



**Sample Pages from
Tough City, Prone to Rain**

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TOUGH CITY, PRONE TO RAIN

A NOIR ONE ACT BY
Alan Haehnel



Tough City, Prone to Rain

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Characters

10M+5F+10 AG

Newsie: (AG) Telling how it is in the big city.

Donna Rockbridge: (F) Looking for help in the big city.

Passerby 1, 2, & 3: (AG) Three city dwellers sharing deep thoughts.

American Spy: (AG) Dogs bark at midnight.

Russian Spy: (AG) Cats bay at moon.

Myrna: (F) Detective. Don't call her a dame.

Lilac: (F) Detective. Don't call her a doll.

Rose: (F) Detective. Don't call her sweetheart.

Earl: (M) Secretary. Can't tell the difference between a door and a phone.

Lilac's Mother: (F) Thinks Lilac was born to be a nun.

Mr. Goldman: (M) Thinks Myrna was born to be a singer.

Harold: (M) Thinks Rose was born to be his wife.

Leon: (M) Member of "The Gang". Not great at coming up with passwords.

Rattie: (AG) Member of "The Gang".

Frankie: (AG) Member of "The Gang". Likes Christmas.

Buster: (AG) Member of "The Gang".

Butch: (M) Member of "The Gang". Knows the #1 rule of the establishment.

Slade Gunderman: (M) A squared-jaw, wise-cracking difficulty.

Mr. Sugar: (M) Nightclub owner. Not happy with Myrna.

Rocko: (M) Works for Mr. Sugar.

Donny: (M) Works for Mr. Sugar.

Courier: (AG) Was never here.

William: (M) Donna's twin brother.

Character Doubling

The Newsie, Passersby, Lilac's Mother, Mr. Goldman, and Harold, only appear in the first part of the play. They can double cast with the three groups (the gang, the nightclub and Slade) the detectives interview.

Setting

City, 1950's.

Production Note

The city should be a character in this play. To that end, I suggest that most or all of the players can be onstage throughout the show, frozen in various stage pictures, moving objects around between or during scenes, perhaps supplying sound effects and/or music. Scene changes should be fluid, locations established with light changes and simple set pieces.

Costumes

The costumes, wigs and makeup are stylized and colorful, reminiscent of comic strips such as *Dick Tracy*.

Premiere Production Video

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You can find a link on the Theatrefolk page for this play that will take you to a video of the premiere production, performed by Bridgeport High School of Bridgeport, West Virginia. This group provides an excellent example of the sort of creative, theatrical staging I have in mind. The script used for Bridgeport's show does not exactly match what follows, but the story is the same.

theatrefolk.com OR

<https://www.theatrefolk.com/products/tough-city-prone-to-rain>

This is the video link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SpWlFRQ6pxQ>

WAITING ON ORIGINAL CAST LIST

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Lights up on a city street, circa 1950. Lots of people bustling around, heads down, many with umbrellas.

NEWSIE: Extra, extra, shark spotted in bay! Suspicion Fins, today only!
Extra, extra!

DONNA enters, looking around confusedly. She stops PASSERBY 1. As they converse, the action around them freezes.

DONNA: Pardon me, I'm looking for the Broadly Speaking Detective Agency.

PASSERBY 1: Oh, are you now? We're all looking for something, ain't we? In a city like this one – cold, dark, cynical, prone to rain – there's more places to hide than there are to find, if you know what I mean.

DONNA: Actually, I don't.

PASSERBY 1: Good luck. You're gonna need it.

The bustle resumes until DONNA stops PASSERBY 2.

DONNA: (*consulting a map*) Excuse me, I seem to be a little lost. I'm looking for 367 Dark Alley Way, the Broadly Speaking...

PASSERBY 2: You may have an address, but the thing you're looking for won't be on any map.

DONNA: It's supposed to be. It's a detecti...

PASSERBY 2: Oh, sure; there's a north, south, east and west, but what direction do you take when the world's turned upside down? If you know what I mean.

DONNA: I'm not following you.

PASSERBY 2: Good. You'd make me nervous if you did.

The bustling scene resumes for several seconds. Two female SPIES emerge from the shadows, move toward each other. Once they start to converse, the scene around them freezes.

AMERICAN SPY: Psst. Dogs bark at midnight.

