Gardiner's got a ranch up there. Get a warrant first. (*listens*) Yeah.

Puts phone down. Gives Erica long look.

SEAGRAM: That was my lieutenant. Callin' from the "Green Dolphin".

Erica stiffens.

NICKY: The "Green Dolphin"? What's that?

SEAGRAM: A jazz joint on the strip. Place where queers and lesbians hang out. Larry showed the owner some pictures. Turns out Erica was singing there from 10 till midnight Friday night. She's a regular. And you've never been there.

ERICA: You bastard.

Long silence.

SEAGRAM: Erica: Who you want doesn't bother me. I saw some guys in the war make it with other guys at night, then take a bullet for a straight soldier the next day. I saw some gutless straight guys beat up queer G.I.'s, then hide in latrines when Japs started shootin'. People are people. Good. Bad. Mostly some of both.

Long silence.

SEAGRAM: You're ok, Erica. Now you've got an alibi. I'm glad. And since you weren't here on Friday night, I'm startin' to think maybe Nicky didn't set this up, either. I don't see any motive.

Both look to Seagram, mood lifts.

SEAGRAM: But the DA's still gonna charge Nicky, unless I square the case. When the press finds out she's alive, it'll be a circus. The only evidence is against her.

ERICA: What evidence?

SEAGRAM: She was here. She didn't get murdered. Adam had two holes in him, and enough heroin to kill him inside ten minutes.

NICKY: (*gasps*) Heroin?

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Uncut. And Nicky only had barbituates in her. I bet the DA'll make the case she drugged herself, drugged Adam with heroin in the champagne, shot him, then faked somebody else did it by callin' a cabbie to make sure he saw somebody leave.

ERICA: That makes no sense. Why the paint pellets? Who'd the cabbie see? Where's the motive?

SEAGRAM: (*nods*) It doesn't jibe. But that won't stop the DA. The press is pressurin' him to make a quick bust. He'll play the political angle.

Silence.

SEAGRAM: So here's the deal. The DA doesn't know Nicky's here. I can keep that quiet for maybe another day. He and the press'll never figure she's back here. (*pause*) Can I trust you two to stay here til I

square this?

Nicky and Erica trade looks, nod. Seagram suddenly freezes, listens, then looks out "front window".

SEAGRAM: *(whispers)* It's Judd. Get in the bedroom. Don't make a sound. *(They exit rear stage left, Seagram sits in chair. Waits. Sound of key, door opening. Judd enters, takes four steps in.*

SEAGRAM: Morning, Judd. You're up awful early.

JUDD: Ahh! *(Squints to make out Seagram)* Goddamit, Seagram! You scared the hell out of me. How'd you get in?

SEAGRAM: Key of the deceased. What're you after?

JUDD: Ummm, nothing special. I just thought I'd see if there were any odd business papers. Company receipts. Contracts. You know...

SEAGRAM: A screenplay, maybe?

JUDD: *(sucks in breath)* A screenplay? No. Why? What would I want with a screenplay?

SEAGRAM: You tell me, Judd. You said all the business records were at your office. This house is under police seal. You're breakin' the law.

JUDD: A seal? I didn't know. *(He takes out cigarette, lights nervously)*

SEAGRAM: Simone tells me you were at a movie on Friday night? Which one?

JUDD: Nicky's. At the Orpheum. It was the first cut showing for the cast and crew.

SEAGRAM: How come Nicky wasn't there?

JUDD: She saw it Friday afternoon. With Adam and the studio brass.

SEAGRAM: Any good?

JUDD: For the box office? Yeah. Boy meets girl. Boy loses girl. Boy gets girl back. They go off in the sunset.

SEAGRAM: Simone with you?

JUDD: Yes. I can give you ten people that saw us there.

SEAGRAM: Okay. Okay. (*writes, then checks notebook*) On the business records. We read your reorganization plan. Basically, you're shifting all the money into a deal with Van Klassen, and oil leases off the Santa Barbara coast. Seems funny. There's no sign of Adam approving it.

JUDD: There's nothing funny about it. It's good business.

SEAGRAM: Drillin' for oil off Santa Barbara. First I heard of it.

JUDD: They're federal marine leases. Coming up this fall.

SEAGRAM: That where your friend of a friend of Nixon comes in?

JUDD: Just hold it right there, Seagram. There's nothing illegal about it. Washington will decide which company gets them.

SEAGRAM: But the odds go way up if Nixon makes vice-president in November.

Judd says nothing.

SEAGRAM: Your brother's dead. I guess that kills the reorganization.

JUDD: Why would it? Any court in the state will make me executor, and asset beneficiary. I'm his only relative.

SEAGRAM: Unless there's a will. He could have left it to charity. Veterans of the Spanish Civil War or somethin'.

JUDD: Not the business money. I'd fight it and win.

SEAGRAM: He could have left it to Nicky. He loved her.

JUDD: Nicky's dead. Simone would get it.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Closed circle there, eh?

Long silence.

SEAGRAM: Erica tells me your brother had a new screenplay. He told her it'll sink Nixon and his crowd.

JUDD: (*rattled*) Erica! What's she know about...

SEAGRAM: She's his researcher. How'd you know about it?

JUDD: (*waves hand dismissively*) There's nothing to know. He made some wild threats. Even to the studios. They told him it would

never get made. So stop chasin' smoke.

SEAGRAM: Okay. What's this about the flight simulator at Culver City?

JUDD: I told you. We trained pilots on it.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. You didn't tell me you'd used it for a picture already, and wrote off the taxes. Whadya charge the air force?

JUDD: That's a lie.

SEAGRAM: We checked the company books. You made nearly a quarter million. But not a penny went to Adam's side. Now it's mostly in oil leases in your name.

JUDD: I thought this was a murder investigation. I think it's about time I called the DA and demanded a new...

Knock on door.

SIMONE: (*offstage*) Judd! Judd? You in there?

