

GLADYS NIGHTS

By Becky Kimsey

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SYNOPSIS: Gladys is having a mid-life crisis. Stuck in the daily grind, working at her office day job with an irritating narcissist boss, Gladys feels she is about to lose her mind. Suddenly, she is visited by her childhood imaginary friend, Pepper. Unlike the usual imaginary friends, Pepper is a sleek, sexy badass super assassin who made a pact with Gladys 30 years ago that she would never let Gladys become boring. Well, Gladys is now boring, so Pepper talks her into posting an ad: “Assassin for hire.” Gladys interviews several “clients” who want to hire her to kill someone. Much to Pepper’s dismay, during the negotiation process, Gladys inadvertently talks them out of it. When a detective tries to catch her in the act, he somehow falls for her instead, causing a series of unfortunate misunderstandings. In the end, Gladys must choose between Pepper (and a potentially exciting life as an assassin) and her newly found romance. It’s a hilarious, fast-paced, action-packed ride that engages the audience and has them laughing from start to finish!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 3 males, 2 either)

GLADYS (f)	Mild mannered and overweight woman. 40’s. <i>(424 lines)</i>
PEPPER (f)	A female assassin. Southern accent. 20-30s. <i>(247 lines)</i>
BOBBY (m)	Gladys’s patronizing boss. 40’s. <i>(39 lines)</i>
RAY (m)	Detective with a soft spot. 40’s <i>(157 lines)</i>
MAN (m)	Multiple roles: Man, Donny, Greg, Waiter, Mr. Jacobson. 20-40s. <i>(45 lines)</i>
WOMAN (f)	Multiple roles: Alice, Teresa, Attendant, Sunny. 20-40s. <i>(84 lines)</i>
TECHIE #1 (f/m)	Easily intimidated. 18-20 years old. <i>(Non-Speaking)</i>

TECHIE #2 (f/m) Not easily intimidated. 30-40s.
(*Non-Speaking*)

DURATION: 90 minutes.

TIME: The present.

SETTING: Various locations in an urban American city.

COSTUMES

GLADYS – Office attire, sweatpants, hoodie, sneakers, military boots, red dress, trench coat.

BOBBY – Suit, white shirt, tie.

PEPPER – Short black leather jacket, sleek black trousers, red skin-tight tee. Sexy dress.

ALICE – Mousy and uptight business suit.

DONNY – Bad lounge suit, gold chains.

TERESA – Something casual, comfortable.

GREG – Grey suit with a red shirt, detective badge on belt.

MAN – Leather jacket, white t-shirt, loose-fitting jeans, hat.

RAY – Rumpled suit and a nice suit.

TECHIES #1 and #2 – Black pants, black shirt, football pads, hockey helmet, punching mitts, sunglasses.

MUSIC/SOUND EFFECTS

- Recorded voice overs
- Loud dance club music
- Sound of someone urinating
- Muffled pop (gun with silencer)
- Office phones ringing
- Baby crying
- Paintball gun firing sound

SET PIECES

- Rolling office chair
- 4-leg Chair (2)
- Round table
- Clothing rack with several dresses: yellow, navy, red
- Clothing rack with several suits
- Changing screen
- Oval mirror (if one cannot be found, use the fourth wall)
- Candle
- Tablecloth
- Bottle of wine
- Wine glasses
- Water glasses
- Menus

PROPS**GLADYS**

- Large purse [with: "hit" paper, firearm (blanks), pencil, pen, tampon, pills]
- Headset
- Nail file
- Tissues (purse pack)
- Bowling balls (2)
- Banana
- Laptop (charged)
- Clutch [with lipstick, compact mirror, terrible earrings]
- Sunglasses
- Cell phone
- Flash cards

First Card: "Q: Here's the mark. A: And the cash?"

Second Card: "Q: Do you take personal checks? A: This ain't no credit union, sweetheart. Cash only or no deal."

Other Cards: Directors choice.

- Wristwatch
- "Paintball gun" (*Note: A starter pistol with a "silencer" attached along with a silencer sound effect works well*)

BOBBY

- Clipboard
- Pen
- Cell phone
- Briefcase
- Travel mug with cold “coffee”
- Wristwatch

PEPPER

- Contract (written in crayon)
- Whip
- Knife (to wield)

RAY

- Cell phone
- Manila envelope (stuffed)
- Leather binder
- Flowers
- Firearm

TECHIE #1 / TECHIE #2

- Pill bottle with “pills”
- Pie on plate (edible)
- Fork
- Napkin
- 2 Salads with croutons (edible)

MAN

- Squibs

WOMAN

- Briefcase
- Manilla envelope (2 stuffed, one with \$100.00 bill)
- Baby in blanket
- Diaper bag
- Cell phone
- Restaurant takeout box
- Scrap of paper

DIRECTOR NOTES

TECHIES #1 and #2 can be any gender. We grant permission to change gender pronouns for these characters within the script to correspond with production casting.

In Act Two, Scene 1, GLADYS and PEPPER interact with a male audience member. The audience member could be chosen at random or you could have a plant in the audience. The audience member has two lines.

In the world-premiere production, there was an opening sequence dance number that was a spoof on the James Bond opening credit theme. The song used for this number was “Faster Gun” by Little Big Town.

This play contains suggestions for the performance of a musical work (either in part or in whole). Heuer Publishing LLC has not obtained performing rights of these works. The direction of such works is only a playwright's suggestion, and the play producer should obtain such permissions on their own through ASCAP, BMI or the U.S. copyright office.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

GLADYS NIGHTS premiered at Stage Coach Theatre in Boise, Idaho under the direction of Becky Kimsey with the following cast and crew:

GLADYS.....	Courtney Ransom
PEPPER.....	Rebecca Seideman
BOBBY.....	Bryan Romano
RAY.....	John Ode
MAN.....	Kevin Kimsey
WOMAN.....	Nichole Stull
TECHIE #1.....	Carly Ode
TECHIE #2.....	Rebecca Lyons
Director.....	Becky Kimsey
Assistant Director.....	Christy Foster
Stage Manager.....	Tyler Schild
Set Designer.....	Kevin Kimsey
Lighting Designer.....	Dan Allers
Stage Tech.....	Teresa Sorenson
Sound Operator.....	Lora Volkert
Lighting Operator.....	Jillian Durrant
Costumes.....	Elizabeth Greely
Choreography.....	Shannon Peterson

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: *Bare stage. Trash cans are in the upstage left corner. Loud dance club music plays in the background. MAN staggers in stage left and moves to the back wall. MAN wears a leather jacket over a white t-shirt and loose-fitting jeans. He stands with his back to the audience and unzips his pants. He glances left, then right, then we hear the faint but familiar sound of urinating. MAN sighs and begins to whistle "Ode to Joy." GLADYS enters stage left wearing a long trench coat and carrying a large purse. She's whistling the same tune. MAN vaguely registers her presence but continues to urinate and whistle. She, too, faces the back wall next to the MAN and pretends to join him in a pee. Overhead, we hear the following narration by GLADYS.*

GLADYS: *(Voice over.)* My name isn't that important. Just my story. But just so we're clear, I should have been named Nikita Brazovich or Kolovich or some other kind of name with an itch. But no. My folks are from Cincinnati and they named me Gladys. You know, after that gal who sang with the Pips? Oh, and as you can see, I'm gloriously overweight.

