

SLIPPERY AS SIN

By David Lee White

SLIPPERY AS SIN

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SLIPPERY AS SIN

Slippery as Sin was originally produced by the Passage Theatre Company, Trenton NJ, directed by Adam Immerwahr and featuring the following cast.

Dorrington	Greg Wood
Sarah Beltham	June Ballinger
Harry Cleek	Justin Jain
Lolly Beltham	Joniece Abbott-Pratt
Randolph Cleek	Brian Anthony Wilson
Morrison	Trent Blanton
Set Design	Jeff Van Velsor
Costume Design	Robin I Shane
Sound Design	Nick Kourtides
Artistic Director	June Ballinger
Producer	Kacy O'Brien

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CAST. 4 Men, 2 Women

All roles can be played by actors of any race or ethnicity.

DORRINGTON	M 40s -60s. America's greatest detective.
SARAH	F 60s. The matriarch. Highly theatrical.
HARRY	M 20s-30s. Dorrington's Boswell. Intelligent, practical.
LOLLY	F 20s – 30s. A young ingenue – craves excitement! Danger!
CLEEK	M 50s-60s. Harry's father. A successful businessman.
MORRISON	M 40s-50s. The Butler. Speaks with a slight Brooklyn accent.

Time. Fall, 1933

Place. Living room of a large mansion. There are a lot of doors, theatre posters on the walls and a large dining room table with a crystal ball on it. In addition, there is a large, full-length mirror and a large window that can be easily opened, allowing the actors to come and go throughout the play.

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ACT I
SCENE I

DORRINGTON takes the stage and addresses the audience.

DORRINGTON. Good evening. Welcome. The name is Detective Dorrington – America’s foremost private investigator. But of course, you already knew that. How lovely it is to spend the evening with you, my loyal readers. We are here in this glorious home, on this auspicious occasion, to celebrate the engagement of my protégé and biographer, Harry Cleek. Without Harry, I never would have become the famous consulting detective that stands before you this evening. No doubt, you remember our first case together - “The Adventure of the Ivory Blade!” It was the summer of 1925 and I was hot on the trail of the The White Duelist, so named because of his unusually pale skin and his sublime fencing skills. The cover illustration depicted me, sword in hand, engaged in a battle to the death atop a suspension bridge! My first published case might also have been my last had it not been for Harry Cleek. As you recall, his timely intervention saved me from the Duelist's clutches. Harry and I went on to face countless master criminals, saving the city from certain destruction time and again. And for years, no matter where we went, the question was always the same - “Did that really happen, Detective? Is that story true?” Beyond the shadow of a doubt, my friends. I was there, Harry was there. And if Harry wrote about some bizarre and sinister personage, you may rest assured that they were there as well. There was the sinister Chu Fang, Hacksaw Goldoni, the Mole and of course...Diabolicus. *(We see lightning accompanied by a clap of thunder. SARAH, HARRY, LOLLY and CLEEK enter the room.)* Now here we are, you and I. It is 1933 and we are in the home of Madame Sarah Beltham for Harry’s engagement party. And although tonight is a celebration, I urge you to be on your guard. I’ve been in this business long enough to know that even in the most peaceful surroundings, no one is ever completely safe from the hand of evil.

SARAH. There you are, Detective! *(There is a sharp flash of lightning followed by the sound of thunder. Sarah reacts.)* My God!

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DORRINGTON. *(To audience.)* Madame Sarah Beltham – widow of the late Theo Beltham, the famed financier. *(More lightning and thunder. Cleek, Lolly and Harry enter.)*

CLEEK. Great Gravy!

DORRINGTON. *(To Audience.)* Randolph Cleek – Harry’s father and the head of Cleek Industries.

LOLLY. *(Running to the window.)* The thunder! I love the thunder!

DORRINGTON. *(To Audience.)* Lolly. Madame Sarah’s niece and Harry’s adorably feisty fiancé.

SARAH. Lolly has always loved thunderstorms. Even when she was a child. The servants would quake in their shoes and Lolly would run outside all wild-eyed.

LOLLY. They’re beautiful! Such a force of nature!

HARRY. Come away from the window, Lolly.

DORRINGTON. *(To audience.)* There he is, the man of the hour! Harry Cleek - my youthful sidekick and chronicler.

LOLLY. You’re so boring, Harry. You never let me have any fun!

CLEEK. Having fun is a waste of time. *(To Harry.)* You have your hands full with that one, my boy.

LOLLY. *(To Harry.)* Once we’re married, Harry, you’ll let me run off into the rain, won’t you?

HARRY. *(Joking.)* Not on your life.

LOLLY. Oh, you! *(She looks back out the window and sees something.)* There’s someone out there!