Simone opens door, walks in.

SIMONE: Judd. Why didn't you answer me? (*sees Seagram*) ... Seagram!!

SEAGRAM: (*nods*) Mornin, ma'am. You're up early too. Waitin' around the block again?

Simone stares at Judd. Then at Seagram. Silence.

JUDD: Come on, Simone. Seagram's flying blind. Let's go see the

DA.

SIMONE: (*acidly*) Mr. Seagram. Haven't you done anything to find my daughter's killer - or killers - in the last 24 hours?

SEAGRAM: Matter of fact, I've been pretty busy. The company files, for instance...

SIMONE: Which you've been repeatedly told have nothing to do with Nicky's murder.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Repeatedly. Only the more I look, the more dirt I find. And a motive.

SIMONE: Seagram! We've already been through this. We couldn't possibly have been here. (*opens purse, hands him paper*) This is a list of people who saw us at the Orpheum Friday night. And their phone numbers.

Seagram takes list, puts in his pocket. Sinks into chair.

SIMONE: Why was Erica here?

SEAGRAM: (*shocked*) What do you mean?

SIMONE: I just saw her two minutes ago. From my car, around the block. Looking like a thief on the run. (*she sees Seagram is rattled*) Why don't you spend less time listening to her twisted stories and find out where *she* was on Friday night!

Judd gives her shocked look.

SEAGRAM: You got some ideas?

SIMONE: Do I have to spell it out for you? The little bitch likes girls.

JUDD: Simone!

SIMONE: (*ignores him*) And wearing men's clothes. Doesn't *that* strike a bell?

JUDD: Simone!

SIMONE: (*snarls at Judd*) Keep your mouth shut. I know what I'm doing. (*she turns to Seagram*). You've blown it, detective. We've got an appointment with the DA at 10. You'll be off this case by noon. And maybe out of a job.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? What's the complaint?

SIMONE: My daughter has been murdered. Her body's been in the morgue for two days. I can't even bury her, and you're chasing shadows!

She stamps out door, Judd follows, slams door. Seagram rushes off stage, reappears with grip on Nicky's wrist, wrenches her into chair.

SEAGRAM: How'd Erica get out? Where'd she go?

NICKY: (*puts head in hands, sobs*) The window. I don't know. She wouldn't tell me.

SEAGRAM: (*paces in front of her*) Goddamn it! Goddamn it! Erica's tipped them off. They're gonna tell the DA I'm here. He's gonna tell *them* you're alive. Then the shit's gonna hit when he finds out I've got you hidden!

He grabs her wrist, yanks her from chair.

C'mon. We gotta get outta here. If this doesn't break soon, you might get the electric chair.

END OF ACT 2, SCENE 1

ACT 2, SCENE 2

"Green Dolphin" sign up. Erica at mike, sings "Bijou". Light out. "Blinky's" neon sign up. Seagram disheveled. Sandwich, coffee, newspapers scattered on his table. He's talking on phone.

SEAGRAM: *(listens)* Yeah. *(picks up paper, reads)* "Starlet faked death. Abducted by Cops" *(reads another)* "DA orders manhunt for Rogue Cop, Starlet". *(listens)* The whole city's springin' nickels this mornin'.

What about that Pasadena doc? *(listens, makes notes)* The break-in at Gardiner's ranch? *(listens)* Amateur or pro? *(listens)* What about the "Orpheum" alibis? Those names check out? *(listens, shoulders sag)* Yeah? All of 'em? *(listens)* What about the Nixon stuff? *(listens)* Well, keep diggin'...

Erica enters from behind with Blinky. Seagram sees them, motions to Blinky to lock a door, bring back coffee and food. Erica sits down, puts files on table.

SEAGRAM: Gotta go, Larry. I'll call ya at... *(checks watch)* six sharp. *(listens)* Yeah. Thanks. I owe ya. *(puts down receiver, scowls at Erica)*

We had a deal.

ERICA: Sorry. I figured I was wasted in that bedroom. (*she holds up papers*) I was right. I got to Uncle Adam's ranch an hour before Judd did and...

SEAGRAM: Smashed a back window. Whadya got?

ERICA: Enough to put my father away. And sink Nixon. First: where's Nicky?

SEAGRAM: Someplace safe. (*grim smile*) She's sorta my insurance now.

ERICA: Don't jerk me, Seagram. I get Nicky, or you get nothin'.

SEAGRAM: (*grins*) I figured you'd play it that way. But that's okay. (*spreads out papers*) We're almost partners now. There's a warrant on me for kidnapping. You're wanted for murderin' your uncle. Simone's got to the DA. Or somebody behind Nixon has. Probably Judd's friend of a friend.

ERICA: Yeah. I heard I'm wanted from the car radio on the way back from Atasquadero. Lucky they haven't printed my picture yet.

SEAGRAM: They will. Larry says cops are crawlin' over Adam's house, Nicky's apartment, your place, mine - you name it.

ERICA: Nicky's ok?

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Buddy of mine died during the war. His widow's got a place up one of the canyons. Margie's good people.

Erica nods. Blinky brings coffee, sandwiches, leaves.

I know you weren't mixed up in it.

ERICA: It's about time. How'd you make that, Einstein?

SEAGRAM: (*a little sheepish*) Actually, I was pretty sure from the night of the murder. When you thought I was pawing you, I was smellin' for perfume. You wore some. And your clothes smelled like you'd been smokin' in a jazz joint all night.

ERICA: So?

SEAGRAM: The cabbie was there less'n a minute after the shots. Said he only smelled candle smoke. Plus if you were the "black man" he saw, you'da hidden a car nearby. When I got rough, you swore you'd take a taxi home.

ERICA: (*grins*) So that was all a put on.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. The "Green Dolphin" nailed it. And you had no motive.

ERICA: Good. Now you can clear Nicky off your list, too.

SEAGRAM: How?