The MAN registers her more clearly now and is trying to work out what she is doing. She lifts her chin.

GLADYS: 'Sup?

MAN: *(Slurred.)* Wha the hell?

GLADYS: I know what you're thinking. What's a girl like me doing in a place like this? Am I right?

MAN: Whatever. *(He zips his pants back up and turns to leave.)*

GLADYS: Hey. I'm talking to you!

MAN: Get lost, you fat cow.

GLADYS: *(Turns towards him.)* ...Cow?

GLADYS: *(Voice over.)* How's that for a non-starter?

MAN: *(Staggers back. Finger in her face.)* Yeah. Big. Fat. Cow.

GLADYS: *(Voice over.)* Well this non-starter just turned into a kickstarter, baby.

GLADYS smiles. With surprising speed, GLADYS kicks the MAN in the groin. He folds over and she hammers both fists on his back, he falls

to his knees and wails. She pulls a paper out of her purse and studies it as she circles around the MAN groaning on the ground.

GLADYS: Tyler, right? Tyler Johnson?

MAN: *(Feebly.)* Do I know you?

GLADYS: *(Stuffing paper back in the purse.)* Nah. You don't know me. I'm just some lady who was hired to kill you. *(Pulls out a pistol with a silencer, aims it at the MAN.)* You must be soome kind of asshole... Me, I'm just a nice girl tryin' to make a living. But that's okay. To you, I'm just a cow.

SFX: POP! POP! POP! goes the silencer. MAN falls to the ground behind the trash cans.

GLADYS: *(Looks around, puts the gun back in her purse, takes a deep breath, fluffs her hair and leans over the body.)* Moo.

GLADYS exits stage left whistling "Ode to Joy." Lights change. MAN exits in the dark taking trash cans with him as scene changes to OFFICE during the following.

GLADYS: *(Voice over.)* Pretty badass, right? Right? Okay so that didn't really happen. Well, at least not like that. Not exactly like that. I mean, Pepper said that's how it was supposed to go, but in real life it went a totally different direction. But I don't really wanna go over that right now, 'kay? We'll get back to that later, is that alright? You just sit there and be patient. First off, I should probably tell you how it all started. I think it's important that I begin there, cause that gal you saw just now... wasn't really me.

Lights up full.

GLADYS: THIS (*GLADYS rolls on to center stage in an office chair with a cordless headset in her ear. We hear sounds of office phones ringing.*) was me. Ace Carpet Cleaning this is Gladys how can I help you? ...mmhm. I see... I see. What's your name please? (*Louder.*) Your name.

BOBBY enters from stage right with a clipboard and listens, GLADYS does not see him.

GLADYS: Thank you, Mrs. Price— (*Louder.*) I said THANK YOU MRS. PRICE. Now what can I — No, I'm not shouting.

BOBBY: Yes, you were.

GLADYS: (*Stiffens.*) I'm not — Sorry, Mrs. Price. No, no, no, I said I AM sorry. Can you hear me now? Okay, now what is the address please? (*Mimes typing.*) Mmhm. Okay, I see that the last time we were out there was five years ago, so. (*Beat.*) FIVE YEARS.

BOBBY: Tsk tsk tsk. Shouting. (*Writes on clipboard.*)

GLADYS: Yes. I know. Can you maybe move to a different room? I can't — your dog is. Yes. Your dog is really loud, Mrs. Price, I really can't — oh, okay. Go ahead and get the door. Yeah, I'll hold.

BOBBY: Can't she call you back?

GLADYS: Wait, would you like to call us back? Hello? Hello? (*To BOBBY.*) She put the phone down.

BOBBY: You should have had her call you back.

GLADYS: I know.

BOBBY: Annnd now, you're stuck here on the phone while all the other calls go unanswered. (*Pause, as GLADYS looks up. The silence in the office is registered.*)

GLADYS: I'm sorry Bobby.

BOBBY: Mr. Trask.

GLADYS: Sorry Mr. Trask. I just get a little nervous when people stand over me like that.

BOBBY: I'm your supervisor now, Gladys. Standing over you is my job.

GLADYS: Right.

BOBBY: By the way, you missed the meeting again this morning.

GLADYS: What meeting?

BOBBY: The company meeting. Every Thursday.

GLADYS: You mean the one at 6am that we don't get paid to attend?

BOBBY: (*Astounded.*) There are doughnuts, Gladys. Isn't that worth getting here an hour early?

GLADYS: I don't like doughnuts.

BOBBY: (*Snorts.*) Yeah, right. Anyways, it's valuable comradery time. It builds employee morale.

GLADYS: I'll try to make it next week.

BOBBY: It's the only way to build chum points, Gladys. Think about it. How do you expect to be employee of the month when you never show up for Sunshine Thursdays? It means a great deal to Tony. It was his idea, you know.

GLADYS: Yeah. I know.

BOBBY: You got no chum points, Gladys. None.

GLADYS: Yes sir.

BOBBY: There's my girl. Carry on. (*Exits while whistling. GLADYS begins filing her nails as she waits on hold.*)

GLADYS: (*Voice over.*) Yyyep. That's my boss. Bobby Trask. Behind his back, we call him The Whistler. He got promoted a year ago because he whistled "The Star Spangled Banner" every day for the entire NFL season and Tony Jacobson, the owner, decided he was a patriotic genius. When the holidays rolled around and we were forced to endure back-to-back renditions of "Santa Baby," Tony decided it was time to put Bobby in charge of the whole service department. The only time Bobby doesn't whistle is when he's sneaking up on you to catch you yelling at an elderly customer with a yapping dog and someone more important at the door. This was me. Before Pepper came back into my life.

PEPPER cartwheels in from stage left. She's smooth as saccharin and twice as deadly. She looks like an assassin. She is an assassin. She slowly approaches GLADYS from behind and shouts.

PEPPER: Put 'em up!

GLADYS: (*Instinctively raises her hands.*) I'm sorry! (*PEPPER laughs and crouches down beside her. GLADYS slowly lowers her hands and turns to PEPPER.*) Oh no.

PEPPER: Miss me, princess?

GLADYS: I've cracked.

PEPPER: Heyyy. Glad-bag. It's me! Pepper!

GLADYS: I've finally cracked. I've... I've... (*GLADYS leans over and digs in her purse.*)

PEPPER: Don't tell me you forgot about me!

GLADYS: (*Digging frantically.*) Where is it...

PEPPER: Remember? Third grade? You used to take me to the park?

GLADYS: Shiiiiit.

PEPPER: We'd sit on the top of the jungle gym and use the other kids for target practice?

GLADYS: (*Standing, she backs away.*) NO!

PEPPER: (*Following her.*) Come on! First you named me Belle Pepper—

GLADYS: (*Running around her chair.*) No, no, no!

PEPPER: —until you found out you were allergic to bell peppers so we settled on Pepper. Come on! Don't you remember?