HARRY. What? Where?

LOLLY. A man! He’s dressed in black. Standing in the shadows. *(The others run to the window and peer out.)*

SARAH. Why would anyone be standing outside on a night like this?

HARRY. I don’t see anyone.

LOLLY. He was there a moment ago.

HARRY. The lightning, the shadows, the moon...your mind is playing tricks on you. *(MORRISON enters, carrying a tray of drinks and slamming the door behind him. Everyone jumps.)*

MORRISON. Drinks are served. *(Everyone steps away from the window except for Dorrington who continues to stare into the darkness.)*

SARAH. What a curious scowl you’re wearing, Morrison. Where have you been?

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MORRISON. My apologies, Madame. I had to retrieve the last of the Chateau Fatala from the cellar.

SARAH. The last? As in the last bottle?

MORRISON. Yes, Ma'am.

SARAH. What happened to all the other bottles?

MORRISON. Mr. Cleek drank them the last time he was here.

SARAH. Damn. Stuck in a thunderstorm with our last bottle of wine.

CLEEK. Great Gravy.

SARAH. Those of you that don't plan on finishing, please give your glasses to Morrison so he can pour them back into the bottle. There is a depression going on, you know. Waste not, want not.

MORRISON. I could always water them down.

LOLLY. Don't you dare, Morrison! You only live once. I say let's drink like there's no tomorrow!

CLEEK. *(To Harry.)* You've got your hands full with that one, my boy.

HARRY. You've said that twice, dad.

LOLLY. Don't be a spoilsport, Harry.

CLEEK. I'd like to make a toast! And since we're busy drinking, I'll make it brief. *(He lifts his glass.)* to the bride and groom to be!

SARAH. There isn't enough wine for everyone, Morrison, but you can hold an empty glass.

MORRISON. Thanks.

CLEEK. I can't express what it means to me to be able to be here this evening.

HARRY. Well, thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule, dad.

LOLLY. Harry -

CLEEK. Wouldn't miss it for the world, son. Just don't tell my staff or the members of the board. They think I'm meeting with some Long Island investors. It's against my fundamental nature to lie but a man must be afforded some level of privacy, for God's sake.

HARRY. You were saying...?

CLEEK. Ah, yes. Since I became one of the most successful businessmen in the Northeast region, I have seen the best in what America has to offer. Resilience, fortitude and the spirit of innovation that typifies the freedom and liberty gifted to us by our forefathers and the good lord above.

HARRY. Successful and modest. The Northeast is a very lucky region.

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CLEEK. As I was saying... When I look out at the faces of my son and his betrothed, I see the faces of two people who have found the best of what America has to offer – truth, liberty and above all... love.

LOLLY. Here, here! Thank you, Mr. Cleek.

CLEEK. Please, Lolly. Call me dad.

HARRY. It really is very nice of you to have us over, Sarah.

SARAH. Aunt Sarah, Harry. You're almost family.

HARRY. Very well, Aunt Sarah. Lolly speaks so highly of the summers she used to spend here. I'm glad to finally see the place.

SARAH. A little more run down than it was back then. And there aren't near as many tourists on the island as there used to be.

CLEEK. I like it. Less money for thrill-seeking vacationers means more privacy for us.

SARAH. I can't tell you how thrilled I am that you're finally getting married. I remember when your father and I saw one another at Theo's funeral –

CLEEK. Your husband was a good man, Sarah, and a good friend. God rest his soul.

SARAH. Yes, yes. Anyway, I told him that Lolly had returned from boarding school and was turning eighteen and he said that you were an eligible young bachelor –

CLEEK. And we thought "Let's get these two kids together."

SARAH. Sometimes these things work out just perfectly, don't they?

CLEEK. Indeed.

SARAH. I can't help but notice that we've hardly heard from our famous guest all evening.

CLEEK. I just gave a toast.

SARAH. With all due respect, Mr. Cleek, I was talking about Detective Dorrington! We haven't had anyone this exciting since the governor's wife ate all the crepes and sang the entire score to *Girl Crazy*. Remember Morrison? Oh, the parties we had...

MORRISON. Yes. I remember.

DORRINGTON. You flatter me, Madame. You are a fan of our adventures?

SARAH. Oh, yes! Or, rather, I will be after I read some of them. They look so beautiful on the shelf. The color of the binding matches the drapes. Speech, speech!