ERICA: When you walked her through the murder scene, you pointed where the .38 was found. Underneath her hand.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? So?

ERICA: It was under her *right* hand. She's left-handed.

SEAGRAM: (*slapping his head at missing clue*) It was planted.

Silence.

Then it was the "black man" the cabbie saw, Judd, or Simone.

ERICA: Or the "black man" was one of those two. Look at this stuff. It's Adam's notes. My father set up a slush fund for Nixon. He made a fortune with that flight simulator, then laundered it into Santa Barbara oil leases, real estate, movie studios.

SEAGRAM: (*grins*) Good work, gumshoe.

ERICA: Half they put into Nixon's "Run the Reds out of Hollywood" committee, and gifts to newspaper columnists like Hopper and Winchell. Reagan's studio stoolies got some. (*shows paper*) He was an FBI informer. Reagan's code-name was T-10.

SEAGRAM: I know an FBI guy who'll check that for me.

ERICA: The other half they put back into Nixon's campaign slush fund, so it can't be traced.

SEAGRAM: Hang on. Hang on. Judd's alibi's air-tight. We checked the Orpheum. The movie ran til a coupla minutes after 11. He couldn't a made it.

ERICA: What about her?

SEAGRAM: Same thing.

ERICA: Then they must have hired the "black man". Maybe it was the friend of Nixon.

SEAGRAM: Maybe. (*thinks*) But I don't get the paint bullet part. And the cabbie gettin' called for 11:10. Or the drugs in the champagne.

Slams fist down on table. Erica says nothing.

Nothin' adds up!

ERICA: Maybe they found out about the plane to Mexico, hired the killer, and called the cabbie so he'd see the "black man" while they were at the Orpheum?

SEAGRAM: *(suddenly alert)* Yeah. Judd could get the flight confirmation by using the name Gardiner. They time the taxi. Their alibi's unbreakable. The paint bullets and drugs mix it up so it could be self-defense for Nicky. She's finished as an actress, but alive. They get Adam's company and Adam can never expose them.

ERICA: And if there's a script, ***that's*** what they were tryin' to steal.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Did you find one?

ERICA: No. I tore the ranch apart. I know there's one. I've got all his notes. But the pieces just won't fit together.

SEAGRAM: Damn! This is way too twisted. I know there's something wrong about all this... *(flips and flips through notebook. Stops)*

What's a "Peoria take"?

ERICA: Say studio executives are fighting about how the picture ends. Somebody wants the leading man to die in a blaze of glory. Somebody else wants him to get the girl and walk off into the sunset. They used to film two endings, then send 'em to Peoria, Illinois. Middle America. Whichever one Peoria liked, that's the one they used.

SEAGRAM: *(taps head to indicate memory loss)* Right. "If it plays

in Peoria..." *(pause, thinks)* And Nicky filmed two different endings for her picture?

ERICA: Yeah. Happens all the time.

Phone rings.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. *(listens)* Yeah? Give me two minutes. Let him in, then lock the door.

In excited voice to Erica:

Get behind the bar. Your father's here. Alone and rattled. Do you know which version they ran at the Orpheum Friday night?

ERICA: *(whispers, races away)* Yeah. The sunset ending. It was in Hedda Hopper's column the next day. Why?

SEAGRAM: What about the one Nicky saw with Adam the afternoon before?

ERICA: Blazing hero. Adam told me it stunk.

Seagram waves her away. She exits, he checks notes, slurps coffee. Judd enters.

JUDD: Seagram, we've got to talk.

SEAGRAM: I'm listenin'.

JUDD: *(pacing, wringing hands)* Look, I can't stand this pressure. First Nicky's murdered. Then the DA tells us she's alive but you've kidnapped her. My house is surrounded night and day. You're dragging up all this stuff about the oil leases. My daughter's turned against me.

Simone's tearin' strips off me - You've gotta lay off.

SEAGRAM: You're breakin' my heart. You're the one who sicced the DA on me. Now *I'm* the criminal.

JUDD: It was Simone, Seagram. I swear. Can't we make a deal?

SEAGRAM: What kind of a deal?

JUDD: You hand Nicky over to me. I'll tell the DA it was all a big mistake. We'll drop all the rest of it. And I'll make sure Nicky's fixed for life.

SEAGRAM: So then you can go off into the sunset with Simone. Just like the end of Nicky's movie?

JUDD: (*nothing registers, he shrugs*) Yeah. If you want to put it that way.

SEAGRAM: (*without a pause*) Even if the DA dropped my kidnapping charges, you think I'd get my job back? They've taken my badge, Gardiner.

JUDD: Then I'll make sure you're fixed too. Nobody should have to suffer for any of this.

Long pause. Seagram studies Judd.

SEAGRAM: (*in a low voice*) How 'bout your dead brother? You gonna fix him up too?

Judd says nothing, hangs head.

No deal. Erica got to Adam's ranch an hour before you.

JUDD: Then that's who broke in...?

SEAGRAM: She knew exactly what to look for. The company books. Adam's script notes. And his new screenplay.

JUDD: *(sinks into chair, buries head in hands)* Jesus. Jesus. Jesus. *(looks up)* I swear I didn't kill anybody Seagram. I've never fired a gun in my life.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Ya told me. Not even in the war. *(pause)* If you didn't pull the trigger, you know who did. The only deal I'll make is for that name.

Judd puts head on table, moans, wrings hands. Phone rings.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. *(listens, stiffens)* Okay. Bring me some coffee first, though wouldya?

Blinky enters, puts coffee on table. Judd is oblivious. Seagram motions to grab Judd. Blinky pins him while Seagram tears his coat off and wraps it around his head. Muffled yells. They carry him offstage. Seagram returns, Erica briefly appears, he waves her furiously away.

Simone enters, paces furiously in front of Seagram.

SIMONE: Where's Nicky, Seagram?

SEAGRAM: I'm hiding her.

SIMONE: She's my daughter! How dare you stage her murder. She'll never live down those headlines!

