

*Because it is like that
I love my love with a b
Because I am beside that
A king.'*

ALICE. And I think Bernadette wants one too...

*She presses her forehead against GERTRUDE's as
BERNADETTE opens the door.*

BERNADETTE. Hello.

MARY. Hello, I – I'm looking for a Miss Toklas.

GERTRUDE. Miss Toklas is preoccupied with poetry.

ALICE. Nonsense. Don't listen to her. She is a bored old woman.

MARY. I'm very early, I'm afraid –

GERTRUDE. I am not old for I am young.

ALICE. Let her in, Bernadette!

*BERNADETTE lets the woman in. She is an American in
her thirties. Beautiful and petite. The women stare at each
other for a moment.*

MARY. Mary? (*Beat.*) I'm Mary –

Beat.

ALICE. Oh, dear, we weren't expecting you until tomorrow!

MARY. There's been a development. I must take an earlier train. You must be Miss Stein...

GERTRUDE. Of the Gertrudes, yes.

ALICE. Would you like to sit? A drink? Surely you must be thirsty!

GERTRUDE. Scotch works well on Alpine evenings.

MARY. I shouldn't.

ALICE. Then, perhaps your coat –

MARY. Excuse me. (*To BERNADETTE.*) Would you please...?
(*To ALICE.*) I think perhaps we should be alone, Ms Toklas.

ALICE. Yes, of course. Bernadette, could you –

GERTRUDE. What? Could she what? Could she leave?

MARY. Yes.

ALICE. We should have privacy.

GERTRUDE. There is no privacy in a house of writers.

MARY. I'm sorry if I've offended you –

GERTRUDE. I am not easily offended. Unless of course you are Lily Ann Hellman. Then – *then* the very sight of you would offend me. You haven't offended me, Mary. You've merely made an error.

ALICE. Gert.

GERTRUDE. Bernadette has served me coffee. And tea. And Scotch. And wine. She's brought me paper and ink. And she has made my bed and fluffed my pillows. Once, she held me while I cried because I was blocked and couldn't write and when a writer cannot write she dies ten thousand deaths. And if she can serve me coffee and tea and Scotch and wine and bring me paper and ink and make my bed and fluff my pillows and hold me while I die ten thousand deaths and do all that while knowing there is Jew in my blood, she can stay for this conversation.

Beat.

MARY. I'm sure Ethel has told you, but –

GERTRUDE. Yes –

MARY. – each mission requires one hundred and fifty francs. Fifty for the passport, fifty for the guard to look the other way, and another fifty for the boat. It may seem steep, but –

ALICE. We understand.

GERTRUDE. And how will you get the passports across the

border?

ALICE. And the money, too –

MARY. It will be sewn into the lining of my hat.

ALICE. Who will we be helping?

MARY. There are many who are waiting.

ALICE. Children?

MARY. Yes.

GERTRUDE. Women?

MARY. Yes.

Beat.

GERTRUDE. Three. We can help three –

ALICE. Make sure one is a child.

GERTRUDE. And one is a woman.

MARY. And the third?

ALICE. Kind.

GERTRUDE. Smart.

ALICE and GERTRUDE. Both.

MARY. I promise you it will only be used for good.

Beat.

GERTRUDE. Wait here.

GERTRUDE *exits*.

ALICE. Will you be safe?

MARY. Yes.

ALICE. And where will you stay until the train leaves?

MARY. I will wait at the station for Ethel. She'll arrive after sunrise. The train departs at nine-thirty –

ALICE. You'll stay there all night?

MARY. Yes.

ALICE. But won't that seem suspicious?

MARY. I'll just miss the last train. I'll be stranded. Forced to stay. No one will bother the helpless American.

ALICE. Why not stay here? Leave when you must, but at least stay the night.

MARY. Thank you, but I can't.

ALICE. You need to rest! You can't possibly sleep in the station.

MARY. I've done it before.

ALICE. How?

MARY. With one eye open.

ALICE. But an American in Europe during wartime, Miss...

MARY. Last names aren't important.

ALICE. Surely, they must be suspicious of you.

