

#1[Elsa and Kelly]

ELSA. Well, Sergeant Kelly, since we have an early day tomorrow, we'd best have our Ovaltine and go to bed. Oh dear, Helsa has forgotten the sugar.

KELLY. Not on my account.

ELSA. You don't take sugar?

KELLY. I don't take Ovaltine. I hope this blizzard won't scare off our people.

ELSA. My dear, these are actors, producer, director, composer, lyricist, coming to get my money for their Broadway show. Nothing short of the end of the world will stop them.

KELLY. If this is gonna work, you've got to say the speech exactly like we rehearsed it. You're going to be able to pull off your end of this okay?

ELSA. Espionage is in my blood, sir. I won't fail you.

KELLY. I'm just worried the killer is working too damn fast. We thought he'd go for you and the notebook, but he went for someone who obviously could expose him somehow. And not just once. We've had two murders, maybe three. It must be a combination of the book and those people that worried him. With them out of the way, the book is useless. Now ask yourself why.

ELSA. Ask myself why what?

KELLY. Not why what, why who? Because before you ask who, you have to ask why.

ELSA. And how!

KELLY. How what?

ELSA. I was just agreeing. "And how!" Oh Sergeant, this is going to be a grand adventure, isn't it? And I've planned a perfectly grand menu for the occasion. To begin, a tureen of December fruit, followed by lobster on dill, and...

KELLY. Yeah, well since my first adventure will be drivin' through a snow storm tomorrow, I getter get some sleep.

ELSA. Come, I'll show you to your room. I must admit, you are something of a surprise to me, Sergeant. I had thought all New York City policemen to be Irish.

KELLY. We are.

#2 [O'Reilly and Helsa]

O'REILLY. I'm Patrick O'Reilly. I'm one of the actors. I thought I'd be after comin' up to see if I could borrow a shivel.

HELSA. Shivel? Oh... Fraulein von Grossenknueten is using it right now. May I take your coat?

O'REILLY. I may as well go back down, then, and see what I can do.

HELSA. You are Irish, Mr. O'Reilly?

O'REILLY. As Paddy's cow. And you... are Scandinavian?

HELSA. I am German.

O'REILLY. Are you now?

HELSA. A refugee. My mother und father worked in Berlin as laborers in the Government printing plant. In 1923 they died, when a carton which contained marks the equivalent of five American dollars fell on them and they were crushed. My sisters and I were raised by relatives. We saw each other only on Weinachtsabend, when we met to decorate the Weinachtsbaum, und give out Weihnachtsgeschenke.

O'REILLY. Gesundheit!

HELSA. My point is, Fraulein von Grossenknueten gave me refuge here four years ago.

O'REILLY. Did she now?

HELSA. From the Nazis.

O'REILLY. The Nazis was it?

HELSA. Swine that they are!

O'REILLY. I see.

HELSA. And where in Ireland are you from?

O'REILLY. Sure'n are you familiar with Ireland, colleen?

HELSA. I've never been there, no.

O'REILLY. Well, there's a spot in County Blarney which the sun, comin' over the McNamara mountains, hits first, wakin' the fine village of... MacGillicuddy to another of God's days. It's there that I'm from and it's there that I'll ever be.

HELSA. Have I seen you in anything on Broadway, Mr. O'Reilly?

O'REILLY. Are ya writin' a book about me, Miss...?

HELSA. Wenzel. Helsa Wenzel.

O'REILLY. Wenzel, yes. Faith and begorra, but isn't there a very famous German cabaret entertainer named Wenzel? At the Tivoli I believe.

HELSA. You are familiar with German cabaret entertainers?

O'REILLY. Well, it's after bein' my business now, isn't it? Dieter Wenzel, isn't that his name?

HELSA. I never paid much attention to the cabarets.

#3 [Nikki and Ken]

NIKKI. Mr. De La Maize, what is Hollywood like?

KEN. Just dump the garment district in the middle of an orange grove. That's Hollywood.

NIKKI. How picturesque.

KEN. Of course there is an ocean somewhere.

NIKKI. You never saw the ocean?

KEN. Certainly I saw the ocean. I was at a party in Santa Monica one night and someone pulled open the drapes. Drink?

NIKKI. No thank you.

KEN. And you are a singer / dancer?

NIKKI. Dancer, mostly.

KEN. Yes, I kind of thought that when I watched you get off the train.

NIKKI. I walk like a duck, you mean?

KEN. No, you tripped over your suitcase.

NIKKI. Jeepers, this is a swell house, isn't it?

KEN. Yes.

NIKKI. I'll bet they have some swell houses in Hollywood.

KEN. Ostentatious, but... "swell," yes.

NIKKI. You're not working on any movies now?

KEN. I've just finished a picture, "Moonlight in Rio."