SEAGRAM: I didn't stage anything. You saw her just like we

found her.

SIMONE: The DA said it was paint bullets. How can that be?

SEAGRAM: (*shrugs*) You tell me.

SIMONE: And letting me think she was in the morgue for two days! That's criminal! The DA's going to have your badge for that.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. I heard.

SIMONE: Give me Nicky and I'll take care of the DA.

SEAGRAM: You got special pull?

SIMONE: No. But I made the kidnapping complaint. I can withdraw it.

SEAGRAM: She stays hidden. Until I get what I want.

SIMONE: And what is that?

SEAGRAM: Adam's killer.

SIMONE: Can't help you there.

SEAGRAM: Oh - I think you can. Your husband's gone off the deep end. His nerves are shot.

SIMONE: He's been here! When? What did he want?

SEAGRAM: A deal.

SIMONE: What kind of a deal?

SEAGRAM: The only one I'm making. The name of Adam's killer.

Long pause.

SIMONE: You're still in the dark.

SEAGRAM: Not for long. Judd made it clear he'll deal if it'll save his skin.

SIMONE: Where is he?

SEAGRAM: Someplace where you and the DA won't find him. Nixon's people ain't got him, if that's what you're thinkin'.

SIMONE: Does his deal involve money?

SEAGRAM: Quit fishin', sister. You know the score.

Long silence.

SIMONE: If I could give you that name, what would my end of it be?

SEAGRAM: If your story sticks, it depends how much you knew in advance. That's accessory to murder. If his sticks, dependin' on what happened, you might be lookin' at the electric chair. (*He shrugs, lights cigarette*) Your choice.

Simone thinks hard.

SIMONE: You're bluffing, Seagram. There's a card missing from your deck. It'll never get played. You lose. I win.

She starts walking away.

SEAGRAM: Just like how Nicky's film ended at the Orpheum, eh? No sunsets and sweet violins for you. Just a solo blaze of glory.

SIMONE: *(without missing a beat)* That's right, mister. Some of us are just made for that part.

She leaves. Twenty seconds pass. Erica comes back to table. They both grin at each other.

ERICA: Everyone else at the Orpheum saw the version with the *sunset* ending.

SEAGRAM: *(nods)* Now we know she did it. We still have to prove how.

END OF ACT 2, SCENE 2

ACT 3, SCENE 1

Dark stage. "Blinky's" light up, Erica sings "Tattooed Blue". Light out. Jazz music, last of "Penny's Lucky Number" plays for 30 seconds. Table lights up on Adam's living room. Seagram, Erica, Nicky, FBI agent Mackenzie in living room. Seagram on phone.

SEAGRAM: The FBI's set up across the street. *(listens)* Inside a fake milk truck. Here - you talk to Mackenzie.

MACKENZIE: *(takes phone)* Larry. It's been awhile. *(listens)* Yeah. Room's tapped. There's one headset in the bedroom. I'll be in the milk truck with my guy, and Sherman from LAPD brass. We've got Judd Gardiner here, ready to sing. We'll get him on tape, then her. *(listens)*

Yeah. It's big. Hoover's following this from Washington. Here's Mike back.

SEAGRAM: (*taking phone*) Nothin' movin'? (*listens*) Don't take any chances. You tail her from there. Put a stake-out at Gardiner's. One at Erica's. My place. Even Blinky's. (*listens*) No, her place's probably still crawling with the press. Forget the ranch - they've already been there. (*listens*) Whoever torched Adam's office'll likely hit again. They're after the missing script. Call the minute she moves. Yeah. Bye.

Seagram hangs up.

Okay, Judd. This is it. (*touches lamp*) You talk into this FBI mike, you're pleadin' guilty to accessory. Nobody knows what a judge'll give you. But it'll be less the more you talk. Mackenzie's FBI. He makes this official for the feds. Ok?

Judd nods forlornly.

MACKENZIE: Say it for the tape, Gardiner.

JUDD: (*to lamp*) Yes. I'll cooperate.

MACKENZIE: (*to Seagram*) I better get in the truck. When she gets close, swing the curtains. You packin'?

SEAGRAM: Yeah. (*pats cushion to indicate gun under chair*). Thanks, Pete. (*Mackenzie leaves. To others*) Everybody in the bedroom when Simone comes. Share the headset. Make notes when she lies, or somethin's wrong. For the trial.

They all nod. He lights cigarette, makes some notes.

Okay, Judd. We gotta lot of ground to cover. First, why that night?

JUDD: The studios were going to blacklist Adam. He swore he'd make his film in Mexico. When Simone saw Nicky packing, I checked the airport and got the reservation.

ERICA: Using the name Gardiner?

JUDD: Yeah.

SEAGRAM: You ordered the cabbie?

JUDD: No. Simone must have. Maybe to back our alibi. But that was crazy. She said he nearly saw her pull the trigger.

SEAGRAM: She was waitin' when they came home?

JUDD: (*nods*) Said Adam looked plastered. Parked the car half on the grass. Left the front door open.

SEAGRAM: (*makes notes*) The alibi. How'd she set it up?

JUDD: We made sure people saw us at the Orpheum before it screened. And when they were changing reels. Talked it up, you know. After they changed to the last reel, she went to the washroom, put on a man's suit and hat, then left. Nobody noticed.

SEAGRAM: Why'd she think it was the "blazing hero" ending?

JUDD: I don't know. I never said a word to her about...

NICKY: (*amazed, remembering*) It was me! She phoned me after the screening Friday afternoon. - The blazing hero version. She hung up when I told her Adam hated it.

Silence. Seagram lights cigarette, turns back to Judd.

SEAGRAM: How'd she get here?

JUDD: Our car. Parked it a coupla blocks away.

ERICA: How'd she know the door'd be open?

JUDD: She didn't. I had an old key. She never needed it.

SEAGRAM: Where'd she get the .38?

