

KILLER REVIEWS

A MURDER MYSTERY FARCE IN ONE ACT

By Michael Druce

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(FOUR MEN AND FIVE WOMEN)

THE PROPRIETORS

Millie Vickers (150 lines)

Lenny Vickers (96 lines)

THE INSPECTOR

Claude Renault (69 lines)

THE CRITICS

Tiffany Bliss (47 lines)

Victoria Cutting (65 lines)

Miranda Harmsworth (32 lines)

Shame Patterson (22 lines)

Toby Slashburn (24 lines)

Martin Trent (84 lines)

SETTING

The Chateau Poupon located on The Ille Begotten off the Normandy Coast.

Entrances left and right. The left entrance leads to the front door and upstairs rooms. The right entrance leads to the library and the wine cellar. Up center is a couch with space to walk behind. Against the back wall is a table with drinks already full. Stage left is a small desk between two chairs. On the desk is a telephone and magnifying glass. Inside the desk are a pistol clip, flare gun, shuttlecocks and a glue gun. Stage right is a small cabinet between two chairs. On the cabinet is a frame or plaque of film reviews. In the cabinet are a pistol, flares and a ping pong paddle. Several clown noses are scattered around the room.

TIME: The present.

Scene 1: Evening
Scene 2: An hour later
Scene 3: The next morning
Scene 4: Later

PROPS

Several wine glasses
A magnifying glass (*modified so the lens will fall out*)
A telephone (*rigged to appear as if the cord has been cut*)
Flare gun and flares
Pistol and pistol clip
Glue gun
Envelope with letter inside
Letter (*sprayed with adhesive in order to stick to Renault's trousers*)
Ping pong paddle
Shuttlecocks
Several clown noses
Plaque or picture frame with *Honeymoon on the Titanic* reviews

COSTUMES

Millie - Simple, attractive dress.
Lenny - Casual suit
The Critics - Evening wear
Renault/Janz - Suit, trench coat, two hats of different colors.

SCENE 1
EVENING

As the lights fade up, MILLIE is lying on the couch, an arm and leg dangling over the side. She appears to be the victim of foul play, but she is actually the victim of an exhausting day. LENNY enters.

LENNY: (*Fearing the worst.*) Millie? Millie? Are you alright?

MILLIE: (*Martyred.*) Do I look alright? (*A beat.*) Don't answer at that. Of course I'm not alright.

LENNY: You look positively exasperated. What's the matter?

MILLIE: What's the matter? You mean besides arrogant guests, impossible demands, and jumbo-sized egos? Exasperated isn't exactly the word I'd choose. I'm light years beyond exasperated. I'm an accident waiting to happen. I'll be a major wreck before this weekend is over.

LENNY: How can you say that? Everything has been wonderful. You've been the perfect hostess. Dinner will be—

MILLIE: A nightmare, Lenny, a nightmare. These people are making me crazy. Do you know these people are making me crazy?

LENNY: Okay, you're a little crazy. Calm down. Can you do that? Can you calm down?

MILLIE: Calm down? Calm down? You want me to calm down?

LENNY: I want you to calm down. We've had demanding guests before, and you've always been marvelous. Remember what a hit you were with that group last month? They loved you.

MILLIE: They were circus clowns, Lenny. Of course they loved me. Clowns aren't pretentious or demanding. They entertain themselves. They squeeze thirty people into a miniature car and think they're having a good time. They don't care where they sleep or what you feed them. They're happy with peanuts and cotton candy. Other than the occasional clown nose I find lying around, they were a piece of cake. They weren't like these people. These people aren't clowns.

LENNY: Critics, they're just critics.

MILLIE: That's the problem. They're so – critical.

LENNY: And critics are people just like you and just like me

MILLIE: No, Lenny. You and I are people like you and me. We're nice people. These people earn their livings ripping everyone and everything to shreds. They get paid to be hateful. From the moment they got here it's been nothing but snip, snip, snip. The

room's too hot, too cold, my mattress is too hard, too soft, shouldn't it be white wine? No, red. No, blush. No, this. No, that. No thanks! I want them out of here, and I want them out of here now. This group is bad, Lenny, bad company. I have a bad feeling. Bad, bad, bad, bad, bad!