RUSSIAN SPY: Cats bay at moon.

AMERICAN SPY: Welcome, comrade.

RUSSIAN SPY: "Psst?" Is terrible way to start password.

AMERICAN SPY: I'll make a note.

RUSSIAN SPY: Where is subject?

AMERICAN SPY: There, the little one with the map.

RUSSIAN SPY: Is the one, you are certain?

AMERICAN SPY: *(mimicking the Russian's accent)* Is the one, all right.

RUSSIAN SPY: What, you try funny, talk like me?

AMERICAN SPY: Relax.

RUSSIAN SPY: Is not Russian ha-ha; is American rude.

AMERICAN SPY: I'll make a note.

The spies sneak away. The scene unfreezes for several seconds until DONNA and the NEWSIE start to converse.

DONNA: How can anyone find anything in this confusing, strange city?

NEWSIE: Extra, Extra! Out-of-towner calls the city strange! Read all about it!

DONNA: A Newsie! You must know your way around.

NEWSIE: Oh, I know my way around, do I ever. But listen, even if you know it, you don't know the unknown known 'til it's prone to own you, if you know what I mean.

DONNA: Huh?

NEWSIE: Extra, extra, out-of-towner baffled on corner! Read all about it!

DONNA: What is this place? Why is it so dreary and hopeless? And why can't I find the Broadly Speaking Detective Agency?

Lightning flash, thunder clap. The busy city scene springs back to life. Some of the crowd bring in a door with the words "Broadly Speaking Detective Agency" on it. Others bring in the set for the office. The door slides away to reveal MYRNA, LILAC and ROSE – three elegant female detectives. The city scene freezes around them.

MYRNA: Don't call us dames.

LILAC: Don't call us dolls.

ROSE: We're not your sweethearts, babes, or honeybuns.

MYRNA: If you care to play the odds...

LILAC: and call us anything at all...

ROSE: call us broads.

Phone rings. EARL, the secretary, pokes his head between the women, phone receiver in hand.

EARL: Broadly Speaking Detective Agency. Would you like Myrna, Lilac or Rose?

MYRNA, LILAC and ROSE: Who says gumshoes can't wear high heels?

DONNA sees the women.

DONNA: Oh, there it is! *(the crowd unfreezes, impeding DONNA as she tries to walk toward the detective agency)* Excuse me, pardon me, I just want to... if I could please... Ugh! Why is it so hard to get anywhere around here?

Crowd freezes as PASSERBY 3 addresses DONNA.

PASSERBY 3: Did you ever think it's not the where that's the problem?

DONNA: What?

PASSERBY 3: Precisely. Not to mention the who, the when and the how.

DONNA: But if I could just... *(the crowd reanimates, sweeping DONNA away)* Help!

The lights shift to the inside of the Broadly Speaking Agency.

MYRNA: Sh.

EARL: What's the matter, Myrna?

MYRNA: I thought I heard a distant cry of distress.

LILAC: Naw, that's like a belly growling for food; it's your detective brain growling for a case.

ROSE: We've got the ad, we've got the slogan...

EARL: You've got the secretary.

ROSE: We've got the secretary.

EARL: I wish I could type.

ROSE: But he can't type. Now all we need is some business.

LILAC: What, that call last week about the long-lost gerbil wasn't satisfying enough?

ROSE: True. Five minutes poking behind the fridge should've fulfilled us for life.

MYRNA: I'm telling you, something's coming.

EARL: (*hand on the phone*) I'll be ready when it does! (*A knock on the door; EARL quickly picks up the phone.*) Broadly Speaking Detective Agency!

LILAC: Can't knock his eagerness.

EARL: Hello?

ROSE: I think it's the door that's ringing a bell.

EARL puts the phone on the receiver.

EARL: They must've hung up! (*knock at the door*) Wait a minute!

MYRNA: If we wait another minute, the door's gonna hang up, too.

MYRNA opens the door to discover a disheveled DONNA standing there.

DONNA: Is this the... is this the... oh, at last!

And she faints, falling into the office.

LILAC: I said you were too heavy on the perfume, Rosie.

ROSE: Aw, what a cute little piece of fluff.

EARL: You don't suppose she's dead, do you?