DORRINGTON. Oh, all right... (*Dorrington reluctantly rises and raises his glass.*) To begin, I'd just like to bring everyone's attention to this fine vintage of wine we're drinking. (*Everyone reacts.*) Thanks to its subtle hints of wood grain and cat urine, I can easily trace the source to the Hog's Head speakeasy on the lower east side. Of

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course, given the fact that the 18th amendment made the distribution of alcohol illegal, I'm afraid you're all under arrest. (*They stare at him blankly.*) I am kidding. That was a joke. (*They all react – "I knew that!" "Good one!" "Oh, Detective!" etc.*) There are many people that would choose the trials and dangers of wedded bliss over the excitement of tracking down a ring of arsonists or a serial poisoner. I must confess that for years I've dreaded the day when my partnership with Harry would be threatened by a member of the fairer sex. Allow me, then, to compliment him on his choice of paramour. Long may the spirit of adventure live in both of them!

CLEEK. Here, here! (*They all toast.*) Although personally, I think Harry has had enough adventure for one lifetime.

DORRINGTON. Pardon?

HARRY. (*Changing the subject.*) Dorrington! Aunt Sarah was hoping you'd talk to everyone about your crime-solving techniques!

SARAH. Oh yes, Detective. I'm just dying to hear about your powers of observation and deduction!

DORRINGTON. It isn't exactly observation and deduction.

HARRY. You're thinking of Sherlock Holmes.

DORRINGTON. He is fictional. I am not.

HARRY. Dorrington relies on his "character impressions."

SARAH. I don't understand.

DORRINGTON. Modern day methods of deduction make for fun parlor tricks but have no practical application. By the time you've analyzed the cuffs of their sleeves, their brand of tobacco and the calluses on their forefingers, they've managed to shoot you through the heart a half-dozen times and stab you in the back for good measure. No, my method is much quicker and more reliable.

SARAH. Show us!

LOLLY. Come on. Do me.

DORRINGTON. No. Tonight is about the children (*Everyone reacts – "Oh, come on," "Show us!" etc.*) Aside from the fact that you recently spent several weeks in Boston, are estranged from your parents and owned a Blue Bedlington Terrier as a child, I can perceive very little.

LOLLY. That's amazing.

DORRINGTON. Simplicity itself.

CLEEK. How did you know she had been to Boston? Something in her complexion? A certain kind of dirt under the fingernails?

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DORRINGTON. No. As Harry said, these are “character impressions.” Think of my mind as a filing cabinet – an organized collection of facts. Everyone fits, more or less, into a model of sorts. Now, I could go on and on about all the young women I’ve met in my life that share certain qualities with Lolly but the short version is this –I knew Lolly had been in Boston because Ms. Earhart left from there for flight across the Atlantic and that’s something I’m sure she would have wanted to see. In other words, I knew Lolly had been to Boston because she strikes me as someone who would have been to Boston.

LOLLY. Harry could have told you.

DORRINGTON. He could have. He did not. As for your estranged parents - given your rather persistent lust for adventure and travel, it’s safe to assume that you cause your parents no end of grief. The fact that neither of them are here this evening confirms my suspicion.

LOLLY. It’s true! They couldn’t handle me. Aunt Sarah has been my legal guardian since I was fourteen. *(Everyone cheers and applauds.)*

DORRINGTON. As for the dog, well... young girls raised in a certain social class always have Blue Bedlington Terriers.

LOLLY. I didn’t.

DORRINGTON. Sorry?

LOLLY. I didn’t have a Blue Bedlington Terrier.

DORRINGTON. A Boston Terrier, then.

LOLLY. No dog of any kind. My father was allergic.

DORRINGTON. Impossible.

LOLLY. No, it’s true. His eyes dry up.

DORRINGTON. I mean that it’s impossible that that you grew up without a dog. You must have forgotten.

LOLLY. Well, I suppose my parents must have had a pet when I was very young...then gotten rid of it!

DORRINGTON. I’m certain that’s what happened. One hundred percent positive. My impressions have been finely tuned, based on experience. *(To Sarah.)* Much the same way you read people’s palms or tell their fortunes.

SARAH. Detective, if you don’t mind my asking, what’s inside your little briefcase? More tools for your battle against crime?

HARRY. That’s where Dorrington keeps his false beards, magnifying glasses –

SARAH. Oooo! Let’s see! *(Sarah picks up Dorrington’s briefcase.)*

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DORRINGTON. Stop! Put it down. (*Dorrington yanks the case out of her hands.*) I'm sorry. But this case contains things that I must keep safe and secure. You wouldn't be able to open it anyway. Harry and I have the only two keys to the lock.

SARAH. Oh, fine, fine. Well give us something more, for pity's sake. It's not every day one has a private audience with America's most celebrated detective. Share one of your adventures with us!

LOLLY. Oh, yes! I always ask Harry to tell me some but he's afraid they'll upset me.

DORRINGTON. Well, there was "The Adventure of the Twisted Tom Cat."

LOLLY. Oooo! I don't know that one!

HARRY. This one was never published. (*To Dorrington.*) You want me to start?