MARY. Americans are safer.

ALICE. For now, perhaps.

MARY. There are always questions, Miss Toklas. But this isn't my debut. There's been at least a hundred missions already.

ALICE. Incredible!

MARY. Oh, it's certainly gotten a bit more dangerous since I first began. I've been back in America for quite some time, though. When we left, my husband and I, we had to board our daughter with a governess. In Vienna. We couldn't take her with us.

ALICE. How ever did you stand it?

MARY. Without sleeping. I returned to bring her home with me a few days ago, but they asked to assist on a, uh... Well, they

ALICE. I'm sorry, Miss Buttinger, I do not use that word very often, but *fuck*!

GERTRUDE. What is it?

ALICE. I still haven't changed! I was going to change my clothes!

GERTRUDE. Why?

ALICE. The way Lillian will look at me.

GERTRUDE. Lily Ann can piss up a rope. Ice! (*Exits.*)

ALICE. Excuse me, Ms Buttinger. Bernadette will keep you company.

MARY. But –

ALICE. I'll only be a moment. (*Exits.*)

Beat.

MARY. Who is Lily Ann?

BERNADETTE. Lillian Hellman.

MARY. Lillian Hellman as in... Lillian Hellman?

BERNADETTE. Yes.

MARY. The playwright?

BERNADETTE. Yes.

MARY. Well.

BERNADETTE. Yes.

MARY. Does this happen very often?

BERNADETTE. Yes.

MARY. It must be very exciting. All those writers –

BERNADETTE. Maybe for some.

MARY. What brought you to this house?

BERNADETTE. I worked in a café. And I served them wine.

MARY. Who?

BERNADETTE. Miss Stein and Miss Toklas.

MARY. You served them wine.

BERNADETTE. Yes.

MARY. And now you're their housekeeper.

BERNADETTE. More than that.

MARY. You're not telling me everything.

BERNADETTE. The wine was everything.

MARY. It must have been very good wine.

BERNADETTE. They have been kind to me. When I needed kindness most, they were kind to me. Isn't that enough of a reason?

MARY. But it's a little odd, don't you think? The sheepish little country girl comes to work for the radical lesbians? There's a story there.

BERNADETTE. Perhaps you are a writer too, Miss Buttinger...

MARY. You can call me Mary.

GERTRUDE *re-enters, deep in thought, holding a tong and an ice cube.*

GERTRUDE. Have you ever thought about how ice can only melt because it is already frozen and the opposite of freezing is melting but perhaps it is also thawing and if the ice can only melt that is a sad existence because always melting must be lonely –

MARY. Miss Stein, I think I will stay the night, after all.

GERTRUDE. Well, then! Melt away. (*Drops the ice cube into the glass.*)

MARY. If you really don't mind –

GERTRUDE. Of course not! But I'm afraid that means, my

LILLIAN. Agatha likes to crawl.

GERTRUDE. I would've thought it was the reverse!

LILLIAN. Despite your modest surroundings, Gertrude, do tell me. Where are you hiding the Scotch?

ALICE. Bernadette will get that for you.

GERTRUDE. No ice! (*Sits in the armchair.*)

LILLIAN *pats the couch, inviting MARY to join her.*
DOROTHY *sits on the other side, sandwiching MARY between them.*

LILLIAN. And what exactly is an American psychiatrist doing in the French Alps in the middle of a war?

MARY. I am visiting family.

LILLIAN. Good to have family in Europe during a war. Don't you think?

GERTRUDE. Dorothy. Dot. Dottie.

DOROTHY. Dorothy will do.

GERTRUDE. I like Dot.

DOROTHY. It doesn't really matter what you like. My name is Dorothy.

Beat.

GERTRUDE. I'm afraid I've never heard of you. What do you write, Dot?

DOROTHY. Everything.

GERTRUDE. Be specific.

DOROTHY. Poetry. Stories, too.

LILLIAN. And criticism.

DOROTHY. That's the easy bit.

GERTRUDE. What sort of criticism?

