

Susan 1

Scene 2

Time: Saturday, late afternoon. At rise: The stage is completely dark. The apartment is being used as a darkroom. The blackout curtains cover both windows. Both doors are closed. We can see nothing. We only hear Sam's voice as he works at his bench and Susan's voice across the room. After a few seconds —

Start SUSAN. Hear about the murder?

SAM. Quiet. *(The light in the photo enlarger comes on for exactly two seconds, during which we see Sam at his workbench, developing a photo, and Susan at the foot of the steps, near the blackout curtains. The light goes off again.)* You were saying?

SUSAN. The police found a body this morning. Just down the block.

SAM. Where'd you hear this?

SUSAN. It was on the radio.

SAM. You're making this up.

SUSAN. Why would I make up a dead body? *(The workbench lamp comes on. We might now notice that most of Sam's camera equipment is packed at the foot of the steps, ready to go.)*

SAM. It's a ploy to keep me from walking out on you. You can open 'em up now. *(Susan pulls open the blackout curtains. It's gray and rainy outside.)*

SUSAN. You'd walk out on a helpless little blind girl?

SAM. You bet.

SUSAN. What if I turn out to be the killer?

SAM. If you can kill someone and hide the body all by yourself, you're not so helpless.

SUSAN. You're just saying that to make me feel good. Women are easier to kill than men.

SAM. Not in my limited experience. *Was* it a woman?

SUSAN. That's what they said.

SAM. Where'd they find her? *(Sam crosses to the closet and opens the door. We might expect to see Lisa hanging there, but when the door opens we are grateful to see she is not.)*

SUSAN. At the end of the street in that vacant lot. (*Sam gets a tripod out of the closet and shuts the door.*)

SAM. They sure it wasn't an accident?

SUSAN. She was strangled.

SAM. (*Considers for a moment.*) ... I could stay.

SUSAN. You're going to tell that nice old man with his Purple Heart son you're not coming? The police have probably made an arrest by now.

SAM. Do you want me to stay?

SUSAN. ... No. (*Sam decides to test her.*)

SAM. What's the phone number for the police?

SUSAN. Dial the operator and yell: "I'm blind, get me the police!"

SAM. Operators get busy.

SUSAN. Police get busy too.

SAM. I'm serious. What's the number? (*Susan plucks a pencil from a coffee can on the workbench and air-writes rapidly.*)

SUSAN. Sixth Precinct: WA-4234. Hospital: WA4-1477. Fire Department: WA3-9091. Chinese laundry —

SAM. Okay, you don't have to kill the ball. (*Puts money on top of the safe.*) I'm leaving five singles on top of the safe for Gloria.

SUSAN. Gloria's not getting near this place today.

SAM. Who's going to pick up the groceries?

SUSAN. Not Gloria.

SAM. Come on, she's a nice kid.

SUSAN. She's a bitch.

SAM. (*Laughs.*) I think you're just jealous. (*Susan suddenly, angrily throws the pencil at Sam. It misses him and lands on the floor. His manner cools.*) Pick it up. You could hear where it fell. (*Beat. Susan fumes and gets down onto the floor and feels around for the pencil.*) Think. Did it hit wood or linoleum?

SUSAN. It hit the *floor*. Am I anywhere near? Give me a hint at least.

SAM. What if I weren't here?

SUSAN. If you weren't here, I wouldn't have thrown it at you!

SAM. Okay. If you can't do it, you can't do it. (*Sam gives in. He picks up the pencil.*) Catch. (*Sam tosses it to her. Susan barely catches it, but she does. Sam lights a cigarette.*) What's your real beef with Gloria? You say you don't like being alone all the time.

SUSAN. So get me a dog.

SAM. A dog can't do your shopping.

SUSAN. Dogs can't rearrange the furniture either.

SAM. What the hell's that mean?

SUSAN. She moves things when I'm not here. Then I come back and I bang into chairs, trip over rugs —

SAM. She doesn't do that.

SUSAN. How would *you* know?

SAM. Look, things are a mess up there right now. Her mother's a dipso, her father walked out on them. And she just got glasses.

SUSAN. Glasses. Such a burden.

SAM. Yeah, well, you're not supposed to know. It's not like you have to be chatty with her. The two of you can defrost the icebox while I'm gone. All you do is pull the plug and put a pan under it.

SUSAN. You spoil me.

SAM. And after, if it stops raining you can walk to my studio and back, but no asking for help.

SUSAN. I never ask for help.

SAM. You asked that old lady on Sixth Avenue last night.

SUSAN. *She asked me!* Why do I have to be the world's champion blind woman? *(She plops the pencil into the empty coffee can on the workbench. Sam stubs his cigarette out in the ashtray on the kitchen counter.)*

SAM. The world's a dangerous place. I'm holding out my hand for you. *(Susan doesn't budge. Then she slowly crosses to Sam and feels for his hand. Sam raises it but keeps moving it around so she can't find it. Finally she grabs it and laughs. They kiss, embrace.)*

SUSAN. Don't ever walk out on me.

SAM. Why would I do that?

SUSAN. Because you're done playing "I Married a Blind Girl"...?

SAM. *(Beat, then he breaks away from her.)* I'm going to be late. *(Sam grabs up his photography things and his raincoat and goes up the steps.)*

SUSAN. Sam? *(Sam stops at the hall door, looking like he's about to lose his temper.)* Where does the icebox plug into the wall?

SAM. *(Softens.)* Feel around, you'll find it.

SUSAN. And if I don't? **Stop**

SAM. Call Gloria. *(Sam opens the door, exits, and closes it behind him. We hear the street door open and close, and see him walk past the windows outside. Susan sighs — a lonely, uneventful day ahead of her. She exits into the bedroom and reenters carrying an armful of laundry. While she is in the bedroom, the ashtray on top of the safe begins to smoke. Susan stops and sniffs around, trying to locate the direction of the smoke.)*

SUSAN. *(Calling.)* Sam? ... Gloria? SAM?! *(Susan panics and runs*