DORRINGTON. Please. You're so much better at it than I am.

HARRY. There I was, climbing over the fence and into an alley way wearing this awful, itchy eye-patch and a fake scar on my cheek.

DORRINGTON. Harry was in his disguise as an orphan pickpocket! His name was "The Pigeon" and he loved to eat sweet meats! (*Harry stares at Dorrington.*) I'm sorry. Go ahead.

HARRY. As "The Pigeon," I was able to blend in with my surroundings. I joined the gang run by Chu Fang.

DORRINGTON. Chu Fang! The sinister Chinaman. Carried around hypodermic needles filled with truth serum. Used to kidnap young women and sell them into slavery.

HARRY. Yes. Right. Anyway, I was supposed to sneak in the backdoor of a local speakeasy to have a meeting with "The Mole."

DORRINGTON. Ah, yes. The mole. He had a mole.

SARAH. Where were you during all this, Detective?

HARRY. Well, wait –

DORRINGTON. That was part of the surprise!

HARRY. Dorrington!

DORRINGTON. Sorry, Harry. The stage is yours.

HARRY. I walk into the speakeasy and the Mole is nowhere to be seen. But standing right in front of me is Chu Fang himself.

LOLLY. My God.

HARRY. And next to him is the Mighty Naru –

DORRINGTON. Indian fakir. Does rope tricks. Walks on fire.

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HARRY. And next to him is Hacksaw Goldoni!

DORRINGTON. The evil vivisectionist! Italian. Always has a cannoli and a hacksaw.

LOLLY. All three of them?

HARRY. The three most dangerous men in the underworld.

CLEEK. An ambush, no doubt.

LOLLY. What did you do?

HARRY. I stood there. Just staring at them. Suddenly they were all over me. One of them held a chloroformed handkerchief to my nose and I lost consciousness.

CLEEK. Great Gravy!

HARRY. When I woke up, Chu Fang was putting this large, grotesque mask on my face.

LOLLY. Some sort of torture device! Tell us more! I mean... I 'm so glad you're okay!

HARRY. I heard the hissing of gas and started to feel woozy... my eyes and nose began to burn... when suddenly, the Mighty Naru whipped off his turban, pulled off his false nose –

DORRINGTON. And revealed himself as Detective Dorrington! The real Naru was already behind bars! Harry and I had successfully ambushed the ambushers!

LOLLY. Yay!

CLEEK. Turned the tables, did you?

DORRINGTON. Chu Fang drew his sword but I had my rapier hidden beneath my cloak. The two of us dueled across the floor while Boss Goldoni stared at us wild-eyed. Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw him draw down a lamp affixed to the wall, opening a secret passageway. He lunged for it, trying to make his escape. But Harry! Blessed Harry leapt through the air and tackled Goldoni just as the trap door was beginning to close. I quickly disarmed Chu Fang and... (*He notices Harry, who looks slightly perturbed.*) Harry, I'm so sorry. I've completely taken over your story, haven't I? You finish it. Please.

HARRY. And we took them to jail.

DORRINGTON. And we took them to jail! (*Everyone applauds or shouts "Bravo!" "Splendid!" etc.*)

LOLLY. (*To Harry.*) And you had no idea it was Dorrington in disguise?

HARRY. Not a clue.

SARAH. How wonderful!

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CLEEK. You truly are a genius, Detective. Why the police have decided not to work with you is a mystery that none of us will ever be able to solve.

HARRY. Dad, please don't.

CLEEK. Don't be silly, Harry. Dorrington's good name has been dragged through the mud by the chief of police and every newspaper in the city. It's a damned shame! I don't care what the press says! Your best days are not behind you. Sure, you're a little older than you were in your heyday, but aren't we all? That's no reason for the chief of police to call you a...what did he call you?

DORRINGTON. I believe he referred to me as an irrelevant dinosaur.

CLEEK. A dinosaur! Ridiculous! It's damned disrespectful! (*To Lolly.*) Sorry, dear.

DORRINGTON. Yes, well, I'm afraid the police are more interested in pedestrian crimes involving jealous lovers and familial deceit. I'm after much bigger fish – master criminals that hold society in their thrall. The fact that the police have turned their backs on me is a blessing.

CLEEK. Who needs them? And for that matter, who needs a monthly magazine? Just because "The Adventures of Detective Dorrington" was canceled due to poor sales doesn't mean you're irrelevant. Although it is too bad that Harry's delightful writing hobby has come to an end.

HARRY. It wasn't a hobby, dad, it was my livelihood.

CLEEK. Now you have a new livelihood. It's a shame that those days are over, but time marches on.

DORRINGTON. What do you mean?

HARRY. Dad, don't.