JUDD: (*hesitates*) I - she didn't say.

SEAGRAM: (*boring in*) But you think you know. Your friend of a friend?

JUDD: (*scared*) No! I really don't know...

SEAGRAM: Don't blow your deal, Gardiner.

JUDD: All she said was...from an agent.

SEAGRAM: An agent? You mean like FBI?

JUDD: No... a movie agent.

ERICA: Drew Van Klassen?

JUDD: (*very nervous*) Maybe. She never said.

ERICA: (*to lamp microphone*) Van Klassen runs the studio blacklist committee. He decides who's a "friendly witness" and who's a Red. He's connected to Nixon and Reagan. And the LA mob, which runs

the actors guild now.

SEAGRAM: Jesus. The stench. That who torched Adam's office?

JUDD: I don't know.

SEAGRAM: Okay. What happened next?

JUDD: She heard them inside. And music. They were dead drunk. She said she put two holes in Adam, then the gun by Nicky's hand. The cabbie came, she raced out the back.

ERICA: What about Nicky?

JUDD: That's the crazy thing. It's drivin' Simone wild. She never fired at her cause she was already covered in blood. She said Adam had a gun.

SEAGRAM: But she planned to kill Nicky?

JUDD: *(hangs head)* Yeah. If she had to. *(Nicky gasps, sobs. Erica comforts her)*

SEAGRAM: Why? Nicky was her meal ticket.

JUDD: Only for another hour. Remember, Nicky was in love with Adam. They were flying to Mexico. Simone knew Adam hated her. She knew he was going to bust our company. And that his screenplay would expose me. Simone'd lose everything.

SEAGRAM: Why did Adam hate her? Even from the beginning.

NICKY: 'Cause she drove his first girlfriend to suicide.

Room goes dead silent. All eyes swing to Nicky.

SEAGRAM: Back east? When she was Ethel Landry?

NICKY: *(nods)* Adam was twenty. He was in love with Simone's sister, Lorraine. To get him herself, Simone lied that Lorraine was cheating on Adam, and got some guy to swear it was true. Then Simone set it up so Lorraine found her and Adam together in bed. Lorraine drowned herself.

ERICA: That's why he disappeared and turned up in Spain?

NICKY: *(nods)* Then he came to California. We were already here. I ended up in the same high school as Erica. Simone met my father by chance...

ERICA: Chance had nothing to do with it, Nicky. By then profiles of Uncle Adam were in the Hollywood papers. Simone wanted you in the movies. She wanted money. She knew Uncle Adam hated her - so she seduced his *brother* and got what she wanted through the back door. *(pause, she gives murderous look to Judd)* Then *my* mother drowned too - in alcohol.

Silence.

JUDD: *(averting Erica's look)* It's worse than that. Simone was blackmailing Adam.

Room dead silent again. All eyes turn on Judd.

When Adam took on the studio bosses, Simone knew everything was going to fall apart. The only way to keep Adam quiet - and get Nicky back under her control - was to force Adam to do what Simone wanted.

NICKY: How? Adam never did anything illegal! Nobody could blackmail him.

JUDD: (*hollowly*) You're right. My brother never did anything wrong. But Simone made him *think* he was doing something unspeakable.

SEAGRAM: What? How?

JUDD: (*bare whisper*) A week before the murder, Simone told Adam that -- Nicky was his own daughter. From their affair way back in the New York days. (*dead silence*) She was lying. But the dates were close. He believed her.

Nicky cries out, faints. Seagram runs to kitchen, comes back with bottle and glass. Pours drink. Gives to Erica. She makes Nicky take some. Nicky cries. Erica holds her. Room dead silent.

SEAGRAM: (*turns, grabs Judd by throat, shakes him violently*) You yellow weasel! You knew all this and didn't stop it? What kinda man....

ERICA: (*pounds on Seagram's shoulders to stop*) Seagram! Smarten up! He's goin' to San Quentin. Let's make sure Simone goes down, too.

SEAGRAM: (*throwing Judd down on floor*) There can't be more dirt than that.

ERICA: (*taking charge, sneering at Judd*) There is. Somebody just burned Adam's office. Somebody wants his screenplay destroyed. Who?

JUDD: (*cringing*) I don't know. It's way over my head.

ERICA: It's Nixon, isn't it? His point man Van Klassen? All of them?

JUDD: All I know is I got a phone call before I drove up to Atasquadero. Saying I'm dead if I don't get Adam's screenplay and turn it over.

Phone rings. Seagram snatches it up.

SEAGRAM: Yeah? (*listens*) Downtown? Okay. Keep the tail. (*listens*) Christ! They catch anybody? (*listens*) Forget the stake-outs. Put a cop inside every place. Blinky's too. (*hangs up*)

That was my partner Larry. He tailed Simone to Van Klassen's mansion. (*louder, to lamp*) She took in a package of papers. Now it looks like she's on her way here.

He turns to Nicky.

SEAGRAM: I'm sorry, Nicky. I made a mistake. Somebody torched your apartment. Nobody saw who. I shoulda had somebody there.

NICKY: Never mind. (*shakes her head*) The press is so filthy. I would have *never* lived there anymore.

SEAGRAM: I'll fix it so you can stay at Margie's long as you like.

NICKY: Sure. I love it out there. There's nobody.

SEAGRAM: (*checks watch*) I give her five minutes. Everybody get ready to move. What else you got to say, Gardiner? What about the heroin?

JUDD: I had nothing to do with dope. Ever.

ERICA: The money laundering. What's with the oil leases?

JUDD: If Ike wins in November, Nixon'll be VP for four years. He'll call the shots on all public land leases out west. Water canals for ranchers. Mining claims. Where interstate highways go. Oil and gas leases - including off the California coast.

ERICA: The inside track. For big ranchers, mines, highway builders, real estate developers, oil companies.

