

MITCHELL. Well, the bathtub is ready. *(He goes Downstage, and brushes his hair in front of an imaginary mirror.)* What's the matter, honey? You're not nervous, are you?

ARLENE. I was just thinking, Mitchell. This is going to be the first Christmas in thirteen years that Paul and I won't be spending together.

MITCHELL. You've got to stop thinking about it, sweetheart. You've got to keep your mind on what we're doing.

ARLENE. If only he didn't love me so much. It would be a lot easier if he didn't love me so much. But, oh, God, how he loves me.

MITCHELL. *(Sits down on the bed next to her.)* He doesn't love you any more than I do.

ARLENE. Of course he does. He loves me more than any woman deserves to be loved.

MITCHELL. Well, if he loves you so damn much, why don't you stay with him?

ARLENE. You're jealous.

MITCHELL. Of course I'm jealous. I never felt this way before. I can't stand the thought of anybody but me touching you. I'm a dentist, Arlene. You know I can have any woman I want. But all I want is you.

ARLENE. Oh, Mitchell.

MITCHELL. I never told you this before, but remember when I put in that bridge for him and he went home in terrific pain? I purposely did that to him. I put in the wrong sized bridge. I wanted to hurt him.

ARLENE. I love you, Mitchell. *(They embrace passionately.)*

MITCHELL. I've got to have you, Arlene.

ARLENE. No please, not now. *(Rises.)* I've got too much on my mind. I wouldn't be any good.

MITCHELL. You may be right. *(Rises.)* Okay, let's go over the plan once more. One, I open the door.

ARLENE. Two, I say, come in, Paul, and don't ask any questions.

MITCHELL. Three. I hit him over the head with a lamp.

ARLENE. Four. I give him a karate chop in the neck.

MITCHELL. Five. I hit him over the head with a chair.

ARLENE. Six. I shove a handkerchief in his mouth so he won't scream.

MITCHELL. Seven. I give him the injection and he sinks to his knees. *(They heighten the pace.)*

ARLENE. Eight. We drag him into the bathroom.

MITCHELL. And nine, we dump him into the bathtub face down and hold his head under water for as long as it takes.

ARLENE. *(Embracing MITCHELL excitedly.)* Kiss me! Kiss me! I've got to have you, Mitchell.

MITCHELL. Not now, Arlene. You wouldn't be any good, remember? *(MITCHELL goes into bathroom.)*

ARLENE. Poor Paul. He's going to hate this so much. But what about me? Am I not entitled to life? Don't I deserve to know tenderness, warmth and passion without having to get up in the middle of the night, get dressed and take a taxi home? *(MITCHELL comes out with a doctor's bag.)* Oh, Mitchell, I don't know if happiness will ever be in the cards for a woman like me.

MITCHELL. We've got to think positive, Arlene. . . . Where the hell is he? He said he'd be here at six.

ARLENE. Not if he's in the middle of a deal. You know when you're selling used cars, you can spend a whole day promising a guy the moon.

MITCHELL. I know. I bought my mother's Oldsmobile from him. The day after the warranty expired the motor fell out.

ARLENE. Paul used to tell me after he had a few beers that when you buy a used car, you're buying somebody else's troubles.

MITCHELL. Well, I'm getting even this time. He thinks he's coming up here to make a deal on some stolen cars.

ARLENE. I used to love him. I think I used to love him more than he loved me. Then suddenly things started to reverse themselves. I found myself being loved more than I

could love in return. Do you have any idea what it's like being loved more than you can possibly love in return?

MITCHELL. Of course I do.

ARLENE. It drives you crazy. So you force yourself to love that person more than you do and before you know it you hate him for putting you through all this. Do you know what I'm saying?

MITCHELL. Thoroughly. God, when you two first came into my office to have your teeth checked, I would have sworn you were the happiest couple on earth. (*Closes the drapes.*)

ARLENE. (*Primping in Downstage imaginary mirror.*) When I met Paul Miller, I was young, I was foolish, I was innocent . . . But then I started reading. At first newspapers. Then magazines . . . and suddenly, before I knew it, books. Little by little, I outgrew him. He went to the right, I went to the left. He went in. I went out. I went up. He went down. I went here, he went there . . .

MITCHELL. I couldn't live with a man like that.

ARLENE. Yet, he tried his best. He gave me everything. A house, furniture, clothing, silverware . . . I have five watches.

MITCHELL. No one needs five watches.

ARLENE. Of course not. Oh, sure, Paul and I were happy at first. I didn't know any better. My eyes were still closed. I hadn't awakened as a person yet. And then when I met you, the whole thing really crystalized. I wasn't the same girl that Paul had slept with thousands and thousands and thousands of times.

MITCHELL. Arlene, I don't want to hear numbers.

ARLENE. Mitchell, he still is my husband.

MITCHELL. Well, that's all going to change today.

ARLENE. Kiss me. Kiss me. (*They kiss passionately. There is a knock at the door.*) That's him.

MITCHELL. Bad timing.

PAUL. (*Offstage.*) Mr. Zapata.

MITCHELL. (*Take voice.*) Uno momento! (*ARLENE looks at MITCHELL puzzled.*) I told him on the phone, I was Mexican.

ARLENE. You have a very good accent.

MITCHELL. Thank you.

ARLENE. (*Goes to him.*) Oh, Mitchell. I can't help but wonder. Do we really have the right to take another person's life?

MITCHELL. Of course not. That's why it's called murder.

You want total happiness, don't you?

ARLENE. Yes, yes.

MITCHELL. Well, he's keeping you from total happiness.

ARLENE. I'm so confused.

MITCHELL. Look, would it make you feel any better if we tried talking to him first? Who knows, he might even agree to a divorce.

ARLENE. Never. The poor guy loves me too much.

MITCHELL. Let's try. If he says no and we have to kill him, at least we'll have a clear conscience. (*There is another knock at the door.*) Uno momento! (*To ARLENE.*) What do you say, Arlene?

ARLENE. Okay, we'll try it, but don't get your hopes up.

MITCHELL. I love you, Arlene.

ARLENE. I love you, Mitchell.

MITCHELL. Think positive.

(*He turns on more lights in the room, opens the door and stands behind it. PAUL MILLER, a man a year or two older than his wife, is standing there. He is wearing a grey overcoat, a grey suit, and a grey tie. When he sees ARLENE he is completely confused.*)

PAUL. Arlene!?!?

ARLENE. Come in, Paul, and don't ask questions.

PAUL. (*Entering.*) Arlene, what are you doing here? I was supposed to meet a Mr. Zapata.