

RED SCARE ON SUNSET

Mary, Frank (1 woman, 1 man)

1950's Hollywood, wholesome film star, Mary Dale, has found her brooding husband, actor Frank Taggart, stumbling home drunk.

Act I
Scene 3

MARY

Really Frank, how many times must you wake up the servants and force them to handle you in this drunken state?

FRANK

Lay off, will ya. I only had a few beers. I'm not that tight. Don't make me feel like I'm being watched by the FBI. Go back to bed, Mary.

MARY

Well, since you're as sober as a judge, perhaps it's a good time to show you this. (*She takes out the passport.*)

FRANK

What is it?

MARY

A passport belonging to one Moishe Nisowitz.

FRANK

(*Frank explodes and shakes her furiously by the shoulders.*) Where did you find that? Give that back to me! (*About to strike her, then catches himself in horror.*) Good God.

MARY

You wanted to strike me.

FRANK

I wouldn't have. I couldn't.

MARY

(*With great dramatic intensity*)

Frank. I'll believe anything you tell me. But please give me some explanation of what this means and why my discovery of it would cause you to nearly harm me. (*She hands him the passport.*)

FRANK

What can I say? I'm a louse. This passport does belong to me. I am Moishe Nisowitz and it's true I was born in the Soviet Union.

MARY

Then everything you told me is a lie.

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FRANK

I was afraid if you knew the truth you wouldn't marry me. My parents escaped to this country when I was two years old. We settled on the lower east side of New York. I loved this country and I always felt I belonged more to it than to my parents. So when they both died, I gave myself a new American name and a new past.

MARY

(Rushing into his arms)

Darling, I love you so. Despite everything. But please, let's not have any more secrets. You do love me, don't you? That isn't a lie, is it?

FRANK

Of course not. I love you so very much.

MARY

Because you know, if I ever found out you didn't love me, I think I'd kill myself.

FRANK

Mary, don't say such a thing.

MARY

I would, I would kill myself. When I love, I love completely. It's my life. It's who I am. Hold me darling. Hold me tighter. I like it like this. How did your meeting go with your agent?

FRANK

Not bad. He wants to lean me more towards comedy. But it's a tough sell. The studio doesn't think I'm funny. I hate comedy. How was your tea party with Pat and Marta? Did they come to blows?

MARY

They seemed to hit it off fine. But I don't know, there's something about Marta that bothers me. I don't know what it is. I'm tired. Let's get to bed.

FRANK

What's wrong with Marta? She's certainly been a friend to you.

MARY

She gave us lovely bar equipment although considering your proclivities, I would have preferred a blender for milk shakes. No, I wouldn't call her a great pal. Coming to bed?

FRANK

Shortly. I just don't see where you come off criticizing a woman who's done nothing more than want to befriend you.

MARY

I simply said there was something about her that bothers me.

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FRANK

It's just that in this town everyone passes quick judgments on people. This guy isn't funny, this woman should be shunned.

MARY

I didn't say Marta should be shunned. But truth to be told, I find her humorless. And that certainly shows in her comedy playing.

FRANK

I know she can't compete with the glittering wit of a Pat Pilford.

MARY

Pat Pilford is a comedy legend and my best friend. I had no idea you were so devoted to Marta Towers.

FRANK

(with mounting anger)

I don't like your tone, Mary. But it's my opinion that Marta Towers is one of the finest dramatic actresses gracing this artistic wasteland we call motion pictures.

MARY

The studio only signed La Divine because she was sleeping with the head of publicity.

FRANK

(shouting)

Did Pat tell you smutty gossip?

MARY

Frank, listen to us, we're nearly arguing. Now, please, let's end this conversation and go to bed. After all, tomorrow is a rather important day.

FRANK

Tomorrow?

MARY

January seventeenth. The anniversary of the day we first met.

FRANK

Oh yes.

MARY

Now I hope you haven't forgotten we have reservations at Ciro's tomorrow night.

FRANK

Mary, I...

MARY

Frank, you haven't...

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FRANK

I know it's awful but Marta said tomorrow night she could get me into her method acting class at the Yetta Felson Studio. They're very fussy about who they let in to observe. It's a great opportunity for me, Mary.

MARY
(quietly)

I see. Of course. I am disappointed but I know how much this means to you.

FRANK

You're a great girl, Mary.

MARY

Couldn't I come with you? Surely they'd let me observe too.

FRANK

I don't think so.

MARY

But why not? I could hardly be called an amateur. I've made twelve pictures in three years.

FRANK

That's not the point, Mary.

MARY

What is the point, Frank? I'm not good enough. Do they look down their noses at your little wife who last year had two films on Variety's list of top moneymakers? Should I be ashamed of that?

FRANK

Mary, don't get worked up. It's just that they do a different kind of acting.

MARY

My kind of acting comes from the heart. My high school dramatics coach, Miss Helen Phipps, said I acted with the simple pure belief of a child. I'll compete any day with those pretentious intellectuals with their grunting and sweating.

FRANK

Mary, you sound foolish. Great acting is uncovering depths of emotion that dare to be ugly, even repulsive. It's the exposure of the self in all of its raw truth.

MARY

Can I help it if I'm pretty and have a flair for fashion. I'm terribly serious about my acting. I know everything about Lady Godiva, what she thinks, feels, wears. I swear if I was konked over the head this minute, her life would pass before my eyes.

FRANK

Mary, just face it. You're a movie star, not an actress. You wouldn't know Chekhov from Chill Wills.

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MARY

Well, that does it! That does it! (*She runs into the bedroom.*)

FRANK

Mary, forgive me. It was a terrible thing to say.

MARY

(*Enters carrying his pillow and blanket.*) Tonight Frank Taggart or Moishe Nisowitz, whoever you may be, you sleep on the sofa. As of this moment, our twin beds are off limits.

FRANK

You don't have to worry. (*He grabs his coat.*) And another thing, if you've read your history books, your precious Godiva was nothing but a two bit whore. I'll amend that. All women are whores.

MARY

Buster, Godiva was a lady and so am I. Now get out!

FRANK

With pleasure.

Frank exits leaving Mary alone, forlorn and confused.

BLACKOUT