JUDD: Yeah. The deal is: they put money into Havana banks to get Nixon elected. He pays 'em back with federal contracts and oil concessions. He keeps clean by never owning any of it. They make money, he gets elected. The more they make, the higher up he goes.

SEAGRAM: Next stop, President.

JUDD: That's the plan.

ERICA: The studios are in on it, too.

JUDD: Yeah. They get the tip-off on everything from new tax laws to which actors Congress committees are going to name as Reds.

SEAGRAM: And you're their accountant.

JUDD: For just one fund in southern California. (*shrugs*) I think they've got the same setup all over the country.

SEAGRAM: You think Eisenhower knows this stuff?

JUDD: I doubt it. Nixon's set it up so only he knows how all the pieces fit together. Except Van Klassen, who's runnin' Nixon.

SEAGRAM: (*checks watch again*) What about the clothes, Gardiner? Where'd she stash 'em?

JUDD: I don't know. I never saw them after she left the Orpheum. She wouldn't tell me where...

SEAGRAM: (*exploding*) Don't goddam lie to me, Gardiner. I'll cut off your balls!! Tell me where the clothes are!

JUDD: (*to Erica*) I swear! I asked her. She said she'd never tell me because it was the one thing that could put her away!

SEAGRAM: (*slams fist on table*) Goddam it! Her alibi's busted, but there's no eye-witness, no prints, and nothin' to pin her to it. She's gonna get away with it!

Silence. Phone shatters it.

SEAGRAM (*snatches it up*) Yeah! (*listens for 3 seconds*) Okay. Don't let anybody else get near this house. Includin' cops. (*He slams down phone*) Get going. She's on foot now. (*They disappear, he glances around room, pours drink, gulps, pours another. Goes to window, opens and closes 'curtains' twice. Goes back to chair. Knock.*

SEAGRAM: It's open.

Simone enters, closes door. Takes intense look around room, walks to centre. Gives Seagram hard stare, motions to bottle.

SIMONE: I could use a drink. Mind if I get a glass?

SEAGRAM: Go right ahead.

Simone goes to kitchen. Ten seconds later she returns with glass, stares down "hall" on stage left, pours drink.

SEAGRAM: See? Kitchen's empty.

SIMONE: So's the neighbourhood. That's nice. Cheers. *(she raises glass, takes sip)*

You called me. What's your offer?

SEAGRAM: We're pretty sure Judd did it. We know his motive.

SIMONE: Which is?

SEAGRAM: Adam was going to bust the company and leave Judd broke. Nicky was going to charge him with attempted rape.

SIMONE: *(shocked, off balance)* Rape? Rape? But - that's impossible. Nicky never said a...

SEAGRAM: She's signed an affidavit. It's being typed for the DA. She'll testify Judd tried to rape her. Adam knew. So Judd killed Adam.

SIMONE: *(still reeling)* I knew about the company stuff, but rape? No. I'm sure I would have known.

SEAGRAM: You'd be surprised what people can hide.

Silence. Simone sips drink, in deep thought. Seagram sips his patiently.

SIMONE: So that's why you called. You want me to turn state's

evidence.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Then maybe you can walk away from it all.

She glances at him sharply, around room, at drink, at liquor bottle.

SIMONE: *(with sudden suspicion)* That's the second time you've said that, Seagram. "Walk away from it all". It makes my skin prickle - like a trap's being set.

SEAGRAM: *(almost caught)* Don't worry. It's Judd I'm tryin' to set a trap for. You can help.

SIMONE: What makes you think that?

SEAGRAM: I think you know where he is. If you don't, I think you can find him. And get him to meet you. I'll be waiting, and he'll either end up in handcuffs, or be headin' for a slab at the morgue.

SIMONE: That's possible. What's in it for me?

SEAGRAM: Your story sticks, he gets convicted for murder, you walk. Nicky's cleared. Life goes on.

Simone thinks. Rubs finger on rim of glass.

SIMONE: What about his alibi? It's airtight.

SEAGRAM: *(pours drink for himself, her)* Not quite. We checked out your list. Sure, everybody remembers you both before they screened it. And when they changed reels. But nobody remembers seein' him at the end. Nobody.

SIMONE: *(cooly)* And me?

SEAGRAM: We never asked. It's *him* with the motive.

SIMONE: Yeah. I talked to plenty when it ended. Hedda Hopper was there.

SEAGRAM: But he wasn't?

She looks at him coolly.

SIMONE: Before I answer that, tell me how you think he did it.

SEAGRAM: Okay. I figure he wore one suit to the Orpheum, and carried the one the cabbie saw. Probably changed at the Orpheum, so nobody'd recognize him leavin'. He drove a car here - he'd never take a chance on a taxi. He take yours?

SIMONE: For now, detective, I'm not saying we didn't go home together. That could change, but first I want to hear the rest of your theory.

SEAGRAM: Sure. (*takes sip*) So he parks down the street, comes in when they're drunk, fires the .38 into his brother, fires the paint bullets into Nicky, hears the cabbie and streaks out the back door. Drives home, end of story.

SIMONE: (*sharply*) Why the paint bullets?

SEAGRAM: That one's kind of crazy to figure. I'm guessin' he really didn't want to kill Nicky, but he wanted to confuse the cops.

SIMONE: But he left the .38 by her. Why would he shoot her with paint bullets, then set her up for Adam's murder? It makes no sense.

SEAGRAM: Except it worked. Nobody can figure out the paint stuff. It confuses cops, it'll confuse the jury. Nicky'll never take a murder rap. Especially if we can break Judd's alibi. And find the clothes.

SIMONE: *(head swings sharply)* The clothes?

SEAGRAM: The ones he wore here Friday night. The cabbie saw them. Judd didn't wear them home?

Simone says nothing, watches Seagram carefully. Seagram sips drink, Simone rubs her glass rim.

SIMONE: Who called the cabbie?

SEAGRAM: Must have been Judd. To back up his alibi. So he's supposedly at the Orpheum while the cabbie's seein' the murderer. But he cut it pretty close.

