

## RED SCARE ON SUNSET

Mary, Frank (1 man, 1 woman)

1950's Hollywood. Brooding film star, Frank Taggart, is being blackmailed by the Communist party into murdering his wife, beloved wholesome movie star, Mary Dale. She know too much about their secret activities. Mary and Frank had an enormous fight. She suspects he's been having an affair with Marta Towers, a suspected communist. Now Mary comes home from doing a radio show and finds Frank.

### Act II Scene 4

*The beach house. A short time later.*

*FRANK is waiting for her. HE's reading a book. A small gift box is on the coffee table next to him.*

*MARY enters SR door, holding her purse.*

MARY

Frank, you're home.

FRANK

*(Puts the book on the coffee table open.)*

I've been here for hours, waiting, hoping you'd come back soon.

MARY

*(Puts her purse down on the SR level)*

You look tired.

FRANK

Please take me back, Mary. I'm so miserable. How could I have been such a fool to think what they had to offer was real. It was all an illusion.

MARY

Marta Towers is hardly an illusion.

FRANK

I hate her. I wish she were dead. Believe me, Mary, I was never unfaithful. I couldn't go through with it I love you so.

MARY

*(Very confused)*

Frank:, I'd like to believe that *(Giving in.)* Oh darling, come here. *(THEY embrace.)* How can two people who love each other as we do be so silly.

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FRANK

Is it possible for you to forgive me? They don't come lower than me.

MARY

(Emotionally)

Of course I forgive you. You're my husband. I made a vow.

FRANK

(Passionately)

It's this town. Come away with me, Mary. New York, London, anywhere.

MARY

I will darling. Anywhere. My poor lost boy.

FRANK

It's going to be different. I'm going to change. I will. Starting tonight.

MARY

Tonight?

FRANK

Do you smell something cooking?

MARY

Yes.

FRANK

It's called dinner. And I'm cooking it myself. I gave Selina and all the servants the night off. Wanted you all to myself. I have so much to make up to you.

MARY

(Playfully)

You were awfully confident that I'd forgive you.

FRANK

I wasn't confident. I got on my knees and prayed.

MARY

Did you, Frank? And to what God?

FRANK

Your Lord, Mary. Now, madame, if you'll excuse me, I must return to the kitchen to check up on my sauce reductions. *(HE clicks his heels like a butler.)*

MARY

(Laughing)

Oh my. Taggart, you may go.

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FRANK

Yes, mum. (*HE exits SL door.*)

MARY

(*Lighting up a cigarette.*) They may all be communists but not my husband. Not my Frank.  
(*Calling to the kitchen.*) Will we be eating soon, darling?

FRANK

I can't hear you, dear.

MARY

(*Calling offstage*)

How soon will we be eating? Do I have time to call my aunt in Indiana?

FRANK

(*Offstage*)

Darling, I'm sorry I can't understand you. I'll be right out.

MARY

(*Laughs, sits in the chair SR and picks up phone on the SR level to dial.*) Hello ... Hello ... That's odd.

FRANK

(*Enters SL door*)

Darling, what is it you asked me?

MARY

The telephone's dead. I can't even get an operator.

FRANK

Give it to me. (*HE takes the phone.*) You're right. Dead as my last picture. I'll go next door and report it on the Stewart's line.

MARY

No, no, no. You're busy cooking. I suppose for ten hours we could do without the blasted telephone. It'll be a pleasure.

FRANK

You're so pretty. (*HE kisses her forehead. Exits SL door.*)

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MARY

This coffee table is a mess. *(SHE crosses to coffee table and picks up book.)* "Cousin Bette" by Balzac. Oh my. *(SHE opens it where Frank left the marker.)* Shame on him. Scribbling in the margin."... poisoned by a prick of a needle in the clasp of her necklace." How ghastly. *(SHE closes book and puts it down on the coffee table.)* Give me Fanny Hearst any day. *(SHE picks up jewelry box from coffee table.)* What's this? *(SHE opens box.)* Oh,. how lovely. *(SHE takes necklace out of box, crosses right and holds necklace up. Her face is away from the audience. SOUND cue. SHE turns towards the audience, her face a mask of sudden fear and terror.)*

FRANK

*(Enters SL door.)* Oh, you found it. I wanted to surprise you with it after dinner. They're exquisite, aren't they?

MARY

*(Trying to compose herself)*

Yes.

FRANK

They'll be even more perfect once they're around your neck. *(HE tries to stroke her neck, SHE moves away.)* You pulled away.

MARY

Did I?

FRANK

I think we should put these on you now. Get a special preview.

MARY

No, I don't think so.

FRANK

Why don't you want to put them on, Mary? Pearls are your favorite.

MARY

Is there a reason why I shouldn't put them on?

FRANK

None in the world. They were specially designed for you.

MARY

That's what I thought.

FRANK

I can put them on for you. It's a simple clasp. *(HE moves closer to her.)* Why are you moving away, Mary?

MARY

Darling I really don't want to put them on. Please dear. Put them down.

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FRANK

(With a quiet urgency)

I can't MARY. I have to do this. I don't want to. They've made me. They're bigger than we are. We can't fight 'em. This is the way it has to end. Please, darling, don't fight me.

MARY

Darling, there must be another way. You love me. You must have loved me once. Please, Frank, it's me, Mary. Frank! Don't. Don't.

*(FRANK grabs her. SHE tries to fight him off SHE bites his hand but he continues to try to put the necklace around her neck. In their struggle, HE drops the necklace and finally grabs her around the throat and starts to strangle her. When she appears to be on the brink of death, FRANK suddenly wakes up and realizes he's about to murder his beloved wife. HE breaks away in horror.)*

FRANK

What am I doing? What have I become?

*(He runs out of the house, leaving her gasping for breath.)*