NIKKI. "Moonlight in Rio"? You shot a movie in Brazil?

KEN. No, I shot it in Culver City. Except for the beach. The beach I shot in Oxnard.

NIKKI. Who's in it?

KEN. Alice Faye, Dick Powell, Phil Silvers, Ann Miller, Patsy Kelly, George Brent, Lauritz Melchior, Jascha Heifetz, and Borah Minnevitich.

NIKKI. Oh sure, I saw that.

KEN. You probably did, but this one hasn't been released yet.

NIKKI. Oh.

KEN. Ahhh, it's good to be back. In the theater. That event as ancient as man and as mysterious and inspiring as the nature man once sought to imitate or appease in his earliest rituals... rituals we now call—the theater. Not moving pictures, but life. Life distilled to a pure clear ring of truth. Never forget that. It is your heritage.

NIKKI. I guess. But I've only done musical comedy.

KEN. Yes. Well. If you'll excuse me, I'm going to take my sherry upstairs and into the bathtub.

#4 [Elsa, Eddie and Marjorie]

ELSA. Ah, you must be Mr. McCuen, since you're the only one unaccounted for. I'm your hostess, Elsa von Grossenkneten. And of course you know Miss Baverstock since you rode up with her.

MARJORIE. Hardly know, Elsa, as Mr. McCuen was up front with your driver. I didn't get an opportunity to tell you, Mr. McCuen, that I think it's simply divoon of you to fill in at the last moment like this.

EDDIE. Well, thanks, but I... I got my dates mixed up and I'm due back in New York.

ELSA. Oh dear, when?

EDDIE. Well, it would be... right about now.

ELSA. Really? But my goodness, I don't know how you'll get there. Perhaps it's skipped your attention, but we're having a blizzard.

EDDIE. I know, but...

MARJORIE. Well I know I, for one, would be quite sorry to see you go. I've been hearing such good things about your work. And of course, Ken De La Maize, who is directing the audition knows every agent in Hollywood. Do you have an agent in Hollywood, Eddie?

EDDIE. [beat, then sighs] Come on, let's get to work.

MARJORIE. Elsa, I can't wait for you to hear the show. It's divoon, simply divoon. And I have a budget all worked out. Even down to the opening night party. We'll hold it at Sardi's, naturally, and if we charge the actors just a teensy cover charge, we'll break even. [Sees a revolving bookcase.] Elsa, are you redecorating?

ELSA. Oh, that's just the secret passage. The house is laced with them.

MARJORIE. My goodness, Nancy Drew would be in seventh heaven here, wouldn't she? You never told me about this, Elsa, never!

ELSA. They're nothing, Marjorie. Just your average, ordinary, everyday secret passageways. My father, who built this house, was Baron Wilhelm Von Grossenkneten. He was the Kaiser's Chief of Espionage and the most brilliant intelligence mind in European history.

MARJORIE. He was a spy?

ELSA. You have heard, perhaps of the Dreyfuss papers? The Colonel Reedle letter? The Kruger telegram? The Von Moltke note? The Hotzendorff memo? The Von Emmich shopping list? Events which changed the course of history, with my father at their center, working in clandestine, covert alliance, cloaked in an atmosphere of secrecy, stealth and subterfuge.

MARJORIE. But why the secret passages?

ELSA. It was the only way he could leave the room.

#5 [Ken, Roger, Bernice]

KEN. Could Helsa be the Stage Door Slasher? Well it's what we're all thinking, right? But why would Helsa murder three women?

ROGER. Jealousy.

KEN. Of whom?

ROGER. Of Elsa's friends, of course. She said she had many.

KEN. She said Bebe had many. Really, Roger, if you are going to take the thoughts of others and twist them, I prefer you stick to Jerome Kern, you do that so much better.

ROGER. I do not steal from Jerome Kern!

BERNICE. He certainly does not!

ROGER. Thank you, Bernice.

BERNICE. It's Irving Berlin!

ROGER. Oh, fine, fine, let's all be viciously funny about my talent. It strikes me as an exceptionally transparent attempt to get us off the subject, which is, which one of us might have had a motive?

KEN. All right. Shall we begin with the well-known fact that you hate dancers?

ROGER. Not true. I only hate them when they sing.

KEN. You did demand those three girls be removed from the show.

ROGER. But not with a knife!

BERNICE. My God!

ROGER. What is it, Bernice?

BERNICE. I just got the new second act opener! The second act opener should be a waltz!

ROGER. Personally, I thought what we had originally was fine.

BERNICE. Marjorie hated it.

ROGER. Marjorie was dead, Bernice. I don't think you should allow a dead woman's opinion to influence you.

KEN. Besides, this isn't the time.