LENNY: This shindig has been scheduled for weeks. They're checked in, they're expecting dinner. Mr. Janz has spent a lot of money putting this awards ceremony together. How could we possibly back out now? What would we say to Mr. Janz?

MILLIE: Who knows? Who cares? Since we've never spoken to the man, we don't have to say anything. Call that secretary of his and make up a whopping big lie. Say that we've been overrun by rodents; rats are jumping out of the toilets. Say the place is haunted. Anything. Say I'm not well. Say I'm on the edge and that I might come unhinged at any moment.

LENNY: I can't do that. This Janz Award is going to be the next big deal in gratuitous awards. Being here is an honor for us and our guests.

MILLIE: I don't feel honored, and I'm not ready to be put under the microscope.

LENNY: Our guests are here to receive an award, they're not here to review us. It'll be great publicity for the chateau. So just let's focus on what's important – income – and remind ourselves that no matter how obnoxious you think they are, that underneath–

MILLIE: –their snake skins

LENNY: –they're just ordinary people.

Exits left.

MILLIE: Ordinary people have souls.

VICTORIA enters right.

MILLIE: Oh. Hello, Miss Cutting.

VICTORIA: I have a concern, Molly.

MILLIE: It's Millie. My name is Millie.

VICTORIA: Yes, well, I just wanted to mention that sometimes in the column I write for The Times, *Cutting Remarks*, I discuss food and travel in addition to film and theatre.

MILLIE: That's very nice.

VICTORIA: You do read my column, don't you?

MILLIE: No, I don't.

VICTORIA: You don't read *The Times*?

MILLIE: No.

VICTORIA: You do read, don't you?

MILLIE: (*Facetiously.*) No, I'm afraid not. I'm just an illiterate underling. I come from a long line of banjo playing hill people.

VICTORIA: Oh, how delightful.

MILLIE: Was there something else?

VICTORIA: Yes. My bathroom contains a vase of lilacs. I have an aversion to lilacs. I wonder if you might have something a little more to my liking.

MILLIE: I'll see if I can find- (*Aside.*) –some stinging nettles.

VICTORIA: Oh, and that cover on my bed-much too light. Have you something heavier?

MILLIE: I'm sure I can find something- (*Aside.*) –like an anvil.

VICTORIA: Good. I like feeling all warm and toasty when I sleep. Oh, and one more thing-

MILLIE: (*Enduring.*) Yes?

VICTORIA: As I was brushing my hair in the mirror-

MILLIE: (*Aside.*) Did you see your reflection?

VICTORIA: I thought the sun was a little too bright.

MILLIE: I'll see if I can realign the planets.

SLASHBURN, MIRANDA, and SHAME enter right with drinks.

VICTORIA goes upstage, occupying herself with some books.

SLASHBURN: (*To MILLIE.*) What an interesting place you have here.

MILLIE: Thank you, Mr. Slashburn.

SLASHBURN: I'm sure someone with some decorating skill could do wonders with it.

MIRANDA: You know, Millie, I can't help but think I know you from somewhere. Have we met before?

MILLIE: No, Miss Harmsworth, I don't think so.

SHAME: Yes, I was thinking the same thing.

MIRANDA: Perhaps you were a maid or a charwoman elsewhere.

MILLIE: Hard to believe, but no, I don't think we've met.

MIRANDA: What about your husband? He's very familiar to me.

MILLIE: Oh, no, don't tell me that. On the prowl so soon, and you're so much older than I.

MIRANDA: Not familiar that way. I mean, it seems as if I know him

as well. I wonder if he's in the cinema?

MILLIE: No, he just went upstairs.

MIRANDA: Has he ever done anything on film?

MILLIE: Nothing I could talk about in mixed company.

TRENT, with book in hand, enters right with TIFFANY.

TRENT: I just wanted to say, Miss Bliss, what a pleasure it is to finally meet you. I admire your—articles.

TIFFANY: Why thank you, Mr. Trent, I like your articles too.

TRENT: Please, let's not stand on formality.

TIFFANY does a quick sidestep.

TRENT: Call me, Martin.

