

A FLY ON THE WALL

By Pat Cook

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ISBN: 978-1-60003-791-7

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A FLY ON THE WALL

A Full Length Mystery Farce

By Pat Cook

SYNOPSIS: Emma Starling has a vivid imagination. At least, that what her psychiatrist Phillip Axelrod thinks when she tell him of being involved in bank hold-ups, sighting U F O's and dating Donald Trump. Such outrageous things simply never happen and certainly not in Axelrod's world. His is a calm, well-ordered and serene life. At least, it used to be until his office suddenly becomes a nest of loud-mouthed admen, nosy reporters, landlords, mothers not to mention frantic calls from his fiancé'. As if this weren't enough the police show up, placing him under investigation. They want to know about his patients and why? It seems that three other psychiatrists have been murdered. Is he next? Does he know anything more than he's telling? Lieutenant Diana Palmer thinks so as she tries to keep a lid on things. This isn't easy when she finds her back-up, Officer Calvin Thurlow, on a couch spilling his guts to the good doctor. And just when Dr. Axelrod FINALLY clears his office so he can sort out things a suspicious woman shows up, needing his guidance. And just to make her point clear she holds a pistol on him. This could get serious, he thinks. Who is she? What does she want? And just who is killing all the psychiatrists in town? This two act mystery farce will have you guessing until the last patient confesses. And when it all comes to a head, wouldn't you just love to be *a Fly on the Wall*?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 female, 4-5 male, doubling possible)

- PHILLIP AXELROD (m).....A rather uptight psychiatrist in his early 30's. (288 lines)
- EMMA STARLING (f)60, Pixie of a woman. (44 lines)
- JOANN BURTON (f)Phillip's long suffering secretary. (36 lines)
- GRACIE DORSET (f)Wise-cracking delivery woman. (48 lines)
- MAC HUMBERT (m)Gracie's large assistant. (9 lines)
- TYRONE PARKER (m).....Ty; loud, pushy adman, in his late 30's. (69 lines)

BY PAT COOK

PEARL DIRKSON (f)Landlady, around 50-ish. (13 lines)
DIANA PALMER (f).....Attractive, smart police lieutenant, 30-
ish. (176 lines)
CALVIN THURLOW (m).....25, Large but sensitive policeman.
(45 lines)
MOM (f)Phillip's nosey mother, 60-ish. (32 lines)
KELLY DORSET (f).....Reporter wannabe and Gracie's sister.
(55 lines)
MULRONEY (f).....Wise police captain, late 40's. (58 lines)
GLENDA WOOD (f).....35, Desperate and panicky. (88 lines)
COMMISSIONER (m)55, Police veteran. (6 lines)

CAST NOTE: THE COMMISSIONER and MAC HUMBERT may be doubled.

DURATION: 90 minutes

TIME: The present, in the morning.

PLACE: Phillip Axelrod's consulting office.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *The setting for this little intrigue is the office of Dr. PHILLIP AXELROD. As befitting a psychiatrist of his standing, the wood paneled walls are decorated with various certificates and awards interspersed with photos and abstract art. There are two doors utilized in this floor plan. The first door, located SL leads to an outer office where his secretary works. The second door, located on the SR wall, leads to AXELROD'S private restroom. The furniture in the room is comfortable but well kept. The obligatory couch is located on the SL wall, just DS of the door. There is a high back chair near the couch and a coffee table in front of it. It is flanked by matching end tables. A large crescendo complete with bookshelves resides on the US wall. Dr. AXELROD'S desk and chair are located USR near the corner. On it rests a telephone, computer, lamp and other desk items. The rest of the room is rounded out with various plants and bookshelves. As the LIGHTS come up, PHILLIP is seated in his chair near the couch, holding a pen and notepad. He is quietly watching EMMA, who is lying on the couch. After a brief pause she starts to sit up and he leans in to her. She then shakes her head and lies down again. He leans back. She then sits up again and again he leans in. Again she lies down and he checks his watch and leans back. Then she suddenly sits up.*

EMMA: A fly on the wall!

PHILLIP: Do what?

EMMA: That's it, a fly on the wall!

PHILLIP: Mrs. Starling, I ask you to come up with a sentence to best describe what you think of yourself and that's what you come up with?

EMMA: That's it. I'm crazy, right?

PHILLIP: No, you're not crazy. *(He leans forward.)* And I've told you SO many times before we don't use that word.

EMMA: What about loco?

PHILLIP: No.

EMMA: Nuts? Bonkers? Missing some shingles; pick one.

PHILLIP: Look, you just have a very vivid imagination, that's all.

EMMA: You keep saying that, Dr. Axelrod. You really think I'm making all this up?

PHILLIP: I didn't say that. I simply believe that you tend to exaggerate a bit.

EMMA: I'm not exaggerating anything.

PHILLIP: Really? *(He flips through his notepad.)* You've been my patient for almost three months now and so far you're told me that you've met the Men in Black, been invaded by U F O's and used to date Donald Trump.

EMMA: See what I mean? I'm always seeing those things. Nobody else, just me! And nobody will believe me, not even my shrink.

PHILLIP: And that's another word I asked you politely not to use.

EMMA: *(Leans over to him.)* You don't have much of a social life, do you?

PHILLIP: We're not here to talk about me. *(He rises and looks at his pen.)*

EMMA: Oh, I hit a nerve, did I?

PHILLIP: Huh?

EMMA: I mean after I said that you jumped up and –

PHILLIP: I didn't JUMP up and it wasn't because of anything you just said. *(He holds up his pen.)* My pen just ran out of ink. *(He looks at his pad.)* And judging by all your notes you can understand why.

He crosses to his desk. EMMA gets up and moves behind him. He drops the pen in the waste basket and picks up a pen from his desk. He then turns around and almost collides with EMMA.

Mrs. Starling!

EMMA: Then you deny it?

PHILLIP: Why are you so interested?

EMMA: Oh HO, good one. Turn it around, back to me.

PHILLIP: And you didn't answer THAT question, now did you?