DOROTHY. Whatever sort I feel like. Theatre. Cinema. Books. *Tuesdays.* You know –

GERTRUDE. Criticism seems such a waste of words. What do you write well, Dot?

DOROTHY. Everything.

LILLIAN. I do believe Gert has finally met her match.

GERTRUDE. In what?

LILLIAN. Arrogance.

DOROTHY. I prefer to call it 'confidence'.

GERTRUDE. Did you come to pick a fight, Lily Ann?

LILLIAN. I'm only having a little fun!

GERTRUDE. Fun!

LILLIAN. Only a little fun, Gert. Now, tell me. Has your maid gone to Scotland for the Scotch? (*An evil giggle.*) Is she distilling it herself?

GERTRUDE. I do not engage with terrorists.

DOROTHY. Lillian speaks very highly of you, Gertrude

GERTRUDE. Does she?

DOROTHY. Yes.

GERTRUDE. I do not care for liars or lying.

LILLIAN. I've said it before, Gert. You're very talented. Ferocious, but –

GERTRUDE. Ferocious? I?

ALICE. Gertie, please.

GERTRUDE. I, ferocious?

LILLIAN. Yes, but some of your work is quite moving –

GERTRUDE. Some?

LILLIAN. Yes.

DOROTHY. She can't possibly like all of your –

GERTRUDE. Can't she? Is it physically impossible to appreciate an author's entire canon?

DOROTHY. Name one. Name an author whose every word you hang on.

GERTRUDE. Ernest Hemingway.

LILLIAN *blows a raspberry*.

ALICE. Oh, dear.

GERTRUDE. What? What, Lillian?

LILLIAN. The man is a hack.

GERTRUDE. Don't you dare –

LILLIAN. Every single word just reeks of booze. Can't you smell it when you open the pages? And all that *anger*. (*Beat.* To MARY.) Have you ever had a glass thrown at you by Ernest Hemingway?

MARY. No –

GERTRUDE. If she had, she would've deserved it.

BERNADETTE *enters with the glass of Scotch for*

LILLIAN.

LILLIAN (*reaching for the drink*). Finally!

GERTRUDE. No!

GERTRUDE *knocks it from BERNADETTE's hand and into LILLIAN's lap*.

LILLIAN. Christ, Gert!

GERTRUDE. Lily Ann Hellman will not drink my Scotch tonight.

LILLIAN. My dress!

GERTRUDE. Your dress, your dress, who cares about your dress?

LILLIAN. I care about my dress, thank you very much! Christ!

ALICE. Why did you have to do that, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE. Stay out of it!

ALICE. Bernadette, please get Miss Hellman another drink.

LILLIAN. And a towel!

GERTRUDE. No!

BERNADETTE *heads for the kitchen*.

LILLIAN. Oh, this will stain! Christ, Gert!

GERTRUDE. Buy another! No Scotch for the bitch, Bernadette.

BERNADETTE *stops*.

ALICE. Gertrude, please!

GERTRUDE. Please what?

ALICE. Don't!

GERTRUDE. Don't what?

ALICE. This is no time for games. Bernadette, a towel, please.

BERNADETTE *begins to exit*.

GERTRUDE. Absolutely not. Let it air-dry!

BERNADETTE *stops again*.

ALICE. Please, Bernadette. Miss Stein is having a tantrum.

GERTRUDE. She isn't drinking my Scotch!

LILLIAN. Christ! I don't want the goddam Scotch. Just a fucking towel, *s'il vous plaît*. (*Beat.*) Now, Bernadette? Please!

BERNADETTE *scurries off*.

GERTRUDE. Don't yell at my maid like that! And stop saying 'Christ'. You're a Jew! You're not fooling anyone.

LILLIAN. Oh, Gertie, shut up. You're drunk.

it will get worse. *(Rises.)* I think I should be going.

GERTRUDE. No! Do not let Lily Ann Hellman run you out of this house! *(Turning to LILLIAN.)* You're a hack. Do you know that, Lily? You are a –

LILLIAN. And what are you? *(Rises.)* You string a bunch of words together –

GERTRUDE. I pour out my heart! You spew out your bile.