TIFFANY: Alright, Martin. You may call me—

TRENT: A shooting star that fell from the sky and lodged itself in my heart.

TIFFANY: It seems like a mouthful, but alright.

TRENT: I wonder if you've had a chance to visit the library yet?

TIFFANY: No.

TRENT: (*Indicating the book.*) I found a collection of your reviews in there.

TIFFANY: Really? Well, let's see if we can find something of yours.

TRENT and TIFFANY exit right. LENNY enters left.

MIRANDA: Oh, Lenny, what can you tell me about this Mr. Janz?

LENNY: Not very much, I'm afraid. Was there something in particular?

SHAME: She wants to know if he's her type.

LENNY: I wouldn't know what Miss Harmsworth's type is.

MILLIE: (*Under her breath.*) Crude.

SHAME: In other words, is he rich, handsome, and available?

LENNY: We've never met. I've only spoken to a secretary. Now, if I could have everyone's attention.

TRENT and TIFFANY re-enter.

LENNY: As you know, Mr. Janz expected to be here this evening; however, his flight into Tulong has been delayed. As there is no air

taxi again until Monday morning, I shall take my own plane back to bring Mr. Janz here. His secretary says Mr. Janz regrets that he'll miss dinner and apologizes for delaying the proceedings. In the meantime, he has asked that Mr. Slashburn fill in for him. After the presentation of awards, desert will be served in the library. *(To SLASHBURN.)* Mr. Janz sent along this packet of information to be opened only by you in the event he was delayed.

SLASHBURN: Only by me. What an honor. That was thinking ahead, wasn't it?

LENNY: According to his secretary, Mr. Janz plans for everything.

MILLIE: *(Pulling LENNY aside.)* Please, take me with you.

LENNY: Millie, three of us can't fit in a two-seater plane.

MILLIE: I'm sure Mr. Janz won't mind if I sit on his lap.

LENNY: He probably won't, but what will our guests think?

MILLIE: Why would they care whose lap I sat on?

LENNY: I mean what will our guests think if we both up and leave?

MILLIE: They won't even notice. They're too busy patting themselves on the back.

LENNY: If the flight is in, I shouldn't be too long in Tulong.

SLASHBURN: Before we begin, I'd just like to say how wonderful it is that Mr. Janz has been able to do what we've never been able to do ourselves, finally meet each other and see the actual faces behind the bylines.

MILLIE: *(Whispering to LENNY.)* A little like raising the toilet lid and looking in.

LENNY: Shush! Promise you'll be good.

MILLIE: I'm always good. I just may not be nice.

LENNY exits left.

SLASHBURN: A toast. To us, clever, witty, and urbane. To the first ever recipients of the Janz Award for outstanding achievement in film and theater criticism. And of course, to our most generous and most absent host, the old boy himself, Mr. Van Janz.

TRENT: You said old boy. Have you met Janz?

SLASHBURN: I always say old boy, old boy, but no, I haven't actually met the man.

TRENT: Oh. Well, does anyone know him? Has any of us met him?
(To SHAME.) Shame?

SHAME: I heard he's some sort of a media mogul, publishing, films, you name it. But then I also got the impression he's one of those

recluse types, like that fellow who used to wear tissue boxes as slippers

TRENT: Tiffany?

TIFFANY: No, I've never worn tissue boxes as slippers.

VICTORIA: It was Howard Hughes.

MIRANDA: I haven't heard anything about him. Other than the information in the invitation packet I received, I don't know a thing about him.

TRENT: So, what's his game then?

SLASHBURN: Game?

TRENT: Yes, what's he up to?

SHAME: Probably wants to make a bigger name for himself. You don't give out awards these days without getting something out of it yourself.

VICTORIA: Personally, I think there's been enough awards shows, don't you?

SLASHBURN: Depends on who you're giving the award to. If it's to me, no.

TRENT: But why here? A bit of an out of the way place for a big media shindig.

SLASHBURN: Actually, it's a perfect location for an awards show. A medieval chateau on the Normandy coast. Isolated. Dramatic. It's not hard to imagine old Janz swooping down in a helicopter, grand entrance, cameras rolling, plenty of press. Plenty of free food and drink. Lavish spread.