EMMA: Well...

PHILLIP: You have this daughter.

EMMA: I have this daughter *(She catches what he just said.)* SAY, you really ARE good.

PHILLIP: Not married, right?

EMMA: Wow, you ought to work at a carnival, set up a tent and gaze into this crystal ball –

PHILLIP: Is THAT why you've been coming to see me all this time?

EMMA: NO! I just figured, since you were in the market and I have this item you need which I've been trying to get off the shelf...

PHILLIP: So you made up all these stories just to give you an excuse...

EMMA: I didn't make up ANY-thing; everything I told you was all true. Dating Donald Trump, the U F O's, finding an elephant in my back yard...

PHILLIP: Wait. What elephant?

EMMA: I didn't tell you about that? Anyway, I had noticed the really big footprints in my pansies...

Just then there is a knock at the SL door.

PHILLIP: (*Irritated.*) Yes?

JOANN enters timidly.

JOANN: So sorry to disturb you Dr. Axelrod but the delivery people are here.

PHILLIP: Miss Burton, how many times have I told you I cannot be disturbed when I'm with a patient?

EMMA: Who's also disturbed.

PHILLIP looks at her.

Not supposed to say that word either, huh?

JOANN: But they must deliver your terrarium because they have a tight schedule.

PHILLIP: Oh, very well. Let them in.

JOANN exits, leaving the door open.

I have a tight schedule, too, you know.

EMMA: You're talking to yourself, doctor. Wonder what that's a sign of?

PHILLIP: It's perfectly normal, everybody does it.

EMMA: Everybody who doesn't have a social life.

PHILLIP: Mrs. Starling, I know why you're doing this.

EMMA: 'Cause I'm cuckoo?

JOANN enters the room. She speaks to someone behind her.

JOANN: This way.

SHE enters and stands beside the door. MAC and GRACIE enter rolling a wooden cabinet on which sits a large rectangular glass terrarium.

GRACIE: Where do you want this thing?

PHILLIP: *(Moves to the SR wall.)* Over here. *(He indicates a space on the wall DS of the door.)* Against this wall.

GRACIE and MAC roll the cabinet over to the wall and put it in place. As they move EMMA moves to JOANN.

EMMA: *(To JOANN.)* He's putting in an aquarium?

JOANN: That's not an aquarium. It's a terrarium.

EMMA: Does it know it's a terrarium 'cause it's acting a lot like an aquarium?

GRACIE: Here?

PHILLIP: Fine, that's fine. Now if you'll just let me get back to my practice?

GRACIE: Hold on one minute there, Doc. Paper work.

PHILLIP: What?

GRACIE opens a door on the cabinet and pulls out a clipboard. She holds it up to PHILLIP and pulls a pen from behind her ear.

GRACIE: Part of our regs. Need your John Hancock on this. Bottom of the page.

PHILLIP: *(Impatiently.)* Yes, yes, whatever! *(He takes the pen and clipboard. He signs the page.)*

EMMA: *(To JOANN.)* He seems a little edgy today.

JOANN: *(Long-suffering.)* Today?

EMMA: Maybe he should go out and relax a little. Say, on a date?

PHILLIP: *(Holds out the clipboard.)* There, now...

GRACIE: Wait a sec, Clyde. *(She takes the clipboard and flips a page. She hands it back to PHILLIP.)* Sign there in the middle.

PHILLIP: Oh, for heaven's sake. *(He takes the clipboard and signs the page.)*

EMMA: And since you brought it up, is he seeing anyone?

JOANN: He claims to have a fiancé but I've never seen her.

EMMA: *(Catches on.)* Uh HUH.

PHILLIP: *(Again holds out the clipboard.)* Now, can I...

GRACIE: *(Hand up.)* Not yet. *(She takes the clipboard and flips another page. She indicates on the page.)* We need your signature here, your initials here and here and... you want to write this down?

PHILLIP: *(Irritated.)* I'm TRYING TO! *(He signs quickly in three places.)*

MAC: *(Indicates the terrarium.)* When're you going to put the water in?

PHILLIP: It's not an aquarium, it's a terrarium.

MAC: Huh?

PHILLIP: It's not for fish it's for plants.

MAC: You got a box for plants?

PHILLIP: YES!

MAC: Then you'll HAVE to put water in there SOME-time, huh?

He nods triumphantly to GRACIE.

PHILLIP: *(Shoves the clipboard to GRACIE.)* Now, is that all?

GRACIE: Much obliged. *(She turns in opens the SR door.)* What's in there?

PHILLIP: That's my restroom, do you MIND?! *(He moves and yanks the door shut.)*

GRACIE: I was just looking for the restroom, do YOU mind?

PHILLIP: What next? *(Long-suffering.)* Go on, be my guest.

GRACIE: Thank you.

She exits out the restroom door. PHILLIP turns and glares at MAC.

MAC: *(Sheepishly.)* I can't leave, she's my ride.

At that moment, TY enters through the SL door. Although he is wearing a full suit, his collar is undone and his tie is dangling to one side.

TY: *(Raving.)* Doc, Doc, you gott'a help me! Everybody's against me! Everybody keeps watching me! *(He races over to PHILLIP.)* They're EVERY-where!

PHILLIP: *(Long-suffering.)* Oh, what NEXT?

TY: And not just people, either! I tell you, Doc. *(He grabs PHILLIP'S lapels.)* They ain't from this world, I tells ya'. They's from Mars!

EMMA: *(Amazed.)* You see them, too?

PHILLIP: *(Shoves TY away.)* Ty, I'm with a patient!

TY: Huh? *(He straightens up and adjusts his collar and tie.)* Oh man, I'm so sorry.

PHILLIP: Are you out of you mind?

EMMA: You're in the right place.

PHILLIP: Mrs. Starling, there's nothing wrong with him. He's an adman who works on the third floor who thinks he's funny.

EMMA: And you say there's nothing wrong with him?

PHILLIP: *(To TY.)* You know better than to burst in on me when I'm with a patient.