LOLLY. Harry, what is he talking about?

CLEEK. Oh, just tell them, Harry. We're all family.

DORRINGTON. Tell us what, Harry?

HARRY. Forgive me, Dorrington. I wanted to wait and tell you later -

LOLLY. What are you talking about?

HARRY. My father and I have been talking and it seems the best thing to do would...well...would be to...

CLEEK. What Harry is trying to say is that I'm giving him control over the entire Northeast region. You are looking at the new head of Cleek Industries.

DORRINGTON. What?

LOLLY. You're leaving Dorrington?

HARRY. Yes.

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LOLLY. I would have thought it might have come up before now.

HARRY. I'm sorry. I wanted to wait until after this evening.

LOLLY. We'll talk later.

HARRY. Lolly -

LOLLY. Later, Harry.

HARRY. Dorrington, I'm sorry.

DORRINGTON. Don't be silly, Harry. I understand the past few years have been a bit difficult.

HARRY. That's not it.

DORRINGTON. Life goes on, Harry. No need to get caught up in the past. For what it's worth we've had many good years together and for that I'm grateful. This is just a temporary setback. One day I will return again to the newsstands, and I'll renew my work with law enforcement.

CLEEK. Of course, you will! You'll just have to make an adjustment.

DORRINGTON. Pardon? An adjustment?

CLEEK. Certainly. No offense meant, Detective, but surely you must realize that the age of the master criminal is over. America faces a much more insidious menace.

DORRINGTON. And what kind of menace would that be?

CLEEK. Anarchists! Radicals! Communists! Leftists! They hate me and every other successful capitalist! You should see some of the death threats I've received. Given half the chance, they'd murder me in my sleep.

HARRY. Come on, dad.

CLEEK. Am I the only one who remembers how close we came to a social revolution in this country barely a decade ago? The Wall Street Bombing! The destruction of the Los Angeles Times Building! The mail bombs! They nearly crushed this country once and if they aren't dealt with properly, they'll try it again.

DORRINGTON. While I agree with your supposition in principle, Cleek, I strongly disagree with your assertion that the age of the master criminal is over.

CLEEK. Really?

DORRINGTON. Who do you think leads those anarchists and radicals? We're dealing with a master criminal the likes of which society has never seen. Someone who can get every subversive to do his bidding.

LOLLY. My God. Who is he?

DORRINGTON. His name...is Diabolicus! (*Lightning and Thunder.*)

SARAH. You're joking. That's really his name? Diabilicus?

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DORRINGTON. Diabolicus.

HARRY. It's the name the criminal underworld has given him. Dorrington doesn't know his true identity...yet.

DORRINGTON. I first heard his name uttered in whispers by the denizens of the Lower East Side. (*Whispers.*) Diabolicus. Then again, they whispered his name at the Hogs Head Tavern (*Whispers.*) Diabolicus. He is the head of a network of criminals intent on bringing this country to its knees and is responsible for some of the most destructive acts of violence on the eastern seaboard.

LOLLY. Amazing. What kinds of acts of violence? Describe some.

DORRINGTON. Savage murders, unprecedented savagery, crimes beyond our imagination, all with the intent of creating chaos and toppling our most sacred institutions. Pick up a newspaper and you'll see his handiwork everywhere. If a crime goes unsolved, you can be sure that Diabolicus is behind it.

LOLLY. Where is he from?

DORRINGTON. Some hidden corner of Europe, no doubt, or the sands of the middle-east. But make no mistake. He is a man. He can be arrested and brought to trial.

LOLLY. I'd love to meet him. (*Pause. Everyone looks at her.*) You know... just to talk.

DORRINGTON. Diabolicus knows that I'm on his trail. He toys with me at every turn. For instance... (*Dorrington fishes in his jacket pocket and pulls out a scrap of newspaper.*) This appeared in today's copy of the Daily Globe. A poem -

“Dark the sea was. but I saw him,
One great head with goggle eyes,
Like a diabolic cherub
Flying in those fallen skies.”

MORRISON. “For I saw that finny goblin
Hidden in the abyss untrod;
And I knew there can be laughter
On the secret face of God.”

DORRINGTON. You know it, Morrison?

MORRISON. G.K. Chesterton. Poetry is one of my passions.

SARAH. Yes, yes. Who cares? Go on, Detective.

DORRINGTON. That word... “Diabolic.” A message from Diabolicus intended for my eyes only.

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SARAH. For what purpose?

DORRINGTON. Something sinister is afoot. Diabolicus has something planned and he's challenging me to try and stop him.

LOLLY. Oooo... I can just picture him - dressed all in black, climbing the walls, sneaking into bedrooms –

DORRINGTON. I'm afraid it's not as romantic as all that.