MIRANDA: (*Noticing a small plaque.*) Oh, look, this is clever.

TRENT: What is it?

MIRANDA: Snippets from some of our juiciest reviews of *Honeymoon on the Titanic*. (*To MILLIE.*) Did you put these up?

MILLIE: Er—Just following Mr. Janz's instructions.

MIRANDA: How deliciously wicked.

SLASHBURN: Let's have some fun. Entertain us, Miranda. Read some.

MIRANDA: Alright. (*Reading from the plaque.*) "I was utterly spellbound the moment I saw the closing credits."

TRENT: I believe I wrote that. A mind numbing experience.

MIRANDA: "Ham and cheese without the bread. I found myself actually rooting for the iceberg."

SLASHBURN: Thank you, I'll take credit for that.

MIRANDA: This one is mine. "Breathtaking in the scope of its incompetence." (*To VICTORIA.*) This has to be Victoria's. "As

inspiring as the mating ritual of a pair of snails.”

VICTORIA: I believe I added, “Beyond dreadful, so bad it defies ridicule, and makes anything starring anyone else a masterpiece.”

SLASHBURN: Clever, eh?

MILLIE: Not to my mind.

VICTORIA: There’s an oxymoron for you.

SLASHBURN: Molly, I take it you have a dim view of critics.

MILLIE: I’ll keep my opinions to myself, thank you.

SLASHBURN: Come on, indulge us. Throw those opinions around. We do.

MILLIE: I prefer not to. After we did *Invasion of the*— (*Stops herself suddenly.*)

MIRANDA: *Invasion of the Space Gladiators*. I knew it, you were in film. You both were.

SHAME: Anything else we might have seen? Come on.

MILLIE: Mostly B films that went straight to video.

VICTORIA: Naturally.

MIRANDA: Go on.

MILLIE: I’d rather not say.

SLASHBURN: Oh, come on, don’t be so modest.

VICTORIA: I suspect it’s less about modesty than embarrassment.

MILLIE: It was work, Miss Cutting. One starts somewhere.

SLASHBURN: Then you shouldn’t mind telling us.

MILLIE: Very well. First, there was *Chainsaw Cheerleaders*. Lenny and I met on that one. After that I did *Camp Death*, *Fashion Model Rampage*, and *Invasion of the Space Gladiators*.

VICTORIA: What kind of actress were you?

MILLIE: I’m not sure I know what you mean.

VICTORIA: How does one prepare for roles in which you run through a forest in your underwear being chased by a maniac with a chainsaw?

MILLIE: I like to think I was a method actress.

VICTORIA: Something all sixteen-year -old boys appreciate, I’m sure.

MILLIE: At least I haven’t had to be overhauled by a plastic surgeon.

VICTORIA: What exactly are you implying?

MILLIE: If the staples in your stomach and on your face should come loose, you’ll shoot across the room like a rubber band.

TIFFANY: (*Before VICTORIA can respond.*) Anything else we might have seen?

MILLIE: Well, yes, I’ve done other films. *Tilt-A-Whirl, the Movie*.

Three Musketeers.

SLASHBURN: Alexander Dumas' *Three Musketeers*?

MILLIE: No, this one was based upon the candy bar.

MIRANDA: Any reviews?

MILLIE: A few, but they weren't very good. I can assure you from experience that honey goes a lot further than vinegar.

SLASHBURN: Molly, the role of the critic isn't to be nice.

TIFFANY: If entertainers are honest with themselves, they won't be offended by the truth.

MILLIE: I'm sure you receive lots of letters saying, "Thank you for ripping me to shreds."

SLASHBURN: Speaking of letters, I almost forgot, let's see what Mr. Janz has to say. (*Opens the sealed envelope.*) Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for attending this evening. As you know by now, you have been selected as the first ever recipients of the Van Janz awards for criticism. The role of the critic has always been to judge fairly, to review with honesty, to praise when praise is merited, and when necessary, to gently reprove. But you, my friends, are critics of a special breed, critics without peer. You write the proverbial killer reviews, reviews to die for. And so for you, a special distinction has been reserved. Your work deserves something extraordinary, a permanent reminder of your special talents. You have elevated criticism to the fine art of condemnation and savagery. Your barbed leads, your poisoned prose, your caustic criticism, your corrosive critiques, and your reviling reviews have wrecked careers, demolished productions and ruined lives. With the swipe of your pens, you ridicule, you humiliate and you drive your victims into obscurity. As the saying goes, every dog has his day, and your day has come. Welcome to the first annual Van Janz Awards. Before this weekend is over, you will discover that the sword is far mightier than the pen.