MYRNA: If she is, she's got a funny habit of breathing.

ROSE: Let's get her up and in a chair.

EARL: Boy, she's light as a feather.

LILAC: So what does that make me, Earl, the whole turkey?

EARL: I was just saying...

MYRNA: Word to the wise, Earl, when you're working with women, ixnay on the eightway.

EARL: Eightway, eightway... oh! Okay.

DONNA: (*sleeptalking*) Will. Have to change the will.

ROSE: Oh, talking in her sleep, dreaming about some fella, I bet.

LILAC: A face that young, that innocent, it reminds me of...

MYRNA: Me too.

ROSE: Me three.

Lights change. Music plays.

LILAC: The girl I used to be, back before I moved to this dump, back in that little town in Michigan.

MYRNA: In Vermont.

ROSE: In Tennessee. Bethel Springs, which actually did take its name from a spring nearby, but the town took its name from the Bethel Presbyterian Church, which...

MYRNA: Rosie, you're gumming up the narrative.

ROSE: Tennessee, right.

LILAC: An idyllic town.

MYRNA: A seemingly perfect town.

ROSE: But in reality...

LILAC, MYRNA, & ROSE: A trap.

LILAC: A cage.

MYRNA: A prison with a well-meaning warden.

LILAC, MYRNA, & ROSE: One person.

LILAC: My mother.

MYRNA: My agent.

ROSE: My fiancé, Harold. Slicked-back hair, decent teeth, an odd habit of...

MYRNA: Rose.

ROSE: Harold. Done.

LILAC: Mom sat me down and said...

LILAC'S MOTHER: Lilac, you were born to be a nun.

MYRNA: Mr. Goldman yelled at me from the back row...

MR. GOLDMAN: Myrna, you were born to be a singer!

ROSE: Harold got down on one knee and said...

HAROLD: Rose, you were born to be my wife!

LILAC: But when I put my ear to the ground...

MYRNA: And listened for my future...

ROSE: All I got was a muffled sort of noise left over from this head-cold I got back in February...

LILAC & MYRNA: Rose!

ROSE: Future coming, loud and clear!

LILAC: The sound of Bible verses echoing through the cathedral.

MYRNA: The sound of noisy bus engines and squawking microphones.

ROSE: The sound of dishes clinking in the sink, babies crying in a crib.
Hey, that wasn't bad. I didn't go on and on that time, did I? I kept it...

LILAC & MYRNA: Rosie!

ROSE: Till I blew it.

LILAC: The sound, most of all, of doors swinging closed.

LILAC'S MOTHER: A nun, Lilac, a nun!

MYRNA: Of doors slamming shut.

MR. GOLDMAN: A singer, Myrna, a singer!

ROSE: Of doors that would never reopen.

HAROLD: My wife, Rose, my wife!

EARL: So you fled these small-town existences and came to the big city where you could reinvent yourselves as female detectives in a male-dominated industry to prove that nobody could put you in a box, nosiree Bob, right?

LILAC, MYRNA, & ROSE: Correct.

Lights change from the reminiscent scene back to the office.

EARL: And I am proud to answer your phone and take your messages, as seldom as I get to do those activities thus far.

DONNA: Oh!

MYRNA: Look, she's waking up.

ROSE: How're you doing, kiddo? Feeling better?

DONNA: I hope I didn't faint.

LILAC: Naw, you just took a brief, unscheduled nap is all.

MYRNA: Earl, get her some java, will ya?

EARL: Coming right up.

DONNA: I don't want to be any trouble. My name is Donna Rockbridge.

MYRNA: I'm Myrna. This is Lilac and Rose.

EARL: And I'm Earl. One lump or two, Miss?

DONNA: Two please.

ROSE: What brings you to the city and to us broads in particular?

EARL: Here you go.

DONNA: Thank-you. I hope you can help me. I'm looking for my twin brother, William. You see, our parents recently died...

LILAC: Oh, honey, that's rough.

ROSE: Our condolences.

DONNA: Thank-you. It's been a difficult time, of course, and I'm afraid William hasn't taken it well. He and I and our parents led quite a sheltered life on our esta... our farm and when they passed away, William ran away. *(takes a sip of coffee)* Oh dear.

EARL: Sorry if that's too strong.