LOLLY. Maybe you just don't know him well enough, Detective. If you were to sit down and chat with Diabolicus -

DORRINGTON. I seldom find it necessary to "sit down and chat" with anyone.

CLEEK. You're all right by me, Dorrington. I admire a man with a thirst for justice. Mark my words. There will be a day in the near future when you will have achieved your goal. You will defeat Diabolicus.

DORRINGTON. Yes. A pity that Harry won't be there beside me, but he has his own future to attend to.

SARAH. Speaking of the future, I have a surprise for the happy couple! Morrison, the trunk please. Lolly, dear, fetch my scarves from the closet. Everyone gather around. (*Morrison, Lolly and Harry set up the trunk, crystal ball and scarves to create Sarah's séance table.*) Very good. Randolph, would you dim the lights please?

CLEEK. Certainly.

SARAH. Morrison, we're going to need another bottle of wine.

MORRISON. There are no more bottles of wine.

SARAH. I don't care. Go find us something to drink while we peer into the future.

MORRISON. Yes, ma'am.

SARAH. Now... I need absolute silence... (*Morrison exits, slamming the door. They all jump.*) Lolly, Harry...give me your hands. (*Sarah closes her eyes, swoons and begins to speak in a thick, highly-theatrical dialect of some sort.*) I remember years ago, traveling through the Orient... I stumbled upon the dwelling of a great seer who taught me how to peer through the mists of time. After spending weeks fasting in the desert, I made my way to Moscow, Singapore and Bali... all on a quest to study with the most spiritually enlightened minds in the world. They recognized my talent and passed on their gifts to me. (*Sarah begins staring into the crystal ball.*) I see...oh...how lovely. There you are my dear.

LOLLY. Really?

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SARAH. I can see you as clear as you're sitting here. You're five years old, holding a doll, wearing that pretty, flowered dress you had and running through the garden. You were Theo's favorite, you know.

LOLLY. I remember. Rest in peace, Uncle Theo.

SARAH. Yes, yes. Harry! I see you as well. There you are in a dark alley, fighting off a horde of Chinese bandits next to Dorrington!

HARRY. We did have fun, didn't we?

DORRINGTON. Indeed.

LOLLY. Oooo! It must be "The Adventure of the Crimson Kimono!" I know exactly what happens next!

SARAH. Moving along, then. Let us see what married life holds for the two of you. I must look deeply...through the mists of time...There! There you are!

LOLLY. What do you see?

SARAH. I see the two of you in wedded bliss. So happy...

LOLLY. But where are we? Paris? Morocco? Rome? *(Suddenly, Sarah sees something horrible.)*

SARAH. Oh, God. Oh, my God.

HARRY. Sarah?

SARAH. No. Oh, no...

LOLLY. Aunt Sarah, what is it?

SARAH. NO! *(Lightning flashes, thunder crashes. The window blows open and wind roars into the room. Sarah pitches backward and falls to the floor. Dorrington rushes to the open window.)*

CLEEK. Great Gravy! What's wrong?

LOLLY. Aunt Sarah!

HARRY. She's still breathing. Aunt Sarah?

LOLLY. Aunt Sarah, can you hear us?

SARAH. Yes, dear. I hear you. *(to Lolly.)* I'm sorry, my dear, I'm so, so sorry...

LOLLY. Sorry for what? Aunt Sarah, what's wrong?

CLEEK. Morrison! *(Morrison enters.)*

MORRISON. Yes sir.

CLEEK. Get Madame Sarah some wine!

MORRISON. We are completely out of -

CLEEK. Oh, for pity's sake! *(Cleek pulls a flask out of his coat.)* For emergencies.

SARAH. Thank you. *(Sarah begins drinking.)*

SLIPPERY AS SIN

CLEEK. You're okay now. Don't waste it. Morrison, pull my car around front. We should get her to the hospital.

MORRISON. Yes sir. (*Morrison exits.*)

SARAH. Lolly, dear, I'm so sorry I ruined the party.

LOLLY. Don't be silly. Are you all right?

SARAH. I'm fine. Just fine. I saw something. Something so...horrible. Lolly, Harry...listen to me... you must go through with the wedding. You must!

LOLLY. Of course we will.

SARAH. (*Regaining composure.*) Good. That's good.

DORRINGTON. Harry, a word, please. (*Harry crosses to Dorrington. They talk privately.*)

HARRY. What is it?

DORRINGTON. Outside. I saw... something. Someone.

HARRY. Who?

DORRINGTON. Lolly saw him earlier as well. We'll talk later. I don't wish to create a panic. (*Morrison enters.*)

MORRISON. I'm afraid no one is gonna be able to leave this evening.

HARRY. What?