GLADYS: (*Anger rising.*) Ohhhh I remember. I remember, alright. I remember ten years of counseling and therapy sessions and hypnotism treatments. I remember Mom and Dad telling me that you were just in my imagination and if I didn't stop talking about you, and talking TO YOU, I'd end up in a straight-jacket just like that guy on *Cuckoo's Nest!*

PEPPER: (*Triumphant.*) You DO remember!

GLADYS: GO AWAY!

PEPPER: Aw come on, Glad-bag! I came back to help you!

GLADYS: DON'T call me that! I don't NEED your help. You're— you're NOT REAL! (*Digs again through her purse.*)

PEPPER: You bet your sweet boots I am! And I wouldn't be here if you weren't—what the hell are you looking for?

GLADYS: My pills. My anxiety pills. Damn!!! I must have left them on the dresser.

PEPPER: Anxiety pills? What the hell do you need those for?

GLADYS: (*A glare.*) ANXIETY! I must be having an attack. How else do you explain— (*Suddenly her hand flies to her headset.*) Oh helloooo Mrs. Price!

PEPPER: Huh?

GLADYS: I said HELLO MRS. PRICE. CAN YOU HEAR ME OKAY?

PEPPER: Wow.

GLADYS: Yes. I'm HERE. Yes. But your dog is still—

PEPPER: This isn't you.

GLADYS: Your DOG, Mrs. Price. I can't hear you!

PEPPER: This isn't you at all.

GLADYS: I'm sorry, what?

PEPPER: Where's the cutthroat killer kid?

GLADYS: No, no I—

PEPPER: Where's my Glad-bag of possibilities!

GLADYS: I really can't hear—

PEPPER: Come on, you remember how to do this, right?

GLADYS: Mrs. Price?

PEPPER: Tell her to go to hell!

GLADYS: You need us to what?

PEPPER: (*Chanting.*) Go to hell! Go to hell! Go to hell!

GLADYS: (*To PEPPER.*) Shut up!

PEPPER: Atta girl.

GLADYS: (*On phone.*) What? No! Not you, Mrs. Price I was just—
Hello? Hello? Shit! (*To PEPPER.*) Thanks a lot!

PEPPER: My pleasure.

GLADYS: You're gonna get me fired! Leave me alone! I don't need you, I don't want you. You're just a figment!

PEPPER: A what?

GLADYS: A figment! You're a teeny, tiny little figment of my imagination that's trying to work its way back into my subconscious and suck my sanity out through a silly straw! (*About to lose it so she closes her eyes and adopts a meditation pose.*)

PEPPER: Wow.

GLADYS: Ohhmmm ...Go away...

PEPPER: I can't hon. You asked me to come.

GLADYS: No. No I didn't. No.

PEPPER: Ha-ha. Yes. Yes you did. Yes. Still talking in threes, huh?

GLADYS: I never asked you to—

PEPPER: (*Pulls paper from pocket.*) Okay, remember this?

PEPPER shows her the paper; it appears to be a contract written in crayon.

GLADYS: Oh my God.

PEPPER: *(Clears throat, reading.)* I, Gladys P. Hutton, solemnly swear that Pepper is my best friend for ever and ever. And if I ever grow old and boring, I want Pepper to come back and save me. She swears this too. Sincerely, Gladys P. Hutton. P.S. This is my blood.

GLADYS: I can't believe it.

PEPPER: Believe it, tootsie-roll. I came back because you are now old. And you are now boring. And this is your blood. *(Points.)*

GLADYS: I just can't believe it.

PEPPER: I know. I couldn't believe it either. You puked after you saw your own blood, remember that? Some of it got on the contract so I gotta hold it like this. *(Holds it out with two fingers.)*

GLADYS: No. No, no.

PEPPER: You were going to grow up and be an ASSASSIN, Remember? A kick-butt, take-no-prisoners, super-sexy, high-rollin', hardcore-en first class-en, super sass-en assassin!

GLADYS: I remember, okay? But now is just not a good time.

PEPPER: Boring!

GLADYS: I'm serious! This is my JOB!

PEPPER: Boring, boring, boring!!

GLADYS: PEPPER!

PEPPER: Boooooorrringgg!!

BOBBY enters. He does not see PEPPER.

BOBBY: Gladys, what the hell?

GLADYS: Bobby, I'm sorry—

BOBBY: You better be! Mrs. Price called back and asked to speak to a manager. Yeah. That's right. She said you told her to shut up!

GLADYS: No, but I didn't!

BOBBY: Yeah, well she said that you did. So congratulations Gladys, Mrs. Price is going to take her business elsewhere from now on.

PEPPER: Good!

GLADYS: Bobby I swear—

BOBBY: She's going to call the Carpet Captain from now on, Gladys... THE CARPET CAPTAIN! Our biggest competitor! The thorn in Tony's side! The iceberg to his Titanic! Did you know that Captain Cuttley over there goes to the same gym as Tony? Oh yeah, and you can bet he'll be rubbing this little triumph in Tony's face every day for a whole month!

PEPPER: Woah, woah. What kind of gym is this?

GLADYS shoots her a look.

BOBBY: You know, she even told me I should fire you for being so rude to a loyal paying customer.

GLADYS: She hasn't called us in five years! How is that a loyal paying customer?

BOBBY: *(Shocked at this blasphemy.)* Potential, Gladys! Every caller, loyal or not, is a potential customer.

PEPPER: Potential. *(Snorts.)* Yeah right.

BOBBY: And now she will never call us again.

PEPPER: Her dog has more potential.

GLADYS: *(To PEPPER.)* Shhh!

BOBBY: What?

GLADYS: Nothing! *(Sniff.)*

BOBBY: Now... you'll be pleased to hear that I'm not going to fire you, Gladys.

GLADYS: Oh, thank you.

BOBBY: You've been with us for seven years and you know how Tony is: every employee is an investment.

PEPPER: Oh yeah? Invest THIS!

PEPPER flips him the bird. GLADYS stares at it.

BOBBY: But whatever it is that you gotta do to get your head straight, you need to do it now.

PEPPER: You said it.

BOBBY: Why don't you take the rest of the day off?

PEPPER: Yes!

BOBBY: Go home and get your act together.

GLADYS: Okay, I will. Thank you, Bobby.

BOBBY: Mr.

GLADYS: Trask. Thank you, Mr. Trask.

BOBBY exits stage right and GLADYS rolls off stage left. OFFICE is struck as PEPPER remains and performs various karate moves, kung fu, tai chi, yoga poses, etc. as GLADYS reenters and addresses the audience.

GLADYS: Now you know. That's who I was when Pepper came back. Spineless, helpless, hopeless. Now let me explain something. Pepper appeared when I was about 7 years old. All the other kids were talking about their imaginary friends and bragging about how amazing they were. But they just sounded stupid to me. I mean, their imaginary friends were all goofy and fluffy and had names like Narg and Boofa and Pee-paw and... Well I didn't see the point of having an imaginary friend like that. No, I needed something different. See, I didn't have any real friends back then and I needed someone that would pull me out of my shell and make my life real and exciting! So I created Pepper.