MYRNA: Earl needs to stop percolating it through his sock.

DONNA: No, the coffee's fine. I just... felt a sudden chill.

Lights change – another mood-soaked, theatrical scene featuring the atmosphere of the city.

LILAC: Oh, we know that feeling.

DONNA: Do you? What is it?

MYRNA: It's the city, kid.

LILAC: It lurks. It watches.

ROSE: With beady little eyes and upturned collars.

LILAC: Shadows and furtive glances.

Lights up on the spies, who have been sneaking around.

RUSSIAN SPY: Are they talking about us?

AMERICAN SPY: I interpret it as an overall reference to the general milieu and zeitgeist rather than to any particular aspect of said environment.

RUSSIAN SPY: Are they talking about us?

AMERICAN SPY: Na.

Lights off the spies.

MYRNA: Whispers and rumors, the sounds of doors being jimmed, of locks being busted...

LILAC: Cards shuffled, chips scattered...

ROSE: Feet running through darkened alleys...

MYRNA: Everywhere you go, men looking to score, trying to get something for nothing from an unsuspecting someone.

DONNA: Gosh, why do you stay here?

MYRNA: Precisely for people like you, Donna. If you can feel the chill of the city breathing down your neck, you've come to the right place.

During ROSE's bit, the scene shifts back to "reality."

ROSE: Because you're like a mouse and the city is an owl swooping around, in between the buildings like they're trees, and when it sees the mouse, it gets its talons ready and then... *(looks around and notices the disapproving looks from MYRNA and LILAC)* Never mind.

LILAC: Here I thought you were getting better.

ROSE: I get going, I can't help it.

MYRNA: So Donna, the story is that you want us to help you find your brother, William. Have you tried the cops?

DONNA: Well, no I haven't because there's one other little detail. William... took some things with him that weren't his. Some jewels, family heirlooms. I don't want him to get in trouble! He's just not thinking clearly, with my parents dying and all.

LILAC: So he's got some rocks he's trying to fence for cash.

ROSE: And he's come to the big city to do it.

EARL: Ooh, it's a juicy one. A runaway plus a heist. Nice.

MYRNA: Earl, professionals don't take delight in other people's misfortunes.

EARL: Sorry. Sorry, Miss. It's just that we haven't had one of those yet.

LILAC: (*aside to ROSE*) Not that our portfolio's bursting at the seams.

ROSE: The Case of the Missing Gerbil. Kind of thin, if you ask me.

MYRNA: Donna, I think I speak for all of us here at the Broadly Speaking Detective Agency when I say we'll take the case.

LILAC & ROSE: Here, here!

EARL: There, there! (*responding to the odd looks*) I'm just the secretary. Here, here.

MYRNA: When it comes to missing persons and to fenced merchandise, speed is of the essence. We want to cover as much territory as we can as fast as we can.

LILAC: We gotta split up.

ROSE: I gotta hunch where to look.

LILAC: So do I.

MYRNA: We ain't just broadly speaking; we're broadly connected. Back here in three hours to compare notes. Earl...

EARL: Donna and I will stay here and work our way through a pot of sock-strained coffee.

LILAC: And try to figure out the difference between the door and the phone, maybe?

EARL: I got excited. Won't happen again. Doors ring; phones knock; got it. *(the broads give him a look)* Kidding!

MYRNA: Save the humor for when the case is closed.

LILAC, ROSE, and MYRNA leave the office, which fades to black.

LILAC: Smells like the city, all right.

MYRNA: Bad breath, deep debt...

ROSE: Tobacco smoke and evil intentions.

LILAC: Let's go rattle some cages, friends.

They go in different directions. A spotlight stays on ROSE.

ROSE: I knew just where I was headed, a dive where I would be least wanted, and, as the old saying goes, sometimes you get the most from the least. I'm not getting sidetracked this time, no! The other broads are giving me this reputation for saying a mile that adds up to an inch, but I'm walking right into the lion's den and I'm going to come out with an ovenful of hot, fresh information, yes I am.

She knocks on a door that has appeared. LEON is at the peephole.

LEON: What's the password?

ROSE: Who came up with the password?

LEON: I did.

ROSE: What's your name?

LEON: Leon.

ROSE: The password is... noel.

LEON: You may enter.