LILLIAN. I need to use the powder room. *(Starts to exit.)*

ALICE. Oh, it's down to the left –

GERTRUDE. You're going to run away?

LILLIAN. I'm not running away, Gertrude, I'm going to powder my nose.

GERTRUDE. For who? For me? You're not my type!

GERTRUDE *stalks her off stage and we hear a door slam.*

ALICE. Gertrude! *(To the others.)* Excuse me. *(Exiting.)*
Gertrude, just give her a moment!

GERTRUDE *(off)*. Don't pay any attention to her!

ALICE *(off)*. You're being absurd!

AGATHA. Oh, dear...

GERTRUDE *(off)*. She'll come out eventually!

DOROTHY. That would be a good thing for them to cut on my tombstone...

ALICE *(off)*. You know, she's sensitive!

GERTRUDE *(off)*. Sensitive? Lily Ann Hellman is about as sensitive as a *porcupine*!

We hear a door slam.

MARY. Do you think they'll come back?

AGATHA. Of course.

MARY. Even Miss Hellman?

AGATHA. Once you stop paying attention to her, she always comes back for more. *(Beat.)* What exactly is a psychiatrist doing *here*?

MARY. Oh. I...

BERNADETTE. Miss Stein and Miss Buttinger have been pen pals for quite some time.

MARY. Yes... I thought it would be nice to pay her a visit.

AGATHA. And what about your husband? Where is he?

MARY. In America. He has a practice of his own.

AGATHA. Does he? Psychiatry?

MARY. Psychology.

AGATHA. I'm afraid I never understood the difference.

MARY. Psychiatry is for the treatment of mental disorders and psychology is the study of them. *(Beat.)* In a nutshell.

AGATHA. I wasn't actually asking. But thank you. I'll try to remember that the next time I meet a psychiatrist. And what about you, Bernadette? Do you have a husband?

BERNADETTE. No.

AGATHA. No children then?

BERNADETTE. No.

AGATHA. They are blessings in disguise. Rosalind certainly was. My daughter. She's nineteen now.

BERNADETTE. I was nineteen once.

AGATHA. Would you like them? Children, I mean?

BERNADETTE. I –

AGATHA. Not everyone does. Maybe when you find yourself a husband. Rosalind is, of course, from my first husband. Archibald. Dreadful man. A scoundrel, really. But I loved

him. And I kept his name, would you believe it? But then again, how does one let a name like Agatha Christie get away? It would be suicide for a writer. Even if Archie *was* a philandering bum from Chudleigh.

MARY. Is that why you disappeared? I read about it, you know –

AGATHA. Even in America?

MARY. It was world news, Miss Christie.

AGATHA. World news! Because a woman needed a little peace and quiet –

MARY. They thought you'd been kidnapped! Or worse –

DOROTHY. Murdered.

AGATHA. Nonsense. I got in the car and I drove. After I'd found out about her, about Archie's little friend, about Nancy Neele, I got into the car and I drove. That's all! I kept on driving until I couldn't keep my eyes open, wandered into a little hotel in a town too small to remember and asked for a room. I didn't think he'd recognised me, even as I signed the registrar as 'Neele' instead of Christie. But once the papers declared me dead or missing or kidnapped, my face was all over Britain. And the nosey little man behind the desk suddenly realised who this Mrs Neele really was.

MARY. Didn't you think to call anyone? To tell them where you were?

AGATHA. Who? My maidservant?

MARY. Anyone!

AGATHA. I was surprised they'd even noticed I'd left, Miss Buttinger.

MARY. Don't you think it's a little unfair?

AGATHA. When your husband leaves you, you'll understand.

MARY. I hope I never do.

AGATHA. I suppose it was a good thing, though. That the man from the hotel recognised my face. If he hadn't, I might *never* have come home. And I might never had met Max. And Max is a wonderful man. My second husband, you see... An archaeologist. I thought that would be exciting but the dirt and the dust, you know, it's hell on your hands and the stains never come out of your trousers. But there's a benefit to it all, I suppose. The older I get, the more he appreciates me! If you marry a man, my dear, marry an archaeologist.