SHAME: That's certainly a warm and fuzzy welcome.

SLASHBURN: Bit of a practical joker, is he?

TIFFANY: Not a very funny joke.

VICTORIA: Of course it's a joke. Someone like Janz isn't interested in a bunch of third rate entertainers who got bad reviews

SLASHBURN: (*Rubbing his fingers.*) There's something sticky, something odd on this letter.

SHAME: And if it's not?

SLASHBURN: (*Thinking SHAME is referring to the sticky letter.*) There is, I tell you.

SHAME: I mean what if his letter isn't a joke?

SLASHBURN: Then Mr. Janz has got some explaining to do.

TRENT: Right after I get my hands on him.

SLASHBURN: I called it first. Van Janz in mine.

SLASHBURN falls behind the sofa.

TIFFANY: Good grief, I think Toby has fainted.

TRENT rushes to SLASHBURN.

MIRANDA: Probably a touch of the flu. I doubt it's very serious.

VICTORIA: Probably the hors de oeuvres. The next time the recipe calls for cream, try clotted cream instead of something that squirts out of a can.

MILLIE: Save your reviews for someone else, Miss Cutting. I'm not impressed.

VICTORIA: You impudent hussy. You're nothing but a common, common person. Who do you think you're speaking to?

MILLIE: Someone who has a much higher opinion of herself than I have. You've done nothing but complain and criticize since you've been here.

VICTORIA: We're critics. That's what we do. Besides, you're getting paid—

MILLIE: Not to be insulted by you.

VICTORIA: You can be sure you'll never get my business again.

MILLIE: Never will be much too soon.

TRENT rises abruptly, obviously distressed.

TIFFANY: Martin, what is it?

TRENT: Toby is gone.

TIFFANY: I don't understand. He's right there.

TRENT: He's dead, Tiffany. Toby is dead.

MILLIE: How horrible.

SHAME: How?

TRENT: I don't know. He said something about Mr. Janz's letter. Perhaps there was something on the letter.

MIRANDA: What should we do?

TRENT: There's nothing we can do until Lenny comes back with—Mr. Janz? (*A sudden realization.*) Millie, call the police!

MILLIE: (*Dials the phone.*) This is Millie Vickers, my husband and I run the Chateau Poupon. Yes, that's right, the big Chateau on the Ile Begotten. I'd like to report a murder. No, not my mother, a murder. One of our guests read a threatening letter and died. Well, no he wasn't shot-or stabbed-or beaten. No he didn't drink any poison, or bad wine. What we think is there might have been a poison on the letter. Isn't it possible? I see-yes, I see-I see.

TRENT: What did they say?

MILLIE: It sounded like an overactive imagination. They'll try to send someone tomorrow, but they're busy.

TRENT: It's a village. How busy can the police be?

VICTORIA: It's France.

TIFFANY: I just thought of something.

SHAME: What is it, Tiffany?

TIFFANY: What was the last thing Toby said?

TRENT: Van Janz is mine. Good grief. Van Janz is mine. (*A stunned silence.*) Vengeance is mine.

BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2 AN HOUR LATER

The body has been removed. All sit glumly, awaiting Lenny.

LENNY: (*Entering left with Renault.*) Hello, everyone, this is—

MILLIE: (*Leaping to her feet.*) A filthy murdering beast. (*Grabbing RENAULT by the lapel, she flings him onto the couch, hops on top of him and begins flailing away at him.*) You killed Toby Slashburn.

LENNY: What? Slashburn is dead?

RENAULT: What? Slashburn is dead?

MILLIE: Well, don't just stand there. Someone call the police.

LENNY: Millie, Millie, he is the police.

MILLIE: What?

LENNY: This isn't Mr. Janz. This is Police Inspector Renault of the Tulong Police.