TY: How was I to know that, your door was open? *(He points to the SL door.)*

PHILLIP: What? Miss Burton!

JOANN: I'm sorry! *(She moves to the door but before she can close it PEARL enters.)* Mrs. Dirkson!

PEARL: Sorry to have to just drop in unannounced like this but this was very important. And since I saw the door open...

PHILLIP: *(Sarcastically.)* Yes, I'm thinking of opening up a hot dog stand!

JOANN: I SAID I was SORRY!

TY: *(Moves to the terrarium.)* Hey, man, you're sounding like you have a persecution complex.

PHILLIP: This from a man who spells socks with an X. (*He turns to PEARL.*) Now, Mrs. Dirkson, what is so important that you couldn't tell me over the phone?

PEARL looks around and then gently moves PHILLIP DS. As they talk the others all lean in to listen.

PEARL: That's just it. I couldn't take the chance. You never know who's listening in.

PHILLIP: Oh, Mrs. Dirkson, not you, TOO?

PEARL: No, no, this isn't just idle paranoia.

PHILLIP: I know, it sounds like it's been very busy.

PEARL: I mean when I heard from who I heard from I thought I'd better speak to you in person.

PHILLIP: And just WHO did you hear from?

PEARL: The police. (*The OTHERS lean in even more.*) Asking about you.

PHILLIP: ME?!

He then looks around at the others, who quickly straighten up. EMMA moves closer to PEARL.

JOANN: We weren't listening, really.

TY: No, no. (*He casually indicates the terrarium.*) But I think your fish are dead.

MAC: (*Proudly.*) That's a terrarium.

PHILLIP: What did they want to know about me?

PEARL: They were just questioning me first about all my tenants and then when I mentioned you they started asking about your practice and your patients.

PHILLIP: My patients?

EMMA: Did I ever mention I was involved in a bank robbery?

PHILLIP: (*Ushers her to the couch.*) Mrs. Starling, I'll get back to our session as soon as I can.

EMMA: Oh, I can't wait.

TY: Yeah, me either.

PHILLIP: (*To TY.*) You won't be here. (*He moves back to PEARL.*) What about my patients?

PEARL: (*Looking at EMMA.*) What did she say about a bank robbery?

PHILLIP: Pay no attention; she's trying to get me to date her daughter.

PEARL: Of all the nerve.

PHILLIP: I know.

PEARL: Especially when you won't even MEET my daughter.

PHILLIP: Mrs. Dirkson? The police? What did they say?

PEARL: Well, they wouldn't go into any detail about anyone specifically. They just said they'd be contact you personally.

PHILLIP: Miss Burton?

JOANN: You haven't received any calls from the police.

PHILLIP: You mean while you've been in here?

JOANN: Oh. (*She smiles sheepishly.*) Didn't think of that.

GRACIE enters through the SR door.

GRACIE: Okay, Mac, let's hit the road.

MAC: (*Still listening.*) Hang on.

GRACIE: Huh?

She moves to MAC, who nods toward PHILLIP.

PEARL: So I thought you'd better hear it from me before they show up here.

PHILLIP: They said they were coming here? When?

At that moment, DIANA enters through the SL door. She is smartly dressed in plain clothes.

DIANA: Excuse me? (*The OTHERS turn to look at her.*) I'm Lieutenant Diana Palmer with the twelfth precinct.

PEARL: I bet THAT'S them now.

PHILLIP: You think?

TY: Wait a minute here; let me handle this. (*He moves to DIANA.*) Excuse me, but you're the police, right?

DIANA: Didn't I just say that?

TY: May I see your search warrant?

DIANA: I'm not searching anything.

TY: Oh, then may I ask why you ARE here?

DIANA: Just here to ask a few questions.

MAC: *(To GRACIE.)* See? This is why I didn't want to leave.

PHILLIP: Ty, this is no time to - ?

TY: No, no, just wait. *(To DIANA.)* Don't you need some kind of warrant to ask questions?

DIANA: No. We only need permission, usually verbal, from the person being interviewed. *(She leans in to him.)* Trust me, I know the law. I'm a law officer.

TY: A detective?

DIANA: Yes.

TY: Well, let's just see about that.

He moves to PHILLIP and PEARL.

PHILLIP: What do you think you're doing?

TY: Now, detective, let's just see how good you are.

DIANA: How good – what is this, a pop quiz?

TY: One of us is a psychiatrist. *(He indicates himself, PEARL and PHILLIP.)* Which one?

DIANA thinks, then moves to the three.

DIANA: *(After a slight pause.)* I don't care.

PHILLIP: You don't care? WHY don't you care?

DIANA: *(Points to PHILLIP.)* You're the psychiatrist. *(She looks around the room.)*

TY: *(To PHILLIP.)* She's good!

PHILLIP: Don't listen to him; he has delusions of adequacy. Officer, may I ask what this is all about? Why do you need to ask ME any questions?

DIANA: *(Smiles.)* You're used to being on the other end of that, aren't you? I mean YOU usually ask the questions, right? *(She walks around the room, sizing it up.)*

PHILLIP: What? *(He follows her.)* Of course, I ask questions; that's how I make my diagnoses.

DIANA: And that's what I do, ask questions. (*She stops and turns to him.*) However, I need to speak to you someplace private.

PHILLIP: (*Looks around.*) Well, this USED to be private.

DIANA: Uh huh, where you hold your sessions? Is that what you call them?

PHILLIP: You don't like psychiatrists, do you?

DIANA: Say, you ARE good. You think I'm bad you should hear my captain.

PHILLIP starts to speak but she continues.

You have patients who come to you, sometimes for years and then, somewhere along the way you tell them they're suffering from something only you can pronounce, something in Latin.

PHILLIP: Oh. You mean like *modus operandi*?

DIANA: Oh, *touché*'. You listen to their dreams and then show them lots of pictures of ink spots –

PHILLIP: (*Correcting her.*) Ink blots.

DIANA: Spots, blots, what's the difference?