MORRISON. The storm has gotten worse. The only bridge leading to and from the island has washed away.

HARRY. Are you kidding?

MORRISON. I don't kid. I'm not allowed.

DORRINGTON. It looks as if we're stranded here for the evening. Morrison, I assume the guest rooms are in working order.

MORRISON. Yeah.

SARAH. Yes. I suppose you can all stay the night. Morrison -

MORRISON. Maybe Lolly can show them up, Madame. She knows the way.

SARAH. Uh... of course. Lolly, show everyone to their rooms, will you?

LOLLY. Of course.

DORRINGTON. Lead the way, Lolly.

LOLLY. This way, everyone. (*Lolly leads Dorrington and Harry upstairs.*)

DORRINGTON. (*Exiting.*) Thank you, Morrison.

MORRISON. Of course, Detective. (*Sarah goes to talk to Morrison privately. Cleek watches from a distance.*)

SARAH. Yes, Morrison, what is it?

SLIPPERY AS SIN

MORRISON. I think we oughtta speak. I think you owe me an explanation.

SARAH. I don't have an explanation for you, Morrison. At least not one that you would find satisfactory.

MORRISON. Sarah, you gotta talk to me.

SARAH. Do I? Do I "gotta?" Morrison, I think it's high time you realized your station. You are in no position to tell me what I "gotta" do. Now please go upstairs and make sure everyone's room is in order.

MORRISON. Yes, Madame. *(Morrison exits.)*

SARAH. Well?

CLEEK. Well?

SARAH. We did it! *(Sarah grabs Cleek and begins kissing him passionately. She eventually pushes him away.)* Did you like my premonition?

CLEEK. A little over the top, wasn't it?

SARAH. Nonsense. Any second thoughts they might have had about marrying are gone. Once she's married, she'll inherit all of Theo's belongings. The house, the trust fund...everything.

CLEEK. And since you're Lolly's legal guardian and I'm the executor of Theo's will -

SARAH. We will be in control of everything.

CLEEK. Why in God's name Theo insisted on Lolly being married before receiving her inheritance is beyond me.

SARAH. He didn't think women could be trusted with money. Prick.

CLEEK. We could have been done with this ages ago instead of waiting for those two to decide to marry one another.

SARAH. If Theo's going to die on me without leaving me a dime, thank God he at least had the foresight to leave his fortune to a flighty little girl that's never read a legal document in her life.

CLEEK. And there's no way Lolly will ever know that she's Theo's sole heir?

SARAH. You're going to have to trust me, Randolph. There's no need for her to know anything. As executor, your signature is as good as Theo's. As her guardian, my signature is as good as Lolly's. The marriage certificate is the last document we need. Once we have it in hand, everything will be ours. *(They kiss again. Cleek produces a contract from the inside of his jacket.)*

CLEEK. Good. Sign this.

SARAH. What's this?

SLIPPERY AS SIN

CLEEK. I've taken your word for the past eight months that you'll share Theo's fortune with me. It's time to make it official.

SARAH. What?

CLEEK. Insurance. Your little plan won't be complete without my signature. And I'm not about to give you that signature without some sort of guarantee. In writing.

SARAH. You don't trust me. Come on, Randolph. Do you really think I would have come this far, all these months, just to screw you over right on the eve of our success? I never would have been able to do this without you. You and your devious little mind.

CLEEK. I am devious, aren't I?

SARAH. Delightfully devious.

CLEEK. Good. So, sign this agreement turning 50% of Lolly's inheritance to Cleek Industries. And the day after the wedding, we can spend some of that money to pay off the bank and restore this house.

SARAH. *(Taking the contract.)* That will be nice.

CLEEK. You can start throwing parties again and everything will be like it was before. *(Sarah begins thumbing through the contract. Cleek begins kissing her neck.)*

SARAH. Randolph...what are you doing?

CLEEK. I want you, Sarah. I need you. *(She kisses him passionately.)*

SARAH. Upstairs.

CLEEK. Yes. But first...sign. Here and here... *(Sarah kisses him again while signing the documents.)*

SARAH. Why Randolph Cleek... *(Singing.)* "Casey would waltz
With a strawberry blonde,
And the Band played on..." *(Sarah begins kissing Cleek.)*

CLEEK. Not tonight, dear. I'm afraid I'm developing a very large headache.

SARAH. "He'd glide 'cross the floor
With the girl he adored,
And the Band played on..."

CLEEK. Perhaps some other time.

SARAH. I beg your pardon?

CLEEK. Had a bit too much to drink I'm afraid.

SARAH. *(Coming on to him.)* Come on, Randolph.