MILLIE: Oh, pardon me. (*Attempting to readjust RENAULT'S clothing, MILLIE accidentally rolls RENAULT onto the floor.*) Things have gotten a little tense around here.

RENAULT: (*Saluting. His pronunciation of Claude is Cloud.*)

Inspector Claude Renault, at your service.

SHAME: Did you say *Cloud* or *Clod*?

RENAULT: Claude.

SHAME: As in those light puffy things without substance?

RENAULT: No, not cloud. Claude.

SHAME: Oh.

TRENT: I don't understand. What's going on here? Where's Van Janz?

RENAULT: That is what we would all like to know, Mr.—

TRENT: Trent. Martin Trent.

LENNY: What happened to Slashburn?

SHAME: What happened to Janz?

LENNY: You first.

SHAME: No, you first.

LENNY: Rock, scissors, paper.

MILLIE: Stop! Alright, I'll tell. We gathered here as planned.

Slashburn began reading Mr. Janz's letter—

MIRANDA: Which, I might add, sounded very threatening.

MILLIE: Mr. Slashburn said something about there being something sticky on the letter, and that was it. He just keeled over. (*To LENNY.*) Now you.

LENNY: When I got to the gate at the Tulong airpark, the flight was in, but no Janz. I had him paged, only instead of Janz, Inspector Renault showed up looking for Janz. Apparently Mr. Janz is wanted in connection with a series of crimes.

RENAULT: Yes, it seems this name—Van Janz—is a pseudonym.

TIFFANY: Yes, now it seems so terribly obvious. It was right there in the letter, staring right at us—vengeance is mine.

RENAULT: I would like to see that letter.

MILLIE: It's right here.

RENAULT: No! Do not touch it with the naked eye, there might be something on it.

VICTORIA: What?

RENAULT: I mean your fingers. Do not touch that letter with the naked finger. (*Handling the letter with gloves, he picks up the letter carefully.*) Have you a magnifying glass?

LENNY: On the desk.

RENAULT: Thank you. (*Moving to the desk. As he lifts the magnifying glass, the lens falls out.*) Yes, as I suspected.

VICTORIA: What is it, Inspector?

RENAULT: It's a letter.

VICTORIA: Brilliant.

RENAULT: Yes, I've seen this sort of thing before. An extremely toxic poison easily absorbed through the skin.

TRENT: What are you saying, Inspector?

RENAULT: (*Placing the letter on a chair, he crosses to TRENT to make himself heard.*) It's an extremely toxic poison easily absorbed through the skin.

TIFFANY: I believe what Mr. Trent means is what are the broader implications here?

RENAULT: A host who does not exist, a remote location, a threatening letter, and a deceased guest.

ALL: Yes?

RENAULT: Suspicious, very suspicious.

VICTORIA: Suspicious? Don't you think it's murder, Inspector?

RENAULT: Yes, I see what you're getting at. This Mr. Janz is obviously someone known to you all.

SHAME: Someone we've written bad reviews about. But who?

RENAULT: Exactly. We begin by compiling a list of names of the people you've written bad reviews about.

MILLIE: Wouldn't it be easier to make a list of the people you haven't offended? That would be a much shorter list.

TIFFANY: Personally, I don't write hateful reviews.

VICTORIA: If that nose of yours was held any higher, you'd drown in a rain storm.

TIFFANY: My conscience is clear.

MIRANDA: Please, please, no more. May have I another drink, please?

RENAULT slowly removing his coat.

TIFFANY: Yes, good idea. Let's all have a drink, all calm down, and think this thing through.

MILLIE crosses up of RENAULT to serve drinks.

RENAULT: (*Assuming MILLIE will take his coat, he holds it out. The coat drops to the floor.*) Excellent suggestion, Miss-

TIFFANY: Bliss.

LENNY crosses to help MILLIE. He picks up RENAULT'S coat and puts it in the closet.

MILLIE: Here you go. (*Passes the drinks, first to LENNY, RENAULT, and so on, until the glasses are passed down the line. Ad libs of thanks, etc. All drink throughout.*)

TRENT: This ought to steady the old nerves.