PHILLIP: Well, the ink blots are part of the accredited Rorschach test. The Ink Spots sang "Stompin' at the Savoy".

DIANA: I stand corrected. Now, if we may continue with my questions?

PHILLIP: We can... (*He looks at the others*) if we can have some privacy?

DIANA motions to him to lean in.

DIANA: Would you like me to clear the room?

PHILLIP: You going to use your gun?

DIANA: (*Shakes her head.*) Don't have one. No, the idea is to make them WANT to leave. (*She move CS and looks at the others.*) You know, maybe you all can help out after all. You see I'm investigating an income tax fraud case. So, you can understand I'm going to have some I. R. S auditors in here shortly to also ask questions and I know you all...

Suddenly the room becomes a flurry of activity.

TY: (*Rushing to the SL door.*) Well, I wouldn't want to hold up any police investigation.

PEARL: (*Same time as TY.*) I need to get back to my office right now for some reason I can tell you about later. (*Also rushes to the SL door.*)

GRACIE: (*Same time as TY.*) We're on a tight schedule, right?

MAC: Right, tight schedule.

These two also head toward the SL door. All four meet at the door and clumsily exit.

DIANA: I thought that might do the trick.

PHILLIP: Nice trick.

DIANA: Yes, but it only works for just so long. That is until they realize that tax fraud is federal and I'm local.

EMMA: Dr. Axelrod, what should I – ?

PHILLIP: (*Moves to EMMA.*) Mrs. Starling, I am SO sorry about all this. Miss Burton, please reschedule her for another session. (*He ushers her to JOANN.*) As soon as possible, please.

JOANN: Of course. Mrs. Starling? (*She indicates the door.*)

EMMA: And I'm sure I'll have LOTS more to tell you. (*She exits.*)

PHILLIP: I have no doubt. (*JOANN and EMMA exit. After a medium pause.*) Miss BURTON! (*JOANN looks in.*) The door!

JOANN: (*Sheepishly.*) Just about to tend to that. (*She grasps the doorknob and mumbles to herself.*) I only have two hands, I forget one little thing and THAT'S what he grinds on. (*She exits gently closing the door behind her.*)

PHILLIP: Now, what's all this about?

DIANA: The long and the short of it, we're trying to locate a certain person. (*She moves to the terrarium.*)

PHILLIP: And just who is that?

DIANA: Well, let's just say I'm not at liberty to divulge that information just now.

PHILLIP: (*Moves to her.*) Oh, so I'm on a 'you don't need to know' basis. See here, officer, I can't have some ham-fisted investigation taking weeks on end and frightening my patients.

DIANA: Ham-fisted?

PHILLIP: Running down profiles and putting my people through line-ups, things like that.

DIANA: Profiles? Line-ups?

PHILLIP: Whatever you people say in cases like this one.

DIANA: Uh huh. *(She looks at the terrarium.)* Nice terrarium.

PHILLIP: *(Accusingly.)* Lucky guess.

DIANA: I see you have several African Violets there among the Creeping Figs. *(PHILLIP stares at her in amazement.)* We're not all mug shots and A. P. B.s, you know.

PHILLIP: I must admit I am impressed.

DIANA: *(Moves to the desk.)* As I said we're looking for a particular individual so it would be most helpful if you could give us a list of your present clients.

PHILLIP: *(Moves behind the desk.)* Uh huh, this is EXACTLY what I was expecting. Now see here - !

DIANA: Wait, I believe I know how our next conversation will run. I say I want to see your list of patients and then you come back with how impossible that would be. Then I'd say but this is vital to our investigation. Then YOU say your hands are tied. And I come back with how you'd be withholding what could be possible evidence and then you'd cite doctor/patient confidentiality. I'd persist but you'd remain adamant on this point. *(She looks at him.)* Something like that?

PHILLIP: *(After a slight pause, sarcastically.)* I hope I wasn't too tough on you.

DIANA: That's always the clincher, isn't it, that doctor/patient confidentiality thing.

PHILLIP: Which any doctor worth his oath holds sacred. Look, we don't read crystal balls or read the bumps on patient's heads, we listen to my patient's symptoms to determine whether those are a result of psychiatric illness, physical illness or a combination of both. We work hand in hand with the medical profession. So you can see I'm not just all couches and...ink spots.

DIANA: Can't you tell me anything about your case load?

PHILLIP: Can't you tell me anything about who you're looking for?

DIANA: I was afraid you'd catch that particular irony. *(Her cell phone rings.)* Excuse me, won't you? *(She pulls out her cell phone and presses a button.)*

PHILLIP: Oh, by all means. *(He sits behind his desk.)*

DIANA: *(Into her phone.)* Lieutenant Palmer here. What? No, I'm in his office now. *(She eyes PHILLIP.)* No, no, we're getting along like family. Right now? *(She moves to the SL door.)* I can be there in ten minutes. *(She opens the door and motions to someone outside.)*

PHILLIP: *(Sits up.)* Hold it, what're you doing?

DIANA: *(Into her phone.)* I'm leaving now. *(She pushes a button on her cell phone, replaces it in her pocket and turns to PHILLIP.)* Should be back in about an hour.

PHILLIP: Oh, I'll think about you while you're gone.

CALVIN enters.

CALVIN: *(Gruffly.)* Yes, Lieutenant?

DIANA: I have to go back to the stationhouse so I want you to stay here.

CALVIN: You can count on me.

PHILLIP: *(Jumps to his feet.)* Wait just one minute there, you're going to leave him here with me?

DIANA: Oh, I don't want to miss anything...or anyone. *(PHILLIP starts to protest.)* It's for your own good, whether you believe it or not. *(To CALVIN.)* Don't let him out of your sight until I get back.

CALVIN: Ain't nobody getting past me, either coming or going.

DIANA: *(To PHILLIP.)* His name's Calvin Thurlow. Just don't make any sudden moves; it tends to make him nervous. I'll get back as soon as I can.

She exits out the SL door. PHILLIP falls back into his chair. CALVIN moves to PHILLIP, towering over him.

