

BEN BIANCA TOBIAS

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LET'S MURDER MARSHA

TOBIAS. (*off*) Isn't anybody getting the door?!

BIANCA. (*re-enters from kitchen with small tray containing about eight small liqueur glasses, will place it on coffeetable beside GB, during:*) I've only got two hands!

TOBIAS. (*off*) Never mind about your hands—use your feet!

BIANCA. (*en route to door, pauses*) To open the door?

TOBIAS. (*off*) To get to it!

BIANCA. (*mutters under her breath, then opens door; BEN QUADE, a 25ish, nice-looking uniformed policeman steps in*) Oh, honey, it's you! I'm not even ready yet—dinner got started a little late, and— Oh! You're not ready yet, either!

BEN. Had a small emergency, Bee. Just got back from the hospital. In fact, I'm still driving the police ambulance!

BIANCA. We're going on our date in an ambulance?!

BEN. Far as my place, anyhow. I figured it'd save time if I came by for you on the way back to sign out, then we could drop off the ambulance after I change, and be that much ahead of the game.

BIANCA. Oh, all right. Why don't you wait here, I'll finish serving dinner, then get out of this uniform and be right with you!

BEN. You could just take off the cap and apron—the dress looks fine.

BIANCA. (*makes a face*) Have to brush my teeth, too! I just had a sip of *that* stuff—(*indicates GB as she moves kitchenward*)—and it tastes perfectly awful! Or the *other* one did, anyhow.

BEN. Other *what*? (*But she is gone; he looks around, feeling awkward, shifts from foot to foot; then TOBIAS enters.*)

TOBIAS. Bianca, who was at the—? (*sees BEN, reacts*)

with mild surprise) Oh! Officer! Is—is there anything wrong?

BEN. Oh, I'm not here *officially*, Mister Gilmore. I'm Ben Quade, Bianca's date. But she said dinner got started late, so I'm waiting here for her to finish.

TOBIAS. Yes-yes, by all means, Officer Quade. Won't you sit down?

BEN. Thank you. (*pulls out desk chair, faces it right, sits*)

TOBIAS. Excuse me, but—do you always go out on dates in uniform?

BEN. (*chuckles*) No, not at all, sir. But I got off work late, myself. Had to take an injured pedestrian to the hospital. Matter of fact, I'll be taking Bianca in a police ambulance when we leave here, till I can get my own car at the station.

TOBIAS. Well, make yourself comfortable, and I'll—(*catches sight of GB and glasses*) What in the world is *that*?

BIANCA. Search me. Whatever it is, Bianca says it tastes *awful!* Or shouldn't I be telling you that?

TOBIAS. Probably not, but *I* won't tell her you snitched if you don't! (*BOTH laugh, and then TOBIAS snaps his fingers.*) The airplane! Now's my chance, while Marsha's in the other room! (*starts for phone*)

BEN. I beg your pardon?

TOBIAS. Oh, sorry. Birthday surprise for my wife. Have to get matters settled while she's out of earshot . . . (*has phone in hand, then frowns*) Damn! I forgot the number! What's become of my memo-pad?! (*starts looking in desk drawers, finds Creeping Slasher, picks it up, frowns, looks diningroomward, growls softly, then puts book back in drawer, on:*) No wonder she's been acting so jumpy tonight!

BEN. Jumpy? Who?