SIMONE: That doesn't sound like Judd. Too smart. *(pause)* Too daring.

SEAGRAM: Except he knew a cabbie was comin' anyway. He found out Adam and Nicky were takin' a plane to Mexico past midnight. So he sent his own cab to make sure another one didn't get there early. The cabbie told us he was promised a \$20 tip if he got there at 11:10. Not a second before, or after.

SIMONE: Then a second cab would have come later.

SEAGRAM: It did. At 11.35. Booked by Adam Gardiner.

SIMONE: The DA, the papers - you never mentioned that.

SEAGRAM: *(shrugs)* It's got no bearing.

Simone drinks, thinks carefully.

SIMONE: What about the heroin?

SEAGRAM: Judd told me about Adam's bad leg from Spain. He gave us the name of his doc in Pasadena. (*checks notebook*) Guy named Morton. He slipped Adam heroin.

SIMONE: That showed up in the autopsy?

SEAGRAM: Yeah. Big dose. He must have been high as a kite.

Simone visibly relaxes. Thinks carefully. Pours another drink. Seagram pours another for himself.

SIMONE: (*raises glass to toast*) I think we have a deal, detective.

SEAGRAM: (*leaning forward*) Beautiful. Let's put this case to bed.

SIMONE: What would you like to know?

SEAGRAM: The alibi. How'd he get out of the Orpheum?

SIMONE: He told me he was going to a business meeting - just after the last reel started. Said he'd take a cab. I drove home in our car. He came in after midnight. He was wearing what he wore to the Orpheum.

SEAGRAM: After you knew about the murder, why didn't you turn him in?

SIMONE: He had another alibi. I confronted him. He said he'd

gone to the business meeting. He had a guy swear he was there.

SEAGRAM: Who?

SIMONE: Man named Van Klassen.

SEAGRAM: Who's he?

SIMONE: A guy behind Richard Nixon's campaign. That's what Van Klassen said the meeting was about. High-level Republican stuff.

SEAGRAM: You believed him?

SIMONE: Sure. He's a big Hollywood agent. And I didn't think Judd was capable of shooting *anybody*, let alone his brother.

SEAGRAM: The .38. Where'd he get it?

SIMONE: I don't know. I never saw it.

SEAGRAM: What about the clothes?

SIMONE: I told you. I never saw them.

SEAGRAM: He didn't wear them home? You didn't find them in the laundry or somethin'?

SIMONE: No.

Long silence. Seagram rubs chin, forehead dejectedly.

SEAGRAM: Then we're just about where we started. I think Judd's gonna beat this.

SIMONE: (*shocked*) What do you mean? You've got a motive. His alibi's broken. You know how he did it!

SEAGRAM: I've been at this game a long time, lady. What you know and what you can prove in court are two different things. Yeah, his alibi's broken. But he can come up with a second one. The business meeting. If Van Klassen backs that up, Judd's free as a bird.

SIMONE: Christ! Judd did it! You must be able to nail him. What about the cabbie?

SEAGRAM: Never got a good look. There was only candles lit. Judd was wearin' black.

Long silence. Only movement or sound is Simone rubbing rim of glass.

SIMONE: So you need the clothes.

SEAGRAM: Yeah. That's the one piece of physical evidence that can pin it on the killer.

SIMONE: I've never seen them, like I said. But I'm pretty sure I know where they are.

SEAGRAM: (*standing bolt upright*) Shit! Where?

SIMONE: We've got a deal, right? If Judd gets convicted for killing Adam, I walk?

SEAGRAM: (*puts out hand*) Deal.

SIMONE: (*shaking his hand*) Deal. (*pause*) I heard him on the phone to Van Klassen. Said he got the clothes from the actor's wardrobe

trailer at Nicky's shoot.

SEAGRAM: Jesus. That's great. But we need it more specific. Did he say exactly where?

SIMONE: Yeah. In a wooden trunk. Marked "Property of Pinnacle Studios".

Seagram grins at Simone. She grins back. He gets bottle, pours glass for himself. Motions to her for refill. He pours.

SEAGRAM: How about a toast?

SIMONE: Sure. To what?

Seagram raises glass. She raises hers. Mackenzie bursts through door with gun drawn, yelling: "Freeze!! FBI!!" Simone freezes, Seagram clamps handcuff on her arm holding the raised drink.)

SEAGRAM: Your future, lady. Your future.

Erica, Nicky, Judd burst into room. Simone bewildered, drops glass, knees buckling. All rush to congratulate Seagram, whooping, crying, slapping him on shoulder.

Lights out.

END OF ACT 3

EPILOGUE

Stage dark. "Green Dolphin" light up, Seagram and Nicky at table filled with glasses, bottles, while Erica sings "Over The Rainbow". Applause, Seagram takes sax from case. Light out briefly, then up as Erica sings and Seagram plays sax on last verse of "Mystery Wind". Music fades. They return to table, weaving slightly and grinning.

NICKY: You were great, detective! I didn't know you could play like that!

SEAGRAM: (*gruff but pleased*) You deaf? Wait'll you hear a legit guy blow!

Erica grins. Seagram pours a round, knocks back his.

SEAGRAM: (*slightly drunk*) Anybody ever tell you the universal secret of the saxophone, ladies?

Erica and Nicky give amused smiles, shake heads.

NICKY: So what's the mystery?

SEAGRAM: Nobody can turn away from that sound. Nobody with a heart and soul, anyway.

Silence. Erica and Nicky suppress giggles. They get Seagram goaded.

Doncha wanna know why?

ERICA: (*grinning*) We're dying to. But not before we wind you up a little first.

SEAGRAM: (*solemnly, ignoring her*) 'Cause it's the instrument that comes the closest to the human voice. Which is connected to the human heart. Home of the sacred and profane. When a sax blows, the sacred and profane blows in every note.