BERNADETTE. Maybe... Some day.

AGATHA. He is, though. Wonderful, I mean. Sometimes I have to remind myself. I thought I'd have another child with Max, but it just hasn't happened. (*Beat.*) Sometimes I think he loves the pyramids more than me!

Laughter.

DOROTHY. I believe we need more refreshments.

AGATHA. Haven't you had enough?

DOROTHY. I am surrounded by giants. Let me drink.

AGATHA. How many?

DOROTHY. I lost count.

AGATHA. Moderation is good for the soul.

DOROTHY. And so is gin. Bernadette, please. (*Beat.*) I do not like my state of mind. I'm bitter, querulous, unkind. But when I drink, the days are easier. Shorter instead of longer. But sometimes it takes a little more than one or two to make me tight. And tonight is one of those nights.

AGATHA. What does Alan think of your drinking?

DOROTHY. Alan? Ha! The man is queer as a billy goat. I found him last week in bed, you know, with a boy. Younger, too. Maybe sixteen. A tiny little thing with hips smaller than mine. But I knew. You see, I knew these things going in. I knew these things when I said 'Yes'. But Alan is – There is a

it looked like –

GERTRUDE. It didn't look like, it was!

ALICE. Like it was coming from her Secret Place. All this blood coming from *inside* of her.

AGATHA. I think I've heard enough.

GERTRUDE. You thought wrong. Go on, Alice.

ALICE. Six men had gang-raped her in a bathroom at Lehrter Bahnhof.

GERTRUDE. The train station.

ALICE. One of them had a steel rod.

GERTRUDE. It was a pipe.

ALICE. And he –

GERTRUDE. – inserted –

ALICE. Yes.

GERTRUDE. – into her.

LILLIAN. I don't need to know any more.

BERNADETTE. But you asked.

ALICE. The steel tore through her cervix. I thought she would bleed out, there was so much blood. But it finally stopped, just as Gertie was getting into a bed.

GERTRUDE. I was going to spend the night there.

ALICE. They made me leave. Because I was only a 'friend'. Or because they knew we were Jews.

GERTRUDE. There was a curtain between the girl's bed and mine. I couldn't see much. Just a sliver. A silhouette. I spoke to her through it.

BERNADETTE. You read me poetry.

Beat.

GERTRUDE. I read you poetry. (*Beat.*) Sometimes I thought she was sleeping and sometimes I thought she was dead but one time I thought she was listening. I was released the next day.

ALICE. Gertrude went back every day for hours.

GERTRUDE. Sometimes five.

ALICE. She read her more poetry. Every single day... Until she... Until Bernadette was released.

GERTRUDE. And then we took her home.

DOROTHY. Who were they? The men?

GERTRUDE. Who else?

ALICE. Nazis. Six of them.

BERNADETTE. It wasn't a pipe, though. That part you got wrong. It was a gun, not a pipe. It was cold. And, you know, I had been quiet for a while. I'd left my body. Or I was trapped inside it. But I left, when they were doing their business, I left. But when he came, the last one, the big one, and he put it – inside – me, the gun... I looked at him. Hard. And I begged him to pull the trigger because I wouldn't have to feel it any more. The bullet would have already been inside me. It wouldn't have had to fight its way through skin and bones. *Schießen Sie mich*, I said. *Shoot me!* But he didn't. He didn't shoot even though I begged him to. Maybe because he knew it would be a *freundlichkeit*... A kindness. And there was none of that in his blood. Or maybe because there was some kindness hidden away somewhere and maybe he was sorry. I think about that sometimes. Why. I think about why he didn't shoot.

AGATHA. He was frightened of his power.

GERTRUDE. Power is a frightening thing.

BERNADETTE. I take three or four baths a day, now. I take them only hot. Scalding. And I avoid the mirror completely. Sometimes I wait till there is steam and the water has

reached a too-hot point and I step inside. My skin sizzles like an egg on a sidewalk in August. I scrub furiously. A little too furiously. A little too tough on the skin, but it's necessary to get truly clean. To get *sterile*, is how I like to put it. It used to be more. Baths, I mean. Sometimes as many as fourteen.