During the next passage, TECHIE #1 enters stage right with a chair and PEPPER moves to attack. TECHIE #1 tries to fend her off like a lion tamer, but ultimately leaves the chair and runs off. PEPPER sets it center stage.

GLADYS: She was a female assassin. The best of the best. She could sneak in anywhere, kill anyone with anything. One time, she assassinated a drug lord with a staple remover! Another time she killed a pimp with a pair of stiletto heels. Oh yeah. She was badass alright.

During the next passage, TECHIE #2 comes on stage with a side table and PEPPER attacks him as well. TECHIE #2 doesn't even try to fight, just drops it on the floor and backs out slowly, hands open and out. PEPPER picks up the table and sets it upright next to the chair.

GLADYS: But most of all, she was pretty and confident. Which I knew, even as a kid, were two things I could never be. I needed her back then. Big time.

During the next passage, TECHIE #1 cautiously re-enters and when PEPPER moves to attack, he quickly shows PEPPER a bottle of pills. PEPPER holds out her hands, TECHIE #1 tosses them to her and runs back off.

GLADYS: She told me that I could be like that too! Someday. That people could fear and respect me just like they fear and respect her. I liked that idea a lot. And a large part of me desperately wanted it to be true.

GLADYS sits in the chair. PEPPER is looking at the pill bottle, tossing it in the air and catching it. GLADYS doesn't see this, she's in a haze.

PEPPER: Hey.

GLADYS: Hey.

PEPPER: So these are what? Your little happy pills?

GLADYS: No. Those are my un-happy pills. *(Turns to her meekly.)*
Can I have one? Please?

PEPPER: Now why would I give you a pill that makes you unhappy?

GLADYS: They don't make me unhappy, I TAKE them when I'm unhappy, now will you give them here?

PEPPER: Nah. You don't need these. *(Whistles off. TECHIE #1 pops his head in.)*

GLADYS: *(Stands and turns to PEPPER.)* Yes I do, give them here!

PEPPER: *(To TECHIE #1.)* Hey! Hey! Go long! *(TECHIE #1 hesitates, he doesn't know what "go long" means.)*

GLADYS: Pepper! Come on! Give 'em here! *(PEPPER holds them up over GLADYS'S head. A game of keep away.)*

PEPPER: Nope! You don't need these! *(Tosses them to TECHIE #1, he catches them but doesn't know what to do, so he starts to leave.)*

GLADYS: Yes I do!

PEPPER: *(To TECHIE #1.)* No! No! Over here! *(TECHIE #1 throws them back, PEPPER catches them and holds them up high, GLADYS reaches for them, up on her toes.)* Come on, girl! You can reach higher than that!

GLADYS: It's not fair! You're wearing heels!

PEPPER: Come on! Have you forgotten already? You used to LOVE this game!

GLADYS: I did not!

PEPPER: Okay, I used to love this game! But it worked every time! *(Taunting.)* Glad-bag! Glad-bag!

GLADYS: Stop it!

PEPPER: Here you go tiger! *(Tosses them again to TECHIE #1, GLADYS runs to him.)* Hold 'em high buddy! *(He does, and GLADYS is hopping up and down desperately trying to reach them.)* There ya go! Remember this game Gladys? Over here man! *(TECHIE #1 tosses them back.)*

GLADYS: Pepper! Quit it!

PEPPER: Remember what I taught you? Back-atcha buddy!

Tosses them back to TECHIE #1 who catches them.

GLADYS: I HATE THIS!!

PEPPER: Don't get mad!

GLADYS: Get GLAD!

GLADYS punches TECHIE #1 in the stomach. He folds over in agony and hands her the pills.

PEPPER: That's my girl.

Shaking, GLADYS is trying to open her bottle of pills while TECHIE #1, still bent over, walks slowly off.

GLADYS: I did it! I did it!

PEPPER: Yep. You sure did.

GLADYS: Oh boy. I'm shaking! I hope he's okay. Is he okay? *(Looks offstage and PEPPER swiftly takes bottle away from her and moves stage left.)*

PEPPER: He's alright. He's just a figment too, you know. (*GLADYS realizes PEPPER took the pills and watches as PEPPER holds them up. The disembodied hand of TECHIE #2 reaches onto the stage and takes the pills. Off GLADYS'S look.*) Gladys. You don't need pills. You just need some Pepper. (*GLADYS suddenly bursts into tears.*) And a little less salt.

GLADYS: (*Bawling, she sinks into the chair.*) I don't know what's happened to me!

PEPPER: I know...

GLADYS: I hate my liiiiife!

PEPPER: (*Patting her on the back.*) Get it out, come on.

GLADYS: Everybody hates me!

PEPPER: No they don't.

GLADYS: Yes they DOOO!

PEPPER: Oh boy.

GLADYS: Last week I was waiting in line at the Dairy Queen to buy some ice cream for the company meeting—

PEPPER: Yeah?

GLADYS: —and the lady in front of me said I should go first because I looked like I needed it more.

PEPPER: (*Angrily.*) Where does she live? I'll shove a dilly-bar so far up her ass.

GLADYS: I just, I just thought that I'd be different, you know? I thought I'd find a man and get married and have kids and be happy.

PEPPER: Yep. I know.

GLADYS: Instead, I'm fat, and I'm ugly and my hair is terrible and I'm all alooouooooonnnne!

PEPPER: You are not fat and you are NOT ugly! I see what you mean about your hair, but—that's why I'm here, hon! To shake you up and get you back on track. Back to the woman you always thought you'd be. (*Crouches down beside her.*) See right now, you are at the bottom of the barrel. You look up, and all you see are... pickles!

GLADYS: Pickles?

PEPPER: Yeah, they keep pickles in barrels.

GLADYS: Oh, okay. Right. Pickles.

PEPPER: And you are all covered in pickle juice and it's all vinegary and salty.

GLADYS: (*Seriously.*) Are they kosher?

PEPPER: No, Gladys. (*Gravely.*) They're NOT kosher. They're not kosher at all.

GLADYS: (*More sobbing.*) Oh GAAWWD!!

PEPPER: But now is the time, Gladys. Now is the time for you to rise up out of that pickle barrel. (*Guiding her out of her chair.*) To spit the vinegar out of your mouth, to shake all those little floaty things out of your hair! To run like mad to the ocean, dive into the freezing cold water and swim with the sharks!

GLADYS: Sharks?

PEPPER: You're gonna be an assassin, Gladys.

GLADYS: I am?

PEPPER: You bet your sweet boots you are! We are gonna train like mad, just like we used to! With guns, daggers and poison arrows! With knives and needles and nooses!

GLADYS: Nooses? (*PEPPER makes like a hanging.*) Oh, right.

PEPPER: By the time I'm through with you, you're gonna be one hot little kill vixen! You will be feared, you will be respected, but most of all, you will be FABULOUS!!

GLADYS: (*Ecstatic.*) Fabulous!!

Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *GLADYS'S apartment. Bare stage. Action is continuous. During the following, TECHIE #1 and TECHIE #2 remove purse, table and chair.*

GLADYS: (*Voice over.*) So that was pretty intense, huh? She had me alright. Hook, line and sinker. That night we came up with a plan and we started training right away. Boy, she was TOUGH. I mean, I remember her being tough when I was a kid but MAN, she just wouldn't let up! She had me by the balls.