VICTORIA: I'd like to propose a toast. (*All but MIRANDA, who is sipping her drink, raise their glasses.*) To the survivors.

MIRANDA: (*Spits up her drink.*)

SHAME: What is it, Miranda?

MIRANDA: (*Leaping center stage.*) It's Toby.

SHAME: What about Toby?

MIRANDA: It seems so unfair. I think I was in love with him.

SHAME: You knew Toby?

MIRANDA: Not personally. I loved him from afar. It was an unspoken, unrequited love. I fell in love with him through his writing. He was so witty, so charming. He had a wonderful sense of the ironic. You could feel the passion in every word he wrote. And then when I saw him, I knew. My heart fluttered. Those bedroom eyes, those fulsome lips, and those firm-

SHAME: (*Suddenly swooning.*)

TIFFANY: Shame, what is it?

SHAME: I'm sorry. All of a sudden, I need to lie down. I'm feeling a little giddy.

Exits right.

MIRANDA: Shame, come back, Shame.

TIFFANY: I'll help her.

Exits right.

RENAULT: Thank you, Miss Bliss.

He sits on the letter, which sticks to his trousers.

TRENT: Since Mr. Janz is not here now, I think we must consider the possibility that he's been here as a guest or a delivery person and left little booby traps for us. Is there any way Mr. Janz could have come here without your knowing, perhaps disguised?

LENNY: (*Exchanging a glance with MILLIE.*) No. I'm sure if any little booby traps had been left, most likely Millie and I would have been dead by now.

TRENT: (*Discovering a clown nose.*) What is this?

MILLIE: Nothing, they're all over the place.

TRENT: (*Putting on the nose.*) Are there any more letters?

LENNY: None.

TRENT: Good, then it appears were safe for the time being.

TIFFANY: (*Appearing right.*) Inspector, come quick.

RENAULT: Wait here.

Exits right.

MILLIE: You're giving me the eye.

VICTORIA: I am not.

MILLIE: You are.

VICTORIA: I know about giving people the eye, and if I were giving you the eye, we'd both know it.

MILLIE: It looks like the eye to me.

VICTORIA: Probably a guilty conscience.

MILLIE: The only guilt I'm feeling is over treating you humanely.

VICTORIA: You nasty-

RENAULT: (*Enters with TIFFANY right.*) Troubling news, I'm afraid.

TRENT: What is it, Inspector?

TIFFANY: Shame is gone.

Crosses to TRENT.

TRENT: (*Pulling off the clown nose.*) You mean she's left the chateau?

RENAULT: No, it seems Miss Patterson has been poisoned. Unless I am mistaken, there is something in this glass of poison besides wine

TRENT: Do you realize what this means?

RENAULT: Yes, do not drink from Miss Patterson's glass.

TRENT: It means Van Janz is here, now. Van Janz is one of us.

All look at MILLIE.

MILLIE: Oh, no, every one of you handled those glasses. You're not hanging this rap on me. Anyone of you could have dropped a pill into her glass.

MIRANDA: Who said it was a pill?

MILLIE: Well, you didn't see anyone stirring a glass with a spoon, did you?

MIRANDA: But you poured the drinks. How do we know there's not something in the carafe?

MILLIE: Oh, I don't know. Could it be—the rest of us aren't dead?

LENNY: Even if it were Millie—which it's not—what is her motive?

VICTORIA: You heard the letter. Who better than a washed up entertainer whose career went down the drain? You blame the critics, don't you?

MILLIE: Of course I blame the critics. Why shouldn't I? One moment they love you and you're everyone's darling, and just like that, one wrinkle, one extra pound, and one flop, and you're down the drain. One day you're that hot chick and the next you're on Hollywood Squares.

VICTORIA: Is that a confession?

MILLIE: No, it's an impassioned monologue. Alright, I admit it, I have issues.

VICTORIA: Issues? You drip with envy and jealousy.

MILLIE: Of what, you? Why would anyone in their right mind want to be like you?

VICTORIA: Because I'm something and you're nothing. I rub elbows with the rich and famous, attend lavish parties and premieres. I'm a jetsetter, a globetrotter, an opinion-maker, and you - you - all you do is wait on me.

MILLIE: You're right, you need to be killed.

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