ERICA: (*sardonic smile*) That's very profound, Seagram. But don't give up your day job.

NICKY: (*giggles, jabs Erica with her elbow*) Erica!

ERICA: Tell you what Seagram. Let me sleep on that poetic, um, passing note... (*she swishes bottle and grins*)...which reveals a certain taste for taking the diminished fifth.

Seagram grins, shakes head ruefully. Comfortable silence. "Manouche Moon" plays in background.

NICKY: Speaking of sleeping - (*she gets up to leave*) I better get going to Margies. I'm so tired, I could sleep on her back porch for a week straight.

SEAGRAM: Are ya sure? The Ray Charles set is just about to get started!

NICKY: Thanks, detective. Maybe some other time. But (*she holds out her hand to shake his*) thanks for all you did. You saved my life.

SEAGRAM: (*shakes her hand, gives sly glance at Erica*) Naw. Adam did.

NICKY: What? (*she gives bewildered look to Erica*)

ERICA: Forget it, Nicky. Mr. Seagram's a little tight. (*gives her*

kiss) Night. I'll be up on the weekend.

NICKY: Okay. Bye.

Nicky leaves. They listen, smoke, sip drinks.

ERICA: Drop it, Seagram. It's over. Case closed.

SEAGRAM: Simone's not convicted yet.

ERICA: She will be.

SEAGRAM: (*Wagging his head*) Convince me. Van Klassen's got her the best criminal lawyer in the state. Half my files have disappeared. The DA's hauled me off the case. And my FBI pal Pete Mackenzie phoned this morning: Hoover's got his hands on the only tape of Judd confessin'.

ERICA: We've got enough. The hidden set of clothes. Adam's old house key in a pocket. Heroin powder inside the finger of her glove. Judd as state's witness. Her alibi's been smashed. It's enough to convict.

Long silence. "Bohemian Boulevard" in background. Seagram takes drink.

SEAGRAM: No it's not, sugar. You know there's one piece missing.

ERICA: Whatever it is has nothing to do with Simone. Some things are better left buried.

SEAGRAM: Not on my beat.

Silence, but no trace of anger.

SEAGRAM: (*somberly*) I know Adam set it up, Erica.

ERICA: Drop it, Seagram.

SEAGRAM: (*takes out notebook*) The doc gave barbiturates for his *leg*. But the heroin was for brain cancer. Adam knew he had maybe a few months. And, for a week, Simone made him think Nicky was his daughter.

ERICA: (*closes eyes*) It's over. Close your eyes and listen to that gypsy jazz. It'll put you in Paris...

SEAGRAM: (*takes another drink*) So Adam told Judd they were flying to Mexico, drugged Nicky, shot her up with paint bullets, gave himself a fatal dose of heroin, then waited for Simone to show up. Adam knew she would. She did. That's why *he* ordered the cabbie. To catch her in the act, and so homicide cops would find the incriminating screenplay notes he left on the hi fi ...

ERICA: Seagram, I'm leaving if you don't stop.

Long silence.

SEAGRAM: Adam pulled off the perfect murder. His own. To put two vultures in a cage for life.

ERICA: (*grabbing purse and cigarettes*) That's it! I'm leaving...

SEAGRAM: (*grabs her arm, makes her sit down*) Okay. Okay. I'll quit. But first you gotta level with me.

ERICA: About what?

SEAGRAM: Adam's screenplay. Whose got it?

ERICA: (*darkly*) I don't know. The day after we nailed Simone, my doorman told me the FBI had been watching my mail. They took a thick manila envelope, mailed from Adam. I called Pete Mackenzie. He said nobody from the FBI ever touched my mail.

SEAGRAM: Pete's straight. Either they weren't FBI, or Pete didn't know about it. Mighta been Van Klassen's mob guys. Or Hoover went way over Pete's head.

ERICA: I think that's why Nixon just made his "Checkers" speech. He figured confessin' to a little dirt would divert the press from finding the big, dirty slush fund Adam's screenplay exposed.

SEAGRAM: And Van Klassen's mob connections to the studio unions. Betcha he's Hollywood's kingpin for the next forty years.

ERICA: (*with disgust*) All that teary-eyed shit about his little black dog and his wife's cloth coat! Nixon's got it over any actor who ever played a Warner Brothers crook.

SEAGRAM: Ike gets elected, J. Edgar Hoover's gonna use that tape of Judd confessing to keep Nixon on *his* leash. Then the White House'll lay off the mob. 'Cause accordin' to Pete, the Mob's even holdin' somethin' over *Hoover*. They're runnin' that old bulldog for bein' queer.

Long silence. Jazz plays. They drink, smoke.

SEAGRAM: (*laughs*) Where's that Ray Charles set you promised me? We need to hear some *blues*.

ERICA: (*wry laugh*) Yeah. Misery loves company.

SEAGRAM: (*holds up glass*) No. You're right. Let's look on the bright side. Nicky's cleared. Adam left her a fortune. She's gonna have his baby. You get Adam's ranch, and a nice annuity. I got my job back, bustin' deadbeats. Simone and Judd are behind bars. So - a toast. (*grins, flourishes his glass in the air*)

To life! In all it's majesty.

ERICA: (*grins*) To life! In all it's majesty. (*drinks, lights cigarette*)

Speaking of which: you ever think about getting hitched up again?

SEAGRAM: (*floored, but shrugs*) Married? I dunno. I ain't exactly pushin' the dames away.

ERICA: (*with affection*) Aw, you're not such a dinosaur after all. You've even got some brains. So you should think about it.

SEAGRAM: Why? Don't tell me you're interested or somethin'.

ERICA: (*laughs*) No--o. I am what I am. A "Green Dolphin" girl. (*pause, she raises glass*)

But you're all right, detective.

SEAGRAM: (*raises glass to her*) Thanks, sister. You're ok, too.

Lights out. "Maybe It's Crazy" plays as house lights come up.

THE END/CURTAIN