Lights up, GLADYS enters stage left with two bowling balls. She is trying to stay on her toes. PEPPER follows, cracking a whip in the air.

PEPPER: Come on! Come on! Stay off your heels, Gladys! Nimble!
You've got to be nimble!

GLADYS: I'm trying!

PEPPER: Not hard enough! Move it!

GLADYS: Okay, okay! *(Both exit stage right.)*

GLADYS: *(Voice over.)* It was a refresher course, really. I mean we went over all this when I was a kid but, well...

PEPPER barrel-rolls onto the stage from stage right with a pistol in her hands. She stops center stage on her stomach, pointing the pistol at the audience and says:

PEPPER: Bam, bam, bam!!! *(Turns her head stage right.)* GO!

GLADYS: *(Voice over.)* I wasn't as agile as I was when I was seven. *(GLADYS rolls onto the stage with great difficulty. Instead of a pistol, she is brandishing a banana. Halfway there, she gets stuck on her boobs, so she rocks back and forth to get her momentum going.)* Annnnd I didn't have boobs when I was seven. *(PEPPER drops her head to the ground, sighs, then stands upstage center.)* But hey, you gotta give me chum points for trying, right? "A" for effort? *(GLADYS has worked up quite a momentum and is now enthusiastically rolling all the way to the other side. PEPPER watches unbelieving.)* I got really good at the barrel roll. Right? I mean look at that. *(GLADYS has reached the other side and PEPPER helps her up while TECHIE #2 enters with chair and open laptop.)* Okay so fast forward, we worked on this for weeks. And when Pepper decided I was ready, she helped me post an ad. On Craigslist. *(Insert updated classified advertisement website reference. GLADYS takes laptop off chair, sits with it on her lap as lights change.)*

GLADYS: Are you sure this is gonna work?

PEPPER: Oh sure. This is perfect! Very high-tech! Okay, read it back to me.

GLADYS: Okay, ahem. “Is there someone in your life that you wish were dead? Someone who torments you? Abuses you? Is there someone who is making your life a living hell? Don’t get mad. Get GLAD.” Are you sure I should use that picture?

PEPPER: Hell yes! You look hot!

GLADYS: ‘Kay, but—

PEPPER: They gotta know who they’re dealing with.

GLADYS: I guess so.

PEPPER: Hey, who’s the experienced one here, huh?

GLADYS: You are.

PEPPER: You bet your sweet boots I am. Now finish the rest.

GLADYS: Let’s see. “Contact me using the link below to set an appointment for a killer consultation. P.S. Gladys works nights.”

PEPPER: You really wanna put that at the end?

GLADYS: Well yeah, it has a nice ring to it, don’t you think? Besides, I can’t quit my day job. This is just part time.

PEPPER: Part time?

GLADYS: For now.

PEPPER: Okay, that’s your call. You just wait. Once the clients start rolling in, you’re not going to need that crummy job. You’re gonna make a killing!

GLADYS: Ha! Ha that’s funny!

PEPPER: Yeah.

GLADYS: Killing.

PEPPER: This is just the beginning, girl. You are on your way to freedom!

Lights dim.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *Bare stage. Lights slowly come back up as TECHIE #2 enters, taking laptop from GLADYS and exits as GLADYS moves downstage center to address the audience. During the following, scene changes to DINER. TECHIE #1 comes back in to remove the chair. He hesitates upon seeing PEPPER and holds up hands to surrender. PEPPER grabs him by the collar and silently orders him to get the table. TECHIE #2 enters with another chair, setting it beside the other one and then exits. TECHIE #1 brings the table and sets it in front of the two chairs. PEPPER sees the chair arrangement, pulls out a knife and puts it to TECHIE #1'S throat who moves to the chair and rearranges it the way PEPPER likes, all while the knife is at his throat. PEPPER, now satisfied, dismisses him.*

GLADYS: That same night, I mean literally that same night, someone sent me a request for a consultation. Eeeek! I was SO excited I threw up in the sink. After a good mouth rinse, and a solid victory dance, Pepper and I agreed to meet the new client at Frieda's. It's a diner downtown. Perfect place for a Killer Consultation. Public place. Quiet. Under the radar. And really great pie.

PEPPER realizes they forgot the pie. As GLADYS exits stage left, PEPPER heaves a sigh, pulls out her gun and cocks it.

PEPPER: Pie? PIE!! I'm gonna count to three. One...

TECHIE #1 pushes TECHIE #2 onto the stage. He is holding a slice of pie on a plate with a napkin.

PEPPER: There ya go. (*Sarcastically, to TECHIE #1.*) Hey, way to delegate, pal! (*TECHIE #2 sets pie down, pulls a fork out of her pocket, and sets it down on the napkin. PEPPER looks at the fork with disgust.*) Real sanitary. (*TECHIE #2 runs off, PEPPER picks up fork, spits on it, wipes it with the napkin. GLADYS enters wearing a hoodie, sweatpants and sneakers.*)

GLADYS: I got there early cause—well, I wanted to make a good first impression. Assassins have to be punctual, right? Besides, my

blood sugar was getting low so I was hoping to get a slice in before we cut to the chase with my new client. Her name was Alice.

GLADYS sits in stage-left chair and eats pie while PEPPER scans the perimeter. ALICE enters stage right with a briefcase. ALICE is buttoned up in a business suit. Hair pulled back in a super-tight bun. She is fragile and pale. Desperate for anyone to make her cry. She sees GLADYS eating pie and hesitates. GLADYS looks up and waves excitedly.

GLADYS: Hey there! Come on over, I'm almost finished.

ALICE: Gladys, right?

GLADYS: *(Through a mouthful of pie.)* Guilty as charged. Have a seat.

ALICE: Um. Okay. *(She sits as PEPPER examines her.)* I um... I hope you brought references.

GLADYS: References?

PEPPER: References?

ALICE: You don't have any references? You know, recommendations from previous um... clients?

PEPPER: It's a trap. You don't need references. You have skills.

GLADYS: I don't need references. I have skills.

ALICE: Oh. Okay. What kind of skills?

PEPPER: What the hell is this? A temp agency?

GLADYS: *(Without thinking.)* What the hell is this, a temp agency?

ALICE: *(Taken aback.)* No. No, I just. I've never done this before.

PEPPER: Ha. She's a rookie.

ALICE: I just thought maybe you could tell me, you know, if you have experience in this sort of thing.

PEPPER: Just ask her for the mark. She doesn't know Jack.

GLADYS: Who's the mark?

ALICE: Jack.

PEPPER: Jack?

GLADYS: Jack?

ALICE: Yes. My husband, Jack.

GLADYS: Jack's the mark? *(She tries to stifle a laugh.)* Hee-hee. So, you DO know Jack.

ALICE: Excuse me?

GLADYS: Hey, hey. Wouldn't it – wouldn't it be funny if his name was Mark?

ALICE: What?

PEPPER: (*Warningly.*) Gladys.