PHILLIP: *(After a slight pause.)* So...how are you?

Lights. Black out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *It is an hour later. CALVIN is now stretched out on the couch while PHILLIP sits in his chair nearby, taking notes.*

CALVIN: *(Child-like.)* And then...and then there I was, only 8 years old when all the kids in the playground ran away from me. And how they all looked at me like I was some kind of monster. Just 'cause I'm bigger than them, you know?

PHILLIP: *(Understanding.)* Now, now you know children can be very cruel at times.

CALVIN: But I just wanted to play with them, you know, like everybody else. I didn't mean to sit on that seesaw so hard. I just plopped on my end and the next thing I know Charley Frobisher was launched right through the monkey bars.

PHILLIP: Yes, I see but you can't let that nag at you; that was a long time ago. *(He leans forward.)* Remember, I told you about your happy place? Where you go whenever you feel like that?

CALVIN: *(Trying to be helpful.)* Out...out in the woods? And it's summer?

PHILLIP: That's right. Can you see it now?

CALVIN: Yes, yes I can.

PHILLIP: Now doesn't that make you relax and feel better?

CALVIN: *(Leans into PHILLIP.)* Uh huh. Tell me about the rabbits again.

PHILLIP: All the rabbits and deer and other creatures in the forest come up to you.

CALVIN: *(Lays back.)* And they eat right out of my hand?

PHILLIP: Right. They're not afraid of you, are they?

CALVIN: *(Smiling.)* Oh, it's so beautiful.

PHILLIP: So you just remember, that's your happy place and you can go there any time you like.

CALVIN: Well, I DO need to get away. There's a lot of stress in my job, you know.

PHILLIP: I can just imagine. *(He looks around and then leans in to CALVIN.)* Especially on this case you're working on now. Right?

CALVIN: Oh, you said a mouthful. It's always the worst when we're trying to catch a killer.

PHILLIP: *(Eyes widen leans back.)* Uhh...Yes, I guess so.

CALVIN: *(After a slight pause.)* What...what's the matter?

PHILLIP: Hm? Oh, nothing. I was just going to MY happy place.

At that moment, JOANN is backed through the SL door trying to keep DIANA out.

JOANN: No, I have to check with Dr. Axelrod first.

DIANA: He knows I was coming back. I don't see why – *(She sees CALVIN on the couch.)* Officer THURLLOW!

CALVIN: *(Sits up quickly.)* I wasn't doing nothing!

DIANA: Get to your feet, officer! *(She moves to him as he jumps up.)* What is the meaning of this?

PHILLIP: We were just talking –

DIANA: I asked the officer! *(To CALVIN.)* Well?

CALVIN: Uh...see the thing is...I...I was thinking about getting a new couch for my apartment and the doctor here said I could try this one out. So, I was lying down here and –

DIANA: *(Shaking her head.)* Don't even try. *(To PHILLIP.)* What did he tell you?

PHILLIP: *(Rises.)* I told you before – doctor/patient confidentiality.

DIANA: He's not your patient!

PHILLIP: Now, just what do you want from me?

DIANA: I already told you, I need to know about your patients. Like that elderly lady who was here earlier.

PHILLIP: Emma Starling? You CAN'T suspect her of anything.

DIANA: I might surprise you who I suspect.

PHILLIP: Why didn't you question her while she was here?

DIANA: I'm trying to keep this investigation on a low profile. I don't want to scare off anyone who might have valuable information later.

PHILLIP: Well, she's been coming to me for several months and I can tell you for a fact she's no killer. *(He turns away and winces, having just volunteered too much.)*

DIANA: Killer?! *(She turns to CALVIN.)* Officer Thurlow!

CALVIN: I better call Captain Mulroney. *(He starts for the SL door.)* Check in, you know.

DIANA: You do that. And I'll have a few words to say to her about you when I get back to the stationhouse.

CALVIN: *(Weakly.)* I thought you might. *(As he moves to the door he mumbles to himself.)* Happy place, happy place... *(He exits.)*

PHILLIP: Miss Burton?

JOANN: I'm going... *(She moves to the door and grabs the knob.)*
And closing the door behind me.

PHILLIP: Practice that, why don't you?

JOANN: *(To herself.)* Doesn't have to get sarcastic... *(She exits closing the door.)*

DIANA: *(Irritated.)* Now, just so you'll know – *(She pulls out her badge.)* Here is my badge! See? Number seven seventeen. THERE are my credentials. Would you like to also see my driver's license or birth certificate?

PHILLIP: What're you talking about now? I never doubted who you said you were?

DIANA: *(Puts up her badge.)* Yeah? So how come you called my captain?

PHILLIP: What?

DIANA: And complained about how I was bulldozing everybody without even showing my badge. That's what she just told me in her office in no uncertain terms.

PHILLIP: I didn't call your captain! How could I phone anybody with Calvin right here in the room with me from the time you left?

DIANA: You didn't make any phone calls while I was gone?

PHILLIP: No!

At that moment, MOM rushes through the SL door, followed by JOANN.

MOM: Philly, what's all this I just heard about the cops putting you under some kind of investigation?

PHILLIP: Mom?

JOANN: Mrs. Axelrod, I was trying to tell you –

DIANA: Your mother?

MOM: What have you done now? And don't lie to me; I can always tell.

DIANA: Let me in on it when you catch him.

MOM: Who're you?

DIANA: Lieutenant Diana Palmer. Like to see my credentials?

MOM: *(To PHILLIP.)* I just know your father is turning over in his grave right now.

PHILLIP: Dad was cremated.

MOM: *(Eyes looking up.)* The police!

DIANA: *(To PHILLIP.)* I suppose you didn't phone her either, right?

PHILLIP: I DIDN'T!

DIANA: She just made a lucky guess, then?

MOM: Him? No, he didn't call me.

PHILLIP: Well, there's no way you could've... *(He then turns to JOANN.)* Miss Burton?

JOANN: *(Sheepishly.)* It was me.