(*Beat.*) But now it's only three. Or four.

MARY. Then there was no café?

ALICE and GERTRUDE. No.

MARY. Or any advertisement.

ALICE and GERTRUDE. No.

LILLIAN. There was pity.

Beat.

ALICE and GERTRUDE. Yes.

LILLIAN. You'll never have children.

BERNADETTE. These are my children. I take care of them.

GERTRUDE. And we are her mothers.

DOROTHY. When? When did this happen?

BERNADETTE. It has been some time.

LILLIAN. How long?

BERNADETTE. Three years. Maybe more. Maybe less. I don't count the days.

LILLIAN. That's a lie.

DOROTHY. Lillian, don't be cruel.

LILLIAN. But it is! Isn't it, Bernadette? It *is* a lie?

BERNADETTE. Yes.

LILLIAN. You count them all.

BERNADETTE. Every single one.

LILLIAN. You write them down.

BERNADETTE. All of them.

LILLIAN. You mark time.

AGATHA. That's enough, Lillian.

BERNADETTE. I'm marking it now.

LILLIAN. You would've rather died.

DOROTHY. Lillian!

BERNADETTE. I begged him to pull the trigger!

LILLIAN. How many days?

BERNADETTE. One thousand, one hundred and twenty-three days. I was nineteen years old.

AGATHA. Like my Rosalind.

BERNADETTE. Like your Rosalind.

MARY. Did they know you were a Jew?

BERNADETTE. Yes. I think.

DOROTHY. Why were you in Berlin? Wasn't it dangerous for –

BERNADETTE. I was pregnant. There was a doctor...

DOROTHY. Oh, God. You poor girl.

BERNADETTE. Do you think it was my punishment?

AGATHA. For what?

LILLIAN. Punishment for what?

BERNADETTE. Wanting to get rid of it?

AGATHA. Of course not!

ALICE and LILLIAN. No!

DOROTHY. But you didn't! You didn't get rid of it, did you?

BERNADETTE. No. The soldiers did it for me.

DOROTHY. Do you know how much it costs? In America? Do any of you know how much it costs to get rid of a baby?

LILLIAN. But only a fraction of our people.

MURIEL. What do you care how *many* you're saving as long as you're saving some?

LILLIAN. It isn't that I don't care, Miss Gardiner. I never said that I don't care. I simply don't see the point in suicide.
(*Beat.*) How many more will you save?

MURIEL. As many as I can.

LILLIAN. But there will always be more Jews.

MURIEL. Not if this continues.

LILLIAN. Don't you think it's all a little in vain, this mission?
You and your fraction?

GERTRUDE *rises. Slowly. Then speaks.*

GERTRUDE. What is vain about saving lives?

LILLIAN. It's a fantasy. We can't stop it. And when it's over, because some day it will be over, it will happen again. The Jews will never be normal. They'll never be safe. And some little shrink from the Boons of America will not be our Golem.

GERTRUDE. I have often wondered what it would be like to be normal. I have questioned my sanity and searched for my normalness. I have stood in the yard with my hands clenched in fists yelling into the sky asking why I was not normal. Even though I'm not sure there is a man in the sky. Even though I'm not sure there is a God or a Higher Power or some Holy Spirit... Even though I have questions, so many questions... I have *also* often wondered if normal even exists. I loved you and I hated you when I saw *The Children's Hour*. I had gone to the theatre that night in disguise just in case you were there because conversation with you bores me. But then the curtain went up and there I was in all my ugliness – in all my rage – in all my not-normalness and I realised that I'd been looking at the sky when I should have been looking at myself. (*Beat.*) This is a time that passes. But it takes time – like a stone in your

kidney or a rock in your chest – in your heart. But when it passes – when the time passes and you finally realise – it is oh so very normal, oh so very quiet – oh so very yes – yes – *yes*. For me it was a summer afternoon when the sun was hot and melting everything and Alice looked at me. And the sunlight reflected back at me through her eye like a diamond but without the sharpness that can cut your skin like glass. And in her eye I saw yes. I tasted it. I held it in my hands. I kept it safe. In my peripheral vision I can see Alice nodding but I will not look at her because it will make my final point null and void. I want to keep your eyes while I talk to you, Lily Ann. I want to see into your soul. The Jews will never be normal if this madness goes ignored. The yes will never yes. Yes? Yes! I have always known you were a bitch but I've never thought you were a fool. Open your purse. Say yes.