GLADYS: I mean, what if I asked you who the mark was, and you said Mark. And I said: Yeah, who's the mark and we just go round and round in a circle like that? (*Laughs some more. The sugar is hitting her bloodstream.*) Wouldn't that be hilarious? (*Now she is seriously giggling.*)

PEPPER: GLADYS COME ON!

ALICE: I guess that—(*She relents and giggles a little. She can't help it. It's too silly and the tension was killing her.*) —would be pretty funny.

GLADYS: (*Still giggling.*) I'm sorry! Ha-ha! Oh, I'm sorry! (*Dabs at her eyes with the napkin.*)

PEPPER: Pull yourself together!

ALICE: No, that's alright. I— (*Still giggling.*) haven't laughed in a long time! (*Clears her throat.*) I've been under a lot of pressure lately so – thank you.

GLADYS: My pleasure. Whoo! No more pie for me! (*Pushes plate away.*)

PEPPER: Okay, you've had your fun, now it's time to get down to business.

GLADYS: Okay, let's get down to business.

ALICE: Well you see. Jack is – that is, I think that he's um—

GLADYS: —Mhm? What? You think he's what?

ALICE: I think he's having an affair.

GLADYS: (*Suspicious.*) Okayyyy.

ALICE: So I'd like it done as quickly as possible. I'll give you a thousand dollars now. (*ALICE opens briefcase and hands her a thick envelope.*) His information is in there with the cash.

PEPPER: Now THAT'S what I'm talkin' about!

GLADYS: Um...

ALICE: And I'll give you another thousand when I get paid next Friday.

PEPPER: Cha-ching!!

GLADYS: Wait, wait. Hold on. So... just so I have this straight. You THINK your husband is having an affair, so you want me to kill him?

PEPPER: What the hell are you doing?

ALICE: Well. Yeah. He's— well. I'm almost positive that he is.

GLADYS: But how do you know? I mean what if he's not?

ALICE: No, you don't understand—

PEPPER: Back off, Gladys.

ALICE: I've had signs.

GLADYS: Like what?

PEPPER: Who cares? Take the money and leave!!

ALICE: Well. For example, he comes home late. Every night. For the past month.

GLADYS: Okay. And?

ALICE: And he renewed his gym membership last week, which should tell you right there.

PEPPER: Dead giveaway.

GLADYS: Okay, but... I mean, have you asked him about it? I mean maybe he's just working late at the office and... you know, I read somewhere that exercise helps to relieve stress. Like a lot. And if he's working late, maybe he's under a lot of stress.

ALICE: Well—

GLADYS: I mean, I'm no love expert, but — I mean, look at you. You're beautiful! You have a nice body, bedroom eyes. And you seem like a really nice person.

ALICE: Thanks.

GLADYS: So why would he cheat on you? I mean, unless he's Bradley Cooper. Is he Bradley Cooper? *[Insert current Hollywood hottie.]*

PEPPER: Gladys!

ALICE: God, No.

GLADYS: Then he has NO reason to cheat on you. I mean come on! You're gorgeous! And if he IS cheating on you, and he's not Bradley Cooper, then he's just an idiot who deserves to be slapped with a hefty pile of divorce papers and have all his stuff smoldering in a huge bonfire on the front lawn.

ALICE: We don't have a lawn.

GLADYS: Parking lot?

ALICE: Sure.

PEPPER: ARGH!!!

GLADYS: I mean I'm not trying to tell you what to do. But if it were me, I'd talk to him first and make sure he's actually cheating.

ALICE: Well—

GLADYS: And if he really is cheating on you, then you can either divorce him and get lotsa money—

PEPPER: Gladys, you close this deal now or I'll kill him myself!

GLADYS: Or— (*To appease PEPPER.*) OR you can contact me again and THEN I'll kill him. (*GLADYS grins at PEPPER for approval. PEPPER is just stunned.*)

ALICE: Well, I suppose—

GLADYS: And I will make it as clean or as messy as you want. I could cut off his hoo-ha. Or I could shoot him in the back.

PEPPER: Gladys!

GLADYS: (*Growing enthusiasm.*) Or I could shoot him in the FRONT! Oo! Oo! I could even make it look like a suicide! (*Off PEPPER's glare, she clears throat. Serious.*) I mean, I know how to do that. 'Kay? You just – you should really be sure it's what you really want.

ALICE: (*Thinks for a moment.*) Okay. You talked me out of it.

PEPPER: (*In GLADYS'S ear.*) YOU TALKED HER OUT OF IT!

GLADYS: (*Wincing a bit.*) Yep. Yep, okay.

ALICE: Wow, thanks Gladys. This helps a lot. (*Takes envelope, removes a hundred, and hands it to GLADYS.*) Thanks for the advice. (*GLADYS takes the money and smiles at PEPPER as ALICE puts the envelope with the rest of the cash back in her briefcase. PEPPER moans in agony.*) I guess I overreacted.

GLADYS: Happens to the best of us. Hey, you want some pie?

PEPPER's jaw drops as the lights go down. Over the following, ALICE exits stage right and PEPPER just stands there in shock as GLADYS moves downstage to address the audience.

GLADYS: So that was my first client. And as you can see it didn't go over very well with Pepper. She was kinda pissed at me for a while, but I assured her that it wouldn't happen again. But you know, it was my first time! And I wanted it to be right. I mean, who wants to knock off some guy because he renewed his gym membership? If I made a habit of killing people for that, no one would ever go to gyms anymore and that's bad for the economy.

Over the next, TECHIE #2 returns to remove the plate. PEPPER, still angry, grabs it and makes to throw it at TECHIE #2. TECHIE #2 glares at her so PEPPER takes a bite of the pie and sets the plate down angrily instead. TECHIE #2 picks it up along with the napkin and fork and exits swiftly.

GLADYS: So, the next few appointments didn't go very well either.

DONNY enters wearing a very tacky suit. DONNY sits down and drums his hands on the table distracted by his own enthusiastic agenda. GLADYS sits down across from him.

GLADYS: Hi there. Donny, right?

DONNY: Yeah, yeah. Donny, sure. *(Awkward pause as he continues to tap his hands on the table in a fast-paced "wipe-out" beat.)*

GLADYS: So ahem. What can I do for you?

PEPPER: How about you break off his fingers and do a drumroll on his face?

DONNY: How much do you charge?

PEPPER: Okay, right down to business. Here we go!

GLADYS: Well, that all depends.

DONNY: On what?

GLADYS: On what exactly it is you want me to do.

DONNY: Oh. Right. Right. *(Pause.)* Well, I saw your picture.

GLADYS: M-kay.

DONNY: So I figured maybe a-hundred?

GLADYS: Huh?

DONNY: (*Hands up, relenting.*) Maybe two, maybe two... you know, we'll hafta see. (*Looks her over from the back side of the table.*) I mean it looks like you got all the works. So yeah. Maybe two. As long as you can, well, you know, really make me GLAD. (*Winks.*)

GLADYS: Glad?

DONNY: Yeah, glad. (*Grins disgustingly.*) You know... Like you said in your ad?

PEPPER: (*Cocks head to side.*) Um...

GLADYS: (*Pause as the realization hits her. Shocked.*) OH MY GOD!