PHILLIP: YOU called her?! Who told you to do that? I certainly didn't and I'm the one who gives you a paycheck every week!

JOANN: *(Points to MOM.)* So does she.

PHILLIP: WHAT?!

JOANN: I report in to her every week, telling her what you've been doing and like that.

PHILLIP: My own mother? Pays you to spy on me? *(He looks at MOM.)*

MOM: *(After a brief pause.)* Well, you never call.

DIANA: *(To JOANN.)* Then it was YOU who called my captain?

JOANN: Huh? No.

PHILLIP: Miss Burton?

JOANN: I DIDN'T! She doesn't pay me.

PHILLIP: She's the only one in the room who doesn't!

At that moment, TY rushes in.

TY: So, what'd the cops catch you with, Phil? *(He sees DIANA.)* Oh, they're still at it.

PHILLIP: *(Agitated, moves to TY.)* What do YOU want NOW?!

TY: *(Taken aback.)* Hey, man, just asking. Wow, try to show a little sympathy around here and see what it gets you.

PHILLIP: How many times do I have to tell you not to come bursting into my office?

TY: The door was open again.

JOANN: Oh no! *(She slaps her head.)*

PHILLIP: I swear I'm going to nail that thing shut.

JOANN: I'll get it!

Unseen by the others she moves to the door but before she can close it CALVIN enters. He holds a finger to his lips and moves to the couch. She watch him look through the couch curiously.

MOM: So tell me, Philly, what did you DO?

PHILLIP: Mom, I TOLD you I didn't do ANY—thing!

MOM: *(To DIANA.)* So, why are you here?

DIANA: I'm trying to find somebody.

MOM: Who?

PHILLIP: Good luck with that one.

DIANA: I'm not at liberty to say just now.

Unseen by the others, KELLY enters the room. She moves US, pulls out a pad and pen and begins writing during the next few speeches.

MOM: Can you give us a hint?

DIANA: No.

MOM: Has this person been in the newspapers lately?

DIANA: I wouldn't know.

MOM: How about on TV? It's a congressman, right? They're ALWAYS pulling something illegal.

DIANA: I can't say.

MOM: Just give me his initials. Is it a man or woman?

DIANA: What?

PHILLIP: *(Mournfully.)* She loves game shows.

MOM: He's had a few congressmen on that couch, you know.

She points to the couch. DIANA looks over at the couch and sees CALVIN.

TY: What? *(Moves to PHILLIP.)* What congressman have you had on that couch?

PHILLIP: I'm not going to tell her, I'm going to tell YOU?!

DIANA: Officer Thurlow!

CALVIN snaps to attention as she rushes over to him.

CALVIN: Here!

DIANA: I thought you were going to phone Captain Mulroney?

CALVIN: I can't right now. *(He smiles weakly.)* I lost my cell phone.

DIANA: What?

CALVIN: *(Looks through the couch again.)* It must've fallen out when I was lying down here.

JOANN notices KELLY and moves to her.

DIANA: Which you shouldn't have been doing in the first place!

JOANN: *(To KELLY.)* Excuse me, who're you?

KELLY: *(Watching the others.)* Shh! *(She continues writing.)*

MOM: Tell me if it's a senator or a congressman.

PHILLIP: Mom, will you stop? They're trying to catch some killer.

MOM: WHAT?!

DIANA: *(Wheels around to PHILLIP.)* Which you didn't hear from ME!

MOM: *(To DIANA.)* My son is NOT a killer! Heck, he won't even kill a spider. At home, he always makes me do it.

PHILLIP: Mom!

DIANA: You live with your mother?

PHILLIP: She lives with me; when Dad died I moved her in and I don't know why I'm telling you all this.

CALVIN pulls up his phone from a couch cushion.

CALVIN: Ah, here's the little devil. *(He smiles as he waves the phone to DIANA proudly.)*

DIANA: Great, now report in!

CALVIN: Right! *(He presses a few buttons and holds the phone to his ear.)*

PHILLIP: Mom, all the officer is trying to do is ask me a few questions, I'm not a suspect! *(He looks at DIANA.)* Am I?

TY: *(Leans in.)* Yeah, is he?

CALVIN: (*Into his phone.*) Captain? Officer Thurlow. I'm here with Lieutenant Palmer.

DIANA: I can't tell you anything about the case.

MOM: So what questions do you want to ask him?

DIANA: Wha'd I just say?

JOANN: (*To KELLY.*) I asked you a question, who ARE you? (*This draws everyone's attention.*)

KELLY: Me?

DIANA: (*Moves to KELLY.*) Yes, where did you come from?

KELLY: Channel 6 news.

DIANA: What?!

CALVIN: (*Into the phone.*) Well, we're here along with the psychiatrist, his mother, his secretary –

DIANA: You're a reporter?

CALVIN: And some news reporter. I don't know, she just appeared.

KELLY: Kelly Dorset.

DIANA: How'd you hear about this?

KELLY: We got a call into the newsroom.

DIANA: (*Aghast, looks at the others.*) What, is someone phoning everyone in the phone book?!

PHILLIP: I didn't call her either.

DIANA: I didn't say you did!

PHILLIP: Yeah, but you were thinking it.

DIANA: (*To KELLY.*) Who called you?

KELLY: I can't divulge my sources.

DIANA: You won't talk, HE won't talk – (*She eyes PHILLIP.*)

PHILLIP: And you won't talk EITHER, let's not forget.

JOANN: Awfully noisy in here for all you people not talking.

CALVIN: (*Into the phone.*) What? Right away. I'll tell them. (*He presses a button and deposits his phone into a pocket.*)

DIANA: Okay, this has gone on long enough. I want everybody to vacate this room and I mean now!

TY: What?

DIANA: You heard me. I need to question the shrink in private, which is what I came here to do hours ago!

MOM: But I'm his mother!

DIANA: I'm sorry, ma'am, but this is a police investigation so you all need to leave immediately. I do hope you can understand that.