The door moves aside, and we see the gang in their hideout.

RATTIE: Hey, how did she get in here?

FRANKIE: Leon, you know the rule!

BUTCH: No individuals of the female variety allowed.

LEON: She said the password so I had to let her in.

BUSTER: How did she know the password?

LEON: I don't know. I told her my name was Leon and then she thought a little bit and then she said I know the password and I said so what is it and she said noel so I had to let her in because that's the password.

ROSE: Noel is Leon backwards.

LEON: I thought I was being clever but she figured it out.

FRANKIE: (to BUTCH) All this time I thought Leon liked Christmas.

BUTCH: But Leon, password or not, you shouldn't've let her in 'cause you know the #1 rule of this here establishment.

THE WHOLE GANG: No dames allowed!

ROSE: I'm not a dame.

BUSTER: You sure look like one.

ROSE: Looks can be deceiving.

LEON: My mother used to say that – looks can be deceiving. I think she's telling the truth. Plus she knew the password.

FRANKIE: Noel. I like Christmas.

RATTIE: So you're not a dame, huh?

ROSE: I'm not a dame; I'm not a doll; I'm not a sweetheart.

BUSTER: So what are you?

ROSE: I'm a broad by the name of Rose, thank-you very much, from the Broadly Speaking Detective Agency, and from here on out, the questions are going to be coming from me to you, not you to me.

FRANKIE: Aw, geez, this is feeling complicated!

Lights down on ROSE and the Gang, spotlight on LILAC.

LILAC: I'm on my way to trouble: (description can be adjusted to accommodate the actor) six feet, two inches tall, a hundred-eighty pounds of squared-jaw, wise-cracking difficulty going by the name of Slade Gunderman. There are a lot of things I'd like to claim about Slade – that he was a nice, law-abiding guy; that we'd had a few innocent laughs; that we parted the best of friends. Yeah, a

lot I'd like to be able to claim, and I would – if I didn't give a lick about the truth.

SLADE enters.

SLADE: Lilac. Last time I saw you, you were throwing my heart in the freezer.

LILAC: That might have been on account of you cooking mine on a spit.

SLADE: Not quite sure I'm ready for another round yet.

LILAC: Good, then – let's keep this square. I'm here on business.

SLADE: Hm. The Broadly Speaking Agency.

LILAC: You left out Detective.

SLADE: Might've been one of them Freudian slips.

LILAC: Slippery was your middle name, as I recall.

SLADE: And hard-boiled was yours, but your thinking's pretty scrambled.

LILAC: I doubt your shell's any softer than it was, but we better quit with the egg talk before we get arrested.

SLADE: For what?

LILAC: Being poetic without a license.

SLADE: Tell you something else we probably ought to quit.

LILAC: What's that?

SLADE: Standing with our faces so close like this.

LILAC: Why's that?

SLADE: Because I'm thinking of trying on your lipstick, second-hand.

LILAC: It's not your color.

SLADE: But it might be my shade.

LILAC: That didn't make sense, Slade.

SLADE: Never seemed to me that sense was our top priority, Lilac.

LILAC: Well, it is now. I'm looking for somebody. (*SLADE holds out his arms*) On behalf of my client, I'm looking.

SLADE: Who's your client? I might still be interested.

LILAC: She's a good-hearted innocent with a sincere story – in other words, nowhere near your type.

SLADE: All right. Take a seat; give those pillars of beauty a rest. I'll do my best not to think bad thoughts.

LILAC: I'm disappointed.

SLADE: I don't have much faith I'll succeed.

Spotlight shifts to MYRNA.

MYRNA: When to go with your brain, when to go with your gut? The logical side is telling me to spend the next few hours down at the local library, looking through sources for the last name of Rockbridge. But I had a grandfather, used to cut a green branch off of a willow tree, walked around the pasture with it. When it dipped – pow! – that's where you dug for water. A gut maneuver, if ever there was one. Me? The library's that way, but I'm feeling a pull toward that nightclub across the street. That's where I'm going to dig.

MYRNA crosses to the nightclub.

MR. SUGAR: Well, well, boys, will you look at what we got here? Somebody must've left a window open and this bird flew in.

ROCKO: Hello, pretty birdie.

MR. SUGAR: Yeah, a song bird by the name of Myrna Malloy.

