

BEN BIANCA PERSIS TOBIAS MARSHA LYNETTE VIRGIL

LET'S MURDER MARSHA

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send him off—while continuing repeated screams, of course) She's gone berserk! Help me with her!

VIRGIL. (*grabs PERSIS as she starts to move*) No you don't! Keep away from her, do you hear?! (*wrestles her to floor*)

PERSIS. No! Stop! Have you gone berserk, too?

VIRGIL. Don't play innocent! I'm on to you!

PERSIS. Well, get off of me! (*starts screaming of her own*)

TOBIAS. Lynette! Don't just stand there, do something!

LYNETTE. Such as?

VIRGIL. Keep fighting, Marsha! It won't be long now! Five minutes at the most!

MARSHA. (*between screams*) What won't be long now?

VIRGIL. The poison!

PERSIS. (*between screams*) What poison?

VIRGIL. In that *drink* you just had!

LYNETTE. Now, listen—please listen—everybody listen—!

(*At this moment, front door bursts open, and BEN—BIANCA just behind him—leaps into room, his gun steadied before him in two hands, legs spread apart, knees slightly bent in classic cop-on-the-job stance, his leap landing him simultaneous with his cry:*)

BEN. FREEZE! (*ALL FREEZE, looking at him in silent shock.*)

BIANCA. (*pointing to both interlocked couples*) There! What did I tell you!

TOBIAS. What *did* she tell you?

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BIANCA. Everything! I *knew* what you were planning for tomorrow morning, and I told it all to Ben as soon as we got out of here!

PERSIS. So is that any reason to pull a *gun* on us?

BEN. *Quiet*, while I tell you your rights! "You have the right to remain silent—"

TOBIAS. (*releasing MARSHA*) Now just a moment—!

BEN. Hold it right there! One more move and I start shooting!

PERSIS. (*squirming free of VIRGIL and getting to her feet, which he does, too, while she speaks*) But you're trying to shoot the wrong people! *These two tried to poison us!*

MARSHA. That's utter nonsense!

VIRGIL. Of course it is!

LYNETTE. Please, if everybody will just *listen* to me—!

BEN. (*gun-gesturing TOBIAS and PERSIS*) Come on, you two, raise those hands, and be quick about it!

TOBIAS. (*as he and PERSIS raise their hands*) But officer, you've got to listen to me! We have less than five minutes before the poison takes effect!

BEN. Don't hand me that!

TOBIAS. (*starts gesture toward coffeetable*) It's true! Just take that bottle and have it analyzed—(*stops at sight of empty coffeetable*)

BEN. What bottle?

TOBIAS. (*lamely*) Well, it was there a minute ago—!

BEN. Okay, that's enough! Come along, you two, you're going for a ride!

BIANCA. Now? But what about our *date*?

BEN. *Really, Bee!* This is *important!* (*has turned slightly to her while speaking, and TOBIAS and PERSIS start to lower their hands, and he catches, and*

reacts, to movement by again gun-threatening them on:) No you don't!

BOTH. (*hands going high again*) We didn't!

BIANCA. (*angry with BEN*) Well, I guess I know how I rate with you! (*starts stomping off kitchenward*) If I'd known you were going to be *this* devoted to duty, I never would have told you at *all*!

BEN. Bee—! (*But she exits to kitchen without replying; furious, he starts gesturing TOBIAS and PERSIS into hall.*) Oh, boy, *now* you two are *really* gonna get it!

TOBIAS. (*moving toward hall, hands high*) That's not fair!

PERSIS. You can't take your love-problems out on suspects!

BEN. Why *not*?

TOBIAS. He's got a point, Persis.

PERSIS. He *has*?

TOBIAS. Well, he's got a gun, and the person with the gun always has a point—whether he has or not! (*TOBIAS and PERSIS exit, BEN following close after them, on:)*

BEN. Mrs. Gilmore, I'll take these two downtown and book 'em, but we'll need a statement from you . . .

MARSHA. Oh, of course. Any time at all, Officer. (*BEN exits, MARSHA closes door after him.*)

VIRGIL. I feel so unclean! They'll be dead before he even pulls away from the curb!

LYNETTE. *Enough!* If you two will stop gloating and agonizing for a moment, I have something very important to tell you!

MARSHA. Oh, all right, Mother—what?

LYNETTE. *Nobody has been poisoned!*

VIRGIL. But they *drank* from the bottle— they *must* be poisoned!

LYNETTE. Well, they *would* have been, but luckily, I overheard the two of you plotting, and I took the bottle and emptied it down the commode in the hall bathroom!

MARSHA. That's impossible! I'm *sure* there was something in their glasses—?!

LYNETTE. That was *gin!* I wanted *something* in the bottle so I could see just how *far* you two would really *go!*

VIRGIL. Let me get this straight—you *stole* some poison that didn't *belong* to you and you *flushed* it?!

LYNETTE. Well, you had no right to put poison into my birthday present!

MARSHA. Mother, what are you talking about?! That was *Virgil's* present!

LYNETTE. Nonsense! I brought that bottle here tonight, as a birthday present to you! If you don't believe me, ask *Bianca!* (*At this moment, BIANCA enters, carrying OB.*)

BIANCA. Say, do you suppose *this* is the bottle Mister Gilmore was talking about just before he left? I found it in the garbage.

MARSHA. You couldn't have! I stashed it in the kitchen cabinet with the cordial glasses! (*to VIRGIL*) I was going to wash it out later, with the glasses, to conceal the evidence.

BIANCA. But I distinctly remember throwing it into the garbage!

VIRGIL. Well, of course, *that* gets rid of the evidence rather well, too.

LYNETTE. You two are idiots! (*will go to BIANCA, take bottle, and fill small glass from it at bar, during:*) Here, give me that! This will show you, once and for all,