Beat.

LILLIAN. Muriel Gardiner.

MURIEL. Yes?

LILLIAN. I admire what you're doing. I do. I admire your tenacity. I admire your strength. But I worry you feel it is a duty.

MURIEL. It is.

LILLIAN. We can't stop it from happening. We can only slow it.

MURIEL. But something must be done!

LILLIAN. It isn't that I don't like a challenge. I'm Lillian Hellman, darling, of course I like a challenge. I *appreciate* a challenge. I encourage them. And it certainly isn't that I don't care. I'm a Jew, Miss Gardiner, of course I care. But I haven't got a death wish. And I certainly don't want to wind up writing my next play in a labour camp.

AGATHA. How would you write if you haven't got any paper?

LILLIAN. Writers always find a way.

MURIEL. And so do psychiatrists, Miss Hellman. Or anyone, really. It's called surviving.

GERTRUDE. And surviving is an art.

AGATHA. *Are you even a psychiatrist?* Forgive me for wondering, dear, but I suppose that's Lesson Number Two!

MURIEL. Yes. Yes, Miss Christie, I really *am* a psychiatrist. Though I've almost forgotten what it's like. I'm turning into someone else. Into Mary. I'm turning more and more into her every day.

LILLIAN. It happens. I used to be 'honest'. I used to be 'brave', too. And, Miss Gardiner, I was 'responsible'. Someone called me 'powerful' and 'assertive' and another said I was 'intelligent'. And... then one day I was something else.

GERTRUDE. A bitch.

LILLIAN. Yes... That.

GERTRUDE. When did it happen?

LILLIAN. Overnight, I think. One day I wasn't, and one day I was. But you see, a person can only hear 'no' so many times. 'But you're a woman', 'but the characters are women', 'what if you make it a man'. A woman can only hear that so many times before she goes mad. And maybe I throw an ashtray or seven and use the occasional 'fuck' in passing and maybe I do smoke two packs of Camels a day just so I can blow it in their faces. (*Beat.*) But I do what I've got to do when I want to make a point. When I want to get my way. (*Beat. A revelation.*) That's why you stayed. Isn't it, Miss Gardiner? To make a point?

MURIEL. I don't –

LILLIAN. With *us*... With us you might even get your way!

MURIEL. No.

LILLIAN. Did you come here expecting an army, Miss Gardiner? A legion of writers? Did you think we would all

go home, call the papers, our publishers, expose everything? Did you think we would put targets on our backs?

MURIEL. I had no idea that you were coming.

LILLIAN. I don't believe that.

ALICE. We weren't expecting Miss Gardiner until tomorrow, Lillian.

LILLIAN. It's neurotic to think about the things we cannot change, Miss Gardiner. It's psychotic dwelling on them!

MURIEL. I'm not dwelling, I'm doing!

LILLIAN. And what happens if you get caught?

MURIEL. Someone else will take over.

LILLIAN. Are you sure?

MURIEL. I can hope.

LILLIAN. And that's how you sleep at night? With hope?

Beat.

MURIEL. I am certain, Miss Hellman, that when I sleep, I sleep far better than you ever have and ever will.

A long beat. Uncomfortably long. This is when we learn that LILLIAN is vulnerable, too. After a moment, she reaches into her purse and digs around.

LILLIAN. Three hundred francs.

MURIEL. Thank you.

LILLIAN. I must ask these questions, you know.

MURIEL. I don't. But thank you.

LILLIAN. Writers are curious people, Miss Gardiner.

GERTRUDE. And cruel, too. (*Beat.*) That isn't an insult, Lily, it's a fact.

LILLIAN. And you'll help her? The girl?