MYRNA: I don't recall ever having the displeasure of making your acquaintance.

MR. SUGAR: My cousin showed me a picture of you once, and I never forget a face.

DONNY: Or the name that goes with it, pretty bird. I like your pouty little beak.

MYRNA: And I liked you better from across the room. Who's this cousin?

MR. SUGAR: Oh, he's a very sad man who lives in a very sad town called White River Junction, smack dab in the middle of the state of Vermont.

ROCKO: A very sad state.

MR. SUGAR: Don't help me, Rocko.

ROCKO: Sorry, Boss.

DONNY: Yeah, Mr. Sugar don't need your help.

DONNY slaps ROCKO on the arm. ROCKO slaps him back.

ROCKO: He don't need your help telling me he don't need my help.

MR. SUGAR: Listen, you two slap-happy ding-a-lings, I will be asking for you to employ your primitive talents in just a second, so be patient!

ROCKO: Yes, Boss.

DONNY: Yes, Mr. Sugar.

MR. SUGAR: Because the cause of my cousin's sadness...

MYRNA: Why don't we call him Sal, since we both know who you're talking about?

MR. SUGAR: The cause of Sal Goldman's sadness was that he had never heard a more mellifluous voice than the one which emanated from this songbird – Myrna Malloy. And since he was a talent agent, Sal recognized that Myrna here was going to be his golden goose.

ROCKO: See how he keeps the bird thing going? Clever.

DONNY: Except a goose ain't a songbird.

ROCKO: Sure it is.

DONNY: Naw. They honk. (*he honks*) Terrible sound.

MR. SUGAR: Boys!

ROCKO: Yes, Boss.

DONNY: Sorry, Mr. Sugar.

MR. SUGAR: My cousin's career and life were ruined when this broad walked out on him!

ROCKO: Bad broad.

DONNY: Bad bird.

MR. SUGAR: Listen, you two punch-drunk slob-a-dobs.

ROCKO & DONNY: Yeah, Boss?

MR. SUGAR: Get her!

The lights go out, leaving everyone in silhouette.

ROCKO: Hey, who turned out the lights?

MYRNA: I did.

DONNY: Why for did you do that for?

MYRNA: So you wouldn't see it coming.

ROCKO: See what coming?

MYRNA: This!

MYRNA engages in a raucous fight with DONNY and ROCKO, punctuated with signs: "Pow!" "Biff!" "Socko!" "Bang!" After a few shots establishing that MR. SUGAR's boys are no match for MYRNA, the spotlight shifts to EARL back at the office with DONNA.

EARL: Left behind, some might think, while my adventurous employers deploy their feminine wiles out there in the mysterious beyond. Poor Earl. But while I'm pouring coffee for the lovely little Donna Rockbridge, I don't feel like I got the short end of the stick, not by a long shot. Can I get you something more, Miss Rockbridge?

DONNA: What's that? No, no, I'm fine.

EARL: You've been staring at that window for a long time. Are you hoping you might spot him?

DONNA: Who?

EARL: Your brother, William – are you thinking he might just happen to waltz on down the street? There's an awful lot of places he could be.

DONNA: Don't you think I know that?

EARL: Oh, sure, of course you do. I just...

DONNA: I'm very sorry. Uh, Edgar, is it?

EARL: Earl.

DONNA: Earl. I didn't mean to snap. I...

EARL: Don't give it a second thought. The way I see it, you've lost everything in pretty short order. Who wouldn't snap?

DONNA: That's very kind of you.

EARL: Were you close? With your family?

DONNA: What are you implying?

EARL: Nothing. I'm just trying to make a little conversation, you know, while we wait.

DONNA: I'm not accustomed to talking about such things with...

EARL: The help?

DONNA: Yes. I mean, no. I mean... You know, the women you work with are fascinating people. I couldn't help but be taken by their stories. I admire that sort of pluck.

EARL: I thought you were passed out when the broads were doing their reminiscing.

DONNA: Oh, I... how long has it been, Earl, since they left?

EARL: Couple of hours, give or take. They'll be back soon.

DONNA: Do you think they've made any progress?