MOM: (*Appreciating this.*) Isn't she nice?

CALVIN: (*Moves to DIANA.*) Uh, Lieutenant?

DIANA: (*At the end of her rope.*) WHAT?!

CALVIN: (*Meekly.*) I just spoke with Captain Mulroney. She said she's coming over..

DIANA: WHAT? She's coming HERE?

CALVIN: Uh huh. (*Looks at the OTHERS.*) And she said that nobody can leave. (*DIANA glowers at him.*) Well? You TOLD me to report in!

Lights Black out.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *It is now an hour later. Captain MULRONEY is sitting in the chair next to the couch, calmly listening to the others standing around the chair who're all speaking at once. CALVIN, who is in front of the couch is the only one not talking.*

PHILLIP: And as I've said over and over I cannot discuss any of my patients. I'm not trying to be obstinate here but I took an oath when I became a psychiatrist and I'm not going to break it.

TY: (*Same time as PHILLIP.*) I don't know why I have to stay here, I'm not the one who's being investigated. I mean, I'm only a friend of his and not a close one at that. I only work in the building so why am I a suspect?

DIANA: (*Same time as PHILLIP.*) Can you people stop talking all at once? We're never going to get anywhere with all this confusion. And Captain Mulroney certainly doesn't have time out of her busy schedule to put up with all this!

KELLY: (*Same time as PHILLIP.*) Don't think just because you've brought in the big guns I'm going to waiver in any way. I won't reveal my sources no matter what forces you bring to bear. I'm a better reporter than that!

MOM: *(Same time as PHILIP.)* Why anyone would suspect my Philly of anything is beyond me, let alone being a criminal. And if anybody knows him it certainly is his own mother. And I'd STILL like to know who you're looking for!

JOANN: *(Same time as PHILLIP.)* None of you should be in here. You have to understand it's part of my job to keep this office running smoothly and that includes keeping order in the place so I can't allow just anybody to come in here unannounced!

CALVIN, who's had enough, puts a whistle to his lips and blows it. This causes the others to shut up.

CALVIN: *(Takes the whistle out.)* There!

MULRONEY: Thank you.

DIANA: As I was TRYING to say, Captain Mulroney doesn't have time for all this!

MULRONEY: Now then. *(She rises.)* Let's TRY to get a few things cleared up, shall we? First things first, though. *(She looks at CALVIN.)* Where'd you get the whistle?

CALVIN: Oh, I referee at my kid's basketball games. Sorry.

MULRONEY: Don't apologize, Officer Thurlow, I'm thinking of reinstating it as part of our standard equipment. Reminds me of the old style traffic cops.

DIANA: I have to apologize a little myself. I didn't mean for you to come down here, Captain. But you can see what I'm up against, can't you? Trying to make some sense out of this crowd.

MULRONEY: Oh, I think I have the gist of everyone's complaints here. *(She moves to JOANN.)* She keeps this office in order and is afraid this all this will be blamed on her.

JOANN: Yeah.

MULRONEY: *(To TY.)* He's in advertising and just happened to be here when all this took place.

TY: That's right.

MULRONEY: You don't believe you could be a suspect?

TY: Hey, I'm an adman; we don't believe in ANY-thing unless they pay us.

MULRONEY: *(To KELLY.)* She's a reporter who received a call about this investigation but refuses to reveal her sources.

KELLY: That's right, and I refuse to reveal...oh, you just said that.

MULRONEY: *(To MOM.)* She's the mother of the psychiatrist who won't hear anything against him, unless it's an occasional phone call from him.

MOM: You can say that again. Wait, did I say that?

MULRONEY: No, but you're his mother and why else would you be here? *(MOM thinks on this. MULRONEY moves then to PHILLIP.)* And you're the psychiatrist who stands behind his oath of doctor/patient confidentiality, right?

PHILLIP: As I've said so many times already.

MULRONEY: *(To DIANA.)* And you're the officer leading the investigation. Tell me, what have you learned so far?

DIANA: Well...not much to speak of. So far I haven't been able to ask a single question.

MULRONEY: So, I guess I'm now caught up. *(She turns to face the others.)* Well, there's one thing I'd like to say to you all. *(She takes a deep breath.)* Someone in this room is a murderer! *(The others, as a group, all gasp. After a medium pause, she almost laughs.)* Naaah! I was just kidding. *(The OTHERS all relax, some stare at her in disbelief.)* I've been wanting to do that since day one. *(She looks at DIANA.)* Been on the force over thirty years and never had the chance. *(Again to the OTHERS.)* Just trying to show you that we're not all brute force around here, handling things in a 'ham-fisted way'.

TY: And to think I called YOU to complain about HER!

DIANA: WHAT? YOU called about ME?!

TY: Tell us it's about some tax fraud case. That's federal and she's local!

DIANA: That was just to clear the room!

PHILLIP: *(To DIANA.)* TOLD you it wasn't me who called.

KELLY: *(Moves to MULRONEY.)* So this is a murder investigation?

MULRONEY: Not THIS investigation, no.

KELLY: Then this has nothing to do with those other psychiatrists who were murdered?

PHILLIP and MOM: WHAT?!

MULRONEY: I didn't say that.

TY: Hey, that's right, I read about those.

PHILLIP: You think you could've mentioned that to me? Or were you too busy phoning up people.

KELLY: *(To MULRONEY.)* So it DOES have to do that those murders?

MULRONEY: I didn't say that either.

PHILLIP: OTHER psychiatrists have been murdered?!

MOM: Oh, Hun, try and keep up.

DIANA: *(To TY.)* Was it YOU who called in that reporter?

TY: What? I never HEARD of her!

KELLY: Well, when I get this scoop you'll hear about me plenty. *(To MULRONEY.)* Can you tell me anything about this investigation?

MULRONEY: Two things. We're talking to every psychiatrist in the city.

KELLY: And?

MULRONEY: *(Pointedly.)* And everything we say here will be off the record. *(She leans in to KELLY.)* And you know what THAT means?