PEPPER: (*Bursts out laughing.*) HAAA!! HA-HA!

GLADYS: You think I'm a... a floozy?

PEPPER: Make him GLAD! HA-HA-HA!

DONNY: Huh?

GLADYS: (*Accusing.*) You think I'm a hooker!

DONNY: Well yeah!! Your ad said: "Gladys works nights." That's what— (*Beat.*) Isn't that...? (*Registering her aghast expression, he stares for a count of three, then bolts out of his chair and runs off stage right.*)

PEPPER: (*Calling off.*) Are you glad now, you freak?! Are ya?? (*Turns back to GLADYS.*) That'll teach him. Trolling the internet to get laid. What a loser.

GLADYS: (*Still stunned.*) Maybe we should change the wording up a bit.

PEPPER: Yeah. Maybe.

GLADYS: And the picture. (*Light change as GLADYS stands and addresses the audience.*) I gotta admit, that one threw me. Honestly, I had mixed emotions after that. I mean a teeny part of me was weirdly flattered but the largest part of me was really disgusted with myself. Before we had a chance to change up the ad, I got another request for an appointment. It was a woman though, so the odds were pretty good that she wasn't looking to party.

TERESA walks in with a baby in her arms, diaper bag over her shoulder. She sits down, PEPPER stands back, giving TERESA a once-over.

TERESA: (*Whispering.*) Are you Gladys?

GLADYS: *(Sits back down, matching her whisper.)* Yes. Are you Teresa?

TERESA: Hi, yeah. Hi. *(Extends her hand, GLADYS shakes it. Still whispering.)* Are you the lady killer?

PEPPER: *(Whispering loudly.)* Why are we whispering?

GLADYS: Yes. But I don't always kill ladies. I kill men too.

TERESA: Yeah. Oh, right. Of course.

GLADYS: Is she...? *(Sleeping? Pointing to the baby.)*

TERESA: *(Irritated.)* He. It's a he. Yes, he's sleeping.

GLADYS: Okay. So what can I do for you? *(TERESA reaches in diaper bag with some difficulty, GLADYS leans over to help.)*

TERESA: *(Snapping.)* No, no. It's okay, I got it. *(Pulls out envelope and sets it on table. Full voice now.)* Here's the information. His name is Mark.

GLADYS: *(Sits bolt upright.)* Mark? *(Looks at PEPPER and shakes her head, trying not to laugh.)*

PEPPER: *(Warningly.)* Don't you DARE.

TERESA: Yeah, Mark. He's – what's so funny?

GLADYS: I'm sorry. I – nothing.

TERESA: He's going to be at my house day after tomorrow. So, if you can get to him before then, that would be great.

GLADYS: I'll see what I can do.

TERESA: Great. Thanks, I really appreciate it. The money is in there. Cash. Is a thousand okay?

GLADYS: Yep.

PEPPER: YES!

TERESA: Good. I wasn't sure. Your ad didn't really say. *(GLADYS looks at PEPPER.)*

PEPPER: *(To GLADYS.)* We'll fix that.

GLADYS: *(To TERESA.)* We'll fix that. I'll – I'll fix that.

TERESA: I just hope you can get to him in time. I don't want him seeing his son. Not now, not ever. *(Bounces the baby lovingly.)*

GLADYS: That's – that's his son? *(Points to the baby.)*

PEPPER: Uh oh.

TERESA: Yeah. The sonofabitch left me for his stupid flight instructor and now he wants joint custody. Can you believe that? Yeah, right. It'll be a cold day in HELL before he EVER gets to— *(Baby starts crying.)* Shhh! Oh no, no no. It's okay, quiet now! Shhhh *(Bounces the baby.)*

GLADYS: Was he – abusive or something?

TERESA: *(Smug laugh.)* Oh hell no. He's a marshmallow. A total pushover. Believe me, it'll be an easy kill.

GLADYS: So he never hurt you in any way?

TERESA: *(Getting irritated.)* What's it to you?

GLADYS: Nothing. *(Looks at PEPPER who glares back at her.)*

PEPPER: Don't even think about it.

TERESA: Look, do you want the job or not?

PEPPER: Take the job!

GLADYS: I'm just not sure this is a good idea. Killing the father of your child, I mean it just seems so... wrong.

PEPPER: Wrong? You want wrong? I'll give you wrong! *(Points the gun at the screaming baby.)*

TERESA: Look, I didn't come here for a lecture, okay? Are you gonna take the job or not?

PEPPER: Yes!

GLADYS: No.

PEPPER: ARGH!

TERESA: Fine! I'll just go somewhere else. I'll find an assassin that isn't so judge-y! *(Grabs envelope and rises, baby still crying.)*

PEPPER: Seriously?

GLADYS: Not if I have anything to do with it.

TERESA: Excuse me?

PEPPER: Excuse me?

GLADYS: *(Stands, faces TERESA.)* I've recorded this entire conversation. *(Pulls out her phone.)* If Mark dies, you go to prison and your little bundle of joy here ends up in foster care.

PEPPER: Holy shit.

GLADYS: But you know what? That might not be a bad scenario, since it's incredibly apparent that this kid doesn't deserve to have a heaping, seeping mound of manure like you for a mother anyways.

TERESA: You wouldn't dare.

GLADYS: Oh, yes I would. You see, I believe in Karma. And Karma...
(*Leans in menacingly.*) believes in ME.

PEPPER: Holy hell.

TERESA: Go to hell!

GLADYS: (*Graciously steps aside.*) After you... (*TERESA marches past her, baby still crying. PEPPER stands there in shock. GLADYS does a little jig of joy waving her phone at PEPPER triumphantly.*) Hee-hee!! That was SO GREAT! Wasn't that great??

PEPPER: Did you really record that conversation?

GLADYS: Nope! (*Still dancing.*)

PEPPER: You were bluffing.

GLADYS: (*Shaking her bum.*) Yep! (*PEPPER drops her head into her hands in total dismay.*) Ohhh that felt SO GOOD! Woo-hoo!

TECHIE #1 is pushed on stage wearing football shoulder pads, a hockey helmet and punching target mitts. TECHIE #2 is holding him steady from behind like a boxing trainer as PEPPER attacks the mitts vigorously to relieve her stress. GLADYS moves downstage and addresses the audience, totally pumped.

GLADYS: Did you like that? Showed her a thing or two, didn't I? (*Turns and watches PEPPER.*) Woops. So yeah. As you can see, I wasn't living up to Pepper's... expectations. Over the next few weeks I kinda got into the habit of, you know, talking people out of killing their husbands or wives or whatever and basically 'screwing the pooch' as Pepper calls it. (*PEPPER is now weeping. TECHIE #2 slowly removes the human punching bag.*) She said I was making her existence a living hell. That she came back to help me become an assassin and I was ruining the whole thing. (*Acknowledges her weeping.*) I felt pretty bad about it. So I apologized. (*To PEPPER.*) Sorry Pepper.

PEPPER: Screw you!

GLADYS: And I promised her that the next one would be different. I would do everything she told me to and that I would really make her proud. (*PEPPER wipes her face.*) She accepted my apology and said that the whole problem was probably my Craigslist ad. That it was just drawing attention from the wrong kind of people.