EARL: I haven't worked for them long, Miss Rockbridge, but observing them as I have so far – you know, from my position as the help – I would guess they have made some significant progress. Excuse me. (*Goes to the door and opens it. The SPIES tumble in.*) All right, you two – you've been sneaking around here for hours. What's the deal?

RUSSIAN SPY: Deal? I have no deal. (*to AMERICAN SPY*) You have deal?

AMERICAN SPY: No, no. We were just, uh, looking for, uh...

DONNA: The Broadly Speaking Detective Agency? This place is hard to find.

RUSSIAN SPY: Oh, this is detective agency? Oh, no, we were not looking for detective agency! Detective agency filled with client and secretary was last thing we were looking for, right? Ha-ha, ha-ha. Funny thing.

DONNA: How did you know I was a client?

EARL: And that I was the secretary?

RUSSIAN SPY: Oh, you have that client look.

AMERICAN SPY: And you're very secretary-y. Ish.

EARL: You're not from around here.

RUSSIAN SPY: No, not from city, just visiting from... West Virginia.
(*this can be changed*)

EARL: You don't sound like...

AMERICAN SPY: A very remote part of West Virginia. Anyway, our mistake – we were looking for the, uh...

RUSSIAN SPY: Ice cream shop!

AMERICAN SPY: Ice cream shop, yes, and we got lost, wouldn't you know, so now we're just going to get lost again. Sorry for the mistake.

RUSSIAN SPY: Vanilla for me! Ha-ha! Of the ice cream!

They exit as LILAC, ROSE, and MYRNA enter.

EARL: Hallelujah, they're back!

MYRNA: Who were the trenchcoat twins?

DONNA: Never mind them – did you find William?

LILAC: Hold your horses there, kid.

ROSE: We've barely had time to compare notes ourselves.

MYRNA: Earl, you've got an emergency appointment to make.

EARL: What about, Myrna?

MYRNA: Call the salon. When I was cracking some jaws, I busted a nail.

EARL, ROSE, & LILAC: Ooo!

DONNA: Please, what about William?

LILAC: So. We know your brother is, indeed, in the city.

ROSE: We know he is, indeed, trying to leverage some very expensive jewelry.

DONNA: He's been seen, then?

MYRNA: Oh, he's been seen, heard and smelled all over the place. Your brother's been busy, but he's having a hard time getting what he's after.

DONNA: Nobody wants to pay him for the jewels?

ROSE: Nobody wants to mess with the name Rockbridge. Seems you might have left out a fact or two about how rich and powerful your family is, little Donna.

DONNA: I... didn't want to seem presumptuous.

EARL: Depends on the company how hard she tries.

ROSE: What's that, Earl?

EARL: Nothing.

MYRNA: Turns out your brother's making it even harder to find any takers since he's not trying to trade the rocks for cash.

DONNA: What?

LILAC: You might want to sit down for this part, honey.

ROSE: William has come to the city with a portion of the family treasure... to hire a hitman.

DONNA: You don't mean...

MYRNA: To have his twin sister – that would be you – murdered.

DONNA: Oh, William, William, what have you done? Please, we have to find him. I know it seems like he's being rash...

LILAC: Murder's a bit on the rash side, yeah.

DONNA: But he's just confused. If I could only talk to him. How soon can we actually find him?

MYRNA: It's a slow process, Honey. I mean, we were out there stirring the pot, and stuff simmered up...

LILAC: I could barely keep things from boiling over.

ROSE: Personally, I met some very appreciative individuals who found my style of self-expression highly scintillating.

LILAC: Congratulations on finding a fan club, Rosie.

ROSE: We're meeting for luncheon on Tuesday.

MYRNA: The point is, Donna, these things take time. We've been lucky this afternoon, but it could take days to actually pin him down. You can't expect him to be delivered to you gift-wrapped, right?

DONNA: But...

A knock comes at the door.

EARL: That was a knock on the door. That was not a ring on the phone. I am now going to answer the... *(the phone rings)* I am thoroughly confused.

MYRNA: You get the door, Earl, I'll get the phone.

EARL: The clear instructions are deeply appreciated.

COURIER: Delivery!

EARL: Sure, sure, bring it in.

The COURIER wheels in a dump cart with an unconscious body wrapped in burlap laying in it. The body has a bright red bow on the top of its head.

MYRNA: Broadly Speaking Detective Agency, Myrna speaking.