BERNICE. Isn't the time, Ken? Isn't the time? I'm creating. Don't tell me it isn't the time. The contractions are beginning and he tells me it isn't the time. I've been stopped from giving birth a lot here tonight, KEN! Oh I can't work in this environment, Roger. These people have no respect for an artist. It's casting swirls before pine. Oh, I am very drunk.

#6 [Eddie and Nikki]

EDDIE. This could be the break I been waitin' for. Aren't you excited about this?

NIKKI. They usually get stars for the stuff I'm reading, don't they?

EDDIE. Well... you never know. You live in New York?

NIKKI. Yes.

EDDIE. Got a boyfriend?

NIKKI. Did have. He joined the navy last year.

EDDIE. Yeah, navy's not bad. I been thinkin' maybe I should join. Before I get drafted.

NIKKI. Aren't you a bit old to be drafted?

EDDIE. Yeah, right now. But look at the way things are going. I figure I better get a name in show business PDQ so that if I am drafted I can get into the entertainment section of the army.

NIKKI. You wanna kill 'em with laughs, huh?

EDDIE. They got such units.

NIKKI. A comics battalion? Yeah, they hit the beach right after the magicians.

EDDIE. It's called Special Services.

NIKKI. Uh huh, and they pass out Ping Pong balls.

EDDIE. You know, I'd'a known you were a dancer even if you never said so.

NIKKI. Yeah?

EDDIE. You talk straight out. Like a guy. Most dames don't talk that way. Dancers do. 'Course I'm talkin' show biz, not ballet.

NIKKI. You date a lot of dancers?

EDDIE. I don't date a lot of anything.

NIKKI. You haven't got a girl?

EDDIE. Nope. But that's okay—that's the way it's laid out.

NIKKI. What's laid out?

EDDIE. The hero gets the girl, the comic gets the laughs.

NIKKI. In the movies.

EDDIE. And in real life—pretty much the same.

NIKKI. I wouldn't know. I haven't met any heroes.

EDDIE. Met any comics?

NIKKI. Just one.

EDDIE. You believe in chemistry?

NIKKI. Chemistry?

EDDIE. You know, you look at someone and something happens.

NIKKI. I don't know.

EDDIE. It's happening here. [pauses] O'Reilly and the maid. I think we're seeing the start of a hot affair. They've really got eyes for each other.

#7 [O'Reilly, Nikki, Kelly]

O'REILLY. [*Irish accent:*] Has anyone seen the maid?

NIKKI. She's in the closet. But she's got a butcher's knife.

O'REILLY. I've got a gun.

NIKKI. What's an Irish tenor doing with a gun?

O'REILLY. I'm not Irish, I'm Italian. [*New York accent:*] Lieutenant Tony Garibaldi, N.Y.P.D. Workin' undercover on da case of da stage door slasher. The maid is the slasher and she's on her way up the river. [*To closet:*] Okay, Wenzel, the jig's up, come out with your hands high. You heard me, Wenzel, you're trapped! Okay, I'm counting to five. Eins! Zwei! Drei!

NIKKI. You're counting in German.

O'REILLY. Well, Helsa's German. Vier! Funf!

NIKKI. Funf?

O'REILLY. Five.

NIKKI. No wonder they're so broke over there. [*O'REILLY opens the closet door to see KELLY with gag in mouth.*]

KELLY. Grrrt dhh ghghg ooff ma mmfff!

NIKKI. What?

KELLY. Grrt dhh ghghg oof ma mmfff!

NIKKI. Wait a minute, I can't understand a thing you're saying 'cause you got a gag in your mouth. [*Removes gag.*]
Now what did you say?

KELLY. I said, take this damn gag outta my mouth!

O'REILLY. Did you just pass the maid in there?

KELLY. Who knows? It's too dark to see anything.

O'REILLY. I'll take care of this.

KELLY. No, hold it. This is a job for the police.

NIKKI. But he is the police. Lieutenant Tony somebody. He's working on the slasher case.

KELLY. Outta where?

O'REILLY. Headquarters.

KELLY. What division?

O'REILLY. Eerie crimes.

KELLY. Eerie crimes division?

O'REILLY. Yeah, it's a new thing the commissioner just...

KELLY. You gotta badge?

O'REILLY. Sure. [*Takes a step back and points gun at KELLY. Now in German accent:*] Hands up! Everyone over there. Move, move, move!

KELLY. You have my badge, right? You're the son of a bitch conked me on the head, right?

O'REILLY. I needed the I.D. Almost worked. Til bumblebrains here spoiled everything.

NIKKI. Hey!

O'REILLY. I am Klaus Stansdorff of the Gestapo, temporarily assigned to the German Consulate in New York... as a cultural attaché. Now I suggest that the rest of you turn your heads, as the bullet from this gun makes quite a large hole.