RAY enters STAGE RIGHT. He is an average looking fellow dressed in a rumpled suit and carries a leather binder. He sits down and looks around.

GLADYS: Neither of us knew just how right... and how WRONG she really was.

PEPPER stands behind GLADYS, exhausted.

PEPPER: Okay now remember: Get the papers, get the money, don't try to make him comfortable and whatever you do... don't talk him out of this!

RAY: Hey.

GLADYS clears her throat, gets into what she believes is her "Assassin character."

GLADYS: *(Sitting across from him.)* Hey. You Ray?

RAY: Yep. You Gladys?

GLADYS: Yep.

PEPPER: *(À la Tarzan.)* 'You Gladys. Me Stupid.' Get on with it.

RAY: Nice location. I actually used to come here a lot.

GLADYS: Really?

RAY: Yeah. They have—

RAY and GLADYS: *(Simultaneously.)* —really great pie.

RAY: *(Surprised chuckle.)* Right.

GLADYS: *(Joins in the laugh.)* Yes, they sure do. But I've never seen you here before.

RAY: *(Indicating his belly.)* Been trying to quit.

GLADYS: Well there's no need for that. I mean you look— *(Considers saying "great," stops, reconsiders.)* Um. Healthy.

RAY: Oh. Well, thanks.

GLADYS: My pleasure.

RAY and GLADYS stare at each other for a moment. PEPPER registers the attraction between them.

PEPPER: Seriously?

RAY: *(Clears throat.)* Right, so let's get to business, huh? I'd uh – I'd like you to do a job on me. *(GLADYS reacts.)* FOR me! I'd like you to do a job FOR me.

GLADYS: *(Trying really hard to be serious. For PEPPER.)* Okay.

RAY: *(Opens binder and takes out a manila envelope wrapped over several times with packing tape.)* Here's the mark. *(GLADYS hiccups.)*

PEPPER: Don't. You. Dare. *(GLADYS gives her an apologetic look, then straightens up, clears her throat.)*

GLADYS: Okay. Anything I need to know about the, uh... *(Purses her lips. Hard.)* Mark?

RAY: It's all in the packet. *(Looks around suspiciously.)*

GLADYS: Right.

RAY: *(Eyes her for a moment.)* Look, no offense but... Have you done this before? I mean, can you really handle this?

PEPPER: The hell you say?

GLADYS: The hell you say?

PEPPER: I'm here aren't I?

GLADYS: I'm here aren't I?

RAY: *(Pause. That was weird.)* Yeah, I can see that, I just want to make sure this gets done; you know what I'm saying?

GLADYS: I know what you're saying.

RAY: Good.

GLADYS: I'm picking up what you're putting down.

RAY: 'Kay.

GLADYS: I'm reading your rights.

RAY: What?

GLADYS: Huh?

PEPPER: *(Awkward pause.)* Money! Get the money!

GLADYS: *(Accidentally to PEPPER.)* I will!

RAY: Will what?

GLADYS: I will... get this done.

RAY: Good.

PEPPER: *(To GLADYS.)* Hey. What's with you?

GLADYS: *(Deep breath.)* So... what did this guy do?

PEPPER: OH. MY. GOD.

RAY: *(Confused.)* Why do you ask?

PEPPER: Cause she's an IDIOT!

GLADYS: I don't know. You just seem like a nice guy. What did he do to make you want to get him killed? (*Leans in.*) Must have been really bad, huh?

RAY: (*Backing off a bit.*) You know that's not really a question that you should be asking, is it?

PEPPER: TELL ME ABOUT IT!!

GLADYS: (*Coy.*) Isn't it?

RAY: It's a bit unusual, actually.

GLADYS: Life is unusual, Ray. Take me for example. (*Something comes over her and she stands up, circles around him. PEPPER watches in awe.*) There's this man I have to work with who I absolutely despise. Every day I sit there in silence waiting for that special moment when I can utilize my knife throwing skills on a target worthy of receiving it. (*Now behind him, in his ear.*) I could do it, you know? I really could. I could puncture his puckered face with a paring knife from ten feet away. Then I'd sip my coffee and watch the blood spurt out of his ears until he falls flat on his meager little ass. I might even stifle a giggle as he tips backward onto the floor. (*Returns slowly to her seat.*) And then... I'd turn back around in my chair with a cheerful, chummy smile as his blood slips down the side of his face. Hot and thick, pooling into the beige Berber carpet behind me. No one would suspect that it was me. 'Gladys would never do a thing like that.' (*Leaning in.*) **That** is what makes me powerful, Ray. I **COULD** do it. But I don't.

RAY: (*Completely smitten.*) I... see.

GLADYS: (*High on surprising sensuality.*) The thing is, Ray. I have to make sure my target is truly worthy of receiving me. You understand?

PEPPER: Holy shit.

RAY: (*Breathless.*) I believe I do.

GLADYS: Good. Now tell me. (*Picks up envelope.*) What makes this person (*She smells the envelope deeply.*) ...worthy?

RAY: He um—(*He is completely bewildered.*)

GLADYS: Yes?

PEPPER: Oh my God.

RAY: (*Pause.*) He's not worthy.

GLADYS: No?

RAY: No.

GLADYS: Oh... That's too bad, you really had me going there. (*Stands to leave.*) So long, Ray.

PEPPER: You're unbelievable!

RAY: (*Quickly stands.*) Listen, um... Gladys?

GLADYS: Yes?

RAY: Will you... will you have dinner with me tomorrow?

GLADYS: Huh?

RAY: I mean if you're not busy. Killing someone.

PEPPER: Are you kidding me? You don't date clients!

GLADYS: I... don't date clients.

RAY: Well I'm not actually a client now. Am I?

PEPPER: No. No way! You are NOT dating this guy!

GLADYS: (*Smiles, considers.*) I have to check my messages. I'll be in touch. (*Winks.*)

PEPPER: AARGHH! (*She storms off. GLADYS moves downstage left and RAY moves downstage right.*)

GLADYS: (*To the audience.*) So. That's how I met Ray.

RAY: (*Dials on cellphone.*) This is unbelievable.

GLADYS: Unbelievable, right? I mean one minute I'm in the deepest rut of my life!

RAY: (*On phone.*) It's me.

GLADYS: With almost nothing to live for.

RAY: It went fine. Well... actually no, not really sir.

GLADYS: I needed something to shake me up, you know?

RAY: She didn't take the money.

GLADYS: Then I met him and something just came over me! Oh! The look in his eyes! Did you see it? I know you saw it!

RAY: I don't know; she just... sort of talked me out of it.

GLADYS: And then he wanted to take me out to dinner! Me! Can you believe it?

RAY: I have no idea...

GLADYS: I had no idea.

PEPPER: (*Pops her head in.*) Get a move on Gladys!

GLADYS turns, winks at the audience excitedly, and exits with PEPPER.

RAY: No, no. Don't give this to Detective Peters! Greg would just...
This is my case sir. I'll take care of it. (*Hangs up, elated.*) Wow!

Blackout.

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