EARL: What is this?

COURIER: I only deliver. I make no guesses as to the content of said deliveries. I think it's a body. It has not moved. Here is a note. I was never here.

The COURIER exits.

MYRNA: Yes, we did do that job, but no, we do not specialize in pet rodent retrieval. Thank-you and have a pleasant night. *(hangs up the phone)* Fellow broads!

LILAC, ROSE: Hello!

MYRNA: And Earl!

EARL: Present!

MYRNA: Let us agree upon a policy, namely, that if we should get a future request asking for help locating a small animal of any kind, we should firmly decline. Agreed?

LILAC & ROSE: Agreed!

EARL: Here, here! *(responding to looks)* Your just-a-secretary agrees.

MYRNA: One gerbil and you're labeled for life. *(regarding the delivery)* What is this?

EARL: It just arrived. Shall I read the note?

MYRNA: By all means.

EARL: "Dear Broads of the BSDA..."

ROSE: The initials sound so official.

EARL: “It has come to the attention of several of us in the neighborhood that you have not only hung out your shingle but are highly decent at this chosen venture of yours.”

MYRNA: Our pot-stirring apparently got noticed.

EARL: “Congratulations and welcome and we hope our future interactions will be mutually beneficial. As a token of our esteem for the work you have done so far, and also because we find this merchandise, for lack of a better term, too hot for our liking, we have brought you one William Rockbridge...”

DONNA: William?

DONNA unwraps the head of the body, revealing her unconscious brother.

EARL: “The individual for whom you have been looking. We only ask that you get him out of our hair and drop this matter as quickly as possible. Sincerely, Various Parties You Visited Today.”

DONNA: Is he dead?

EARL: “p.s. He is not dead, only fainted and a little bit drugged for ease of transportation. The jewels are in his jacket pocket.”

DONNA retrieves the bag of jewels.

DONNA: Here they are! You did it! You recovered my jewels! And you found my brother. I don’t know how to thank you. Myrna, Lilac, Rose – you are crime-solving geniuses. Here, I wrote down my address. Please send me an invoice for whatever I owe you – double it, even. I couldn’t be more pleased. I am going to spread the word to everyone I know about you.

LILAC: Hang on, where are you going? Your brother there tried to buy a hit on you, kid.

DONNA: I know. I saw where the police station was on my way here. I’m going to wheel him there and turn him in myself.

ROSE: We should...

DONNA: No, no – you strong women with your independent ways have given me inspiration! I can be powerful, too. I will take it from here.

DONNA exits, pulling WILLIAM in the cart. The three women and EARL watch her go, turn to look at one

another, turn back to where DONNA has exited, then all walk to separate parts of the room, lost in thought. A lonely saxophone plays.

MYRNA: Logic would have me jumping up and down, throwing a party for the easy solution of our first major case.

ROSE: Job done, client satisfied, money coming in – what more could a private eye want?

LILAC: Somehow, when Donna walked out the door pulling her brother, the air she left behind her is buzzing like a hive of agitated bees.

EARL: I was hoping I'd be making a deli run soon, but the atmosphere right now does not feel conducive to salami.

All four suddenly look in the direction of the door again. The saxophone pauses. They turn to look at one another, then renew their pacing. The music picks back up.

ROSE: Something's off. When Donna asked if William was dead, I didn't hear fear in her voice. It sounded more like hope.

LILAC: Something's not sitting right. She said, "You recovered my jewels." Not *our* jewels, not the *family's* jewels... *my* jewels.

MYRNA: Something fishy's going on. The girl that grabbed that cart and took off like a shot wasn't the same little thing that fainted at our door just a few hours ago.

EARL: Hey! (*the music stops and everyone turns to look at EARL*) Sorry to interrupt your silent contemplation, but I happened to be looking out the window and noticed that Miss Rockbridge did not head in the direction of the police station.

LILAC: Where did she head?

EARL: Towards the docks.

LILAC, MYRNA, ROSE: The docks!

They all run off, followed by EARL. The stage goes dark; we hear running footsteps, crowds on the street, traffic, the broads' ad libs telling people to get out of the way. These sounds die out and are replaced by those of anchor chains moving, waves lapping, and the distant moan of a ship's horn. Lights come up on



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