KELLY: *(Slaps her notepad shut.)* Yes, I do.

DIANA: Why didn't I think of that?

MULRONEY: You're still learning, Diana.

DIANA: This isn't my first investigation, you know. Respectfully speaking.

MULRONEY: I know, you're the youngest person to ever make your grade. Now, I need to speak only to my lieutenant and to Doctor Axelrod. Officer Thurlow?

CALVIN starts herding the others to the SL door.

CALVIN: Awright, awright, you all heard the Captain, let's go. Everybody out. Let's go, shows over.

MOM: But I'm his MOTHER!

MULRONEY: I'll call you personally and tell you if we find out anything.

MOM: *(Pointedly, to PHILLIP.)* Sure, SHE calls me.

KELLY: Great, you get in the loop if you're a member of the family but the working press? Forget it.

CALVIN: You heard the Captain. Out, let's go.

TY, KELLY and MOM exit out the SL door.

PHILLIP: Miss Burton, you might as well go to lunch now.

JOANN: Yes sir. *(She exits, closing the door behind her.)*

CALVIN moves next to MULRONEY.

DIANA: Again, I am SO sorry you had to get dragged into this.

MULRONEY: Now, what seems to be the problem with you two?

DIANA: Us?

PHILLIP: She doesn't seem to understand my position as regards my patients.

DIANA: No, he doesn't seem to understand I'm doing all this for HIS benefit!

PHILLIP: You keep saying that but you won't tell me anything!

DIANA: And neither will you!

PHILLIP: So you can have reasons for keeping quiet but I can't?

DIANA: I have my regs to follow!

PHILLIP: So do I!

DIANA and PHILLIP both fold their arms and turn away from each other. MULRONEY nods to CALVIN.

MULRONEY: *(Quietly, to CALVIN.)* Part of my job is public relations.

CALVIN: Huh?

MULRONEY: I'll show you what I mean. *(She moves to DIANA.)*

Diana, you can't just barge in here and demand their cooperation, you know.

PHILLIP: That's right.

MULRONEY: You can give the whole force a black eye that way.

DIANA: What? I was just trying to—

MULRONEY: *(Interrupting her.)* And I won't stand for any bullying on my watch.

PHILLIP: *(Softening.)* Well, she wasn't really bullying me.

MULRONEY: *(To PHILLIP.)* And you! Here you're just being stupid!

PHILLIP: Stupid?! ME?

DIANA: *(Also softening.)* Captain, I wouldn't exactly call him stupid. I mean respectfully speaking.

MULRONEY: What would you call him then?

DIANA: He's just trying to look out for his patients.

PHILLIP: *(Now beside DIANA.)* That's right. Thank you. *(To MULRONEY.)* And she really hasn't been all THAT forceful; just trying to ask a few questions is all.

MULRONEY: So you won't be filing any complaints against her?

PHILLIP: Complaints? Certainly not! Never entered my mind.

MULRONEY: *(To DIANA.)* And you think he's in his rights then?

DIANA: Of course; I never said otherwise!

MULRONEY: Then I can depend on you two to work together from now on?

PHILLIP: Right.

DIANA: Of course.

MULRONEY: Well, I guess my work here is done. Officer Thurlow?

CALVIN: What?

MULRONEY: Let us depart the premises.

CALVIN: Whatever you say, Captain.

He opens the SL door and MULRONEY exits. He follows after her, closing the door. DIANA thinks and then looks at PHILLIP.

DIANA: What just happened here?

PHILLIP: *(Also thinking.)* Not sure. But I think it was psychological.

DIANA: I was going to say that.

PHILLIP: *(Smiles at her.)* You were?

DIANA: *(Also smiles.)* I think this place is starting to rub off on me.

PHILLIP: Notice the improvement?

DIANA: What say we just start over?

PHILLIP: That's what I would call a sound idea.

DIANA: Well, you would know. *(She starts to exit then turns.)* Tell you what? How about I buy you lunch. You know, just to help cement relations.

PHILLIP: Oh, that's very kind of you but unfortunately I have a lunch date. *(Winces.)* Which I think I'm already late for.

DIANA: Understood. We'll take this up later. *(She opens the door.)*

PHILLIP: I look forward to it. (*DIANA looks at him, smiles and then exits, closing the door. PHILLIP pulls out his cell phone.*) I just hope she hasn't been waiting too long. (*He presses a few buttons and places the phone to his ear.*) She's already on the war path about me always running late and – (*Into the phone, in a syrupy voice*) – Hi, Hun! Listen, I got held up and...no, no, really it's not an excuse! Well, if you'll just let me explain. You would NOT believe the day I've been having here. No, no, nothing to do with one of my patients. Well, it might be though. Listen, it's a long story; why don't you just let me explain when I get there.

There is a knock at the SL door.

What now? (*He moves to the door.*) Just a second, Hun.

He opens the door and GLENDA enters.

GLENDA: Doctor Axelrod?

PHILLIP: You can't be my next appointment; this is my lunch hour.

GLENDA: No, I didn't have an appointment, I just need to talk to you.

PHILLIP: I understand but now is simply not a good time. (*He moves DS and speaks into the phone.*) Hun, I'm leaving right now.

GLENDA: But this is important!

PHILLIP: I TOLD you I can't. (*Into the phone.*) I'm on my way.

GLENDA pulls out a pistol.

GLENDA: Doctor Axelrod?

PHILLIP: (*Turns to her.*) WHAT? (*His eyes widen as he sees the pistol.*) What're you...what're you doing?!

GLENDA: As I said I really need to speak to you. And I mean now.

PHILLIP: (*Weakly.*) So I see. (*Into the phone.*) Hun – (*GLENDA holds the pistol higher as if threatening.*) - I may be a little later than I thought. (*He replaces the phone into his jacket and looks at GLENDA.*)

GLENDA: (*Moves closer to him.*) Oh, this shouldn't take too long.

PHILLIP: No, no, take all the time you need.

He slowly backs up toward his desk with GLENDA moving toward him. Lights. Black out.

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