SLIPPERY AS SIN

CLEEK. Please. I'm very busy. Have a little respect for a working man. *(He yawns.)*
Wow, am I beat. I'll sleep one of the guest rooms. Must keep up appearances. *(Cleek starts to exit, but something dawns on Sarah.)*

SARAH. What did I just sign?

CLEEK. Pardon?

SARAH. That contract. Give it to me.

CLEEK. It's late, Sarah. We have an agreement. If you don't trust me, simply tell me you don't trust me. *(Pause.)* Very well, then. *(Cleek starts to exit again.)*

SARAH. I don't trust you. *(Cleek halts, sighs.)*

CLEEK. Let me explain something to you. This will be fun. You needed me to help you swindle Lolly out of her inheritance so you can save your home. And by taking on the role of lusty seductress, by constantly plying me with sex, you believed that you were the one in charge.

SARAH. What are you talking about?

CLEEK. I'm not the weak, little, sexually-starved plaything you thought I was.

SARAH. What is this? What kind of game are you playing?

CLEEK. Oh, wake up, Sarah. This isn't a game. I am the one in control and have been for a long time.

SARAH. The house. We'll restore it, you said. Everything will be like it was before.

CLEEK. *(Holding up the contract.)* The house belongs to me and I will do with it as I please.

SARAH. *(Lunging for the contract.)* You son of a bitch.

CLEEK. The house, the trust, Lolly's inheritance... you just signed it all over to me. I own everything. Every last cent. I understand this must come as a shock.

SARAH. I'll kill you.

CLEEK. You'll do nothing of the kind. Be a good girl and perhaps I'll provide you with a roof over your head when this run down, travesty of a mansion is nothing but a memory.

SARAH. You're going to tear it down.

CLEEK. Of course. This is a perfect location for my new plant, don't you think? My son will be the public face of Cleek Industries – above board, pro-union. Meanwhile, the real work will take place here – On a tourist island gone to seed, far from the prying eyes of government regulators.

SARAH. I swear to God I'll –

CLEEK. -kill me? Nonsense.

SLIPPERY AS SIN

SARAH. You'll never –

CLEEK. -get away with this? I already have.

SARAH. Give me that document, Cleek.

CLEEK. (*Tapping his jacket pocket.*) Come and get it. (*Sarah starts toward Cleek. The voices of Harry and Lolly are heard whispering from offstage.*)

SARAH. It's the children. We will continue this conversation another time. (*Sarah exits.*)

CLEEK. (*To himself.*) No, my dear. I don't believe we will. (*Harry and Lolly's voices are heard growing nearer. Cleek retreats to the back of the room and hides. Harry and Lolly enter.*)

HARRY. I'm sorry, Lolly. I should have told you.

LOLLY. Do you really want to give up a life of adventure – of stowing away on tramp steamers and infiltrating gangs of Indian thugs in favor of running a weapons factory.

HARRY. Things have changed, Lolly. I can do more good in the business world than I can running through brothels and opium dens.

LOLLY. Did you see the look on Dorrington's face when he found out you were leaving? You hurt him, Harry. And now you're just going to leave him to battle this horrible Diabolicus all by himself?

HARRY. Dorrington was fine before I came along, he'll be fine without me.

LOLLY. Okay, then what about me? What about the life I thought I was going to have?

HARRY. I'm broke, Lolly.

LOLLY. What?

HARRY. The magazine was canceled, Dorrington isn't getting clients anymore. I have no job.

LOLLY. Your father is one of the wealthiest men in the city.

HARRY. And he refuses to give me a dime as long as I'm working for Dorrington.

LOLLY. Oh.

HARRY. I'm out of options, Lolly. Either I work for my father or there's no way for us to get married. No way for us to have a future.

LOLLY. Stand up to him, Harry. To hell with the job. You'll find something else.

HARRY. No one wants to hire a two-bit mystery writer and ex-crime fighter. I'm sorry, Lolly. But I may not be able to be the man you want me to be.

SLIPPERY AS SIN

LOLLY. I want you to be a hero. I want you to believe that there are adventures worth having. Can't you do that for me?

HARRY. I don't know.

LOLLY. Okay, then.

HARRY. Lolly -

LOLLY. Go to bed, Harry. I'm going to sit here and have a glass of wine.

HARRY. There is no more wine.

LOLLY. Then I will sit here and hold an empty glass to my lips like Morrison does.

HARRY. Fine. Good night, Lolly.

LOLLY. Good night, Harry. *(Harry exits. Lolly picks up the bottle of wine and tries pouring it into her glass, but there's nothing left. She sits down and awkwardly tries to hold the empty glass to her lips, then grows frustrated and sets the glass down. Cleek comes out of hiding.)*

CLEEK. Let me help you out with that, my dear.

LOLLY. Oh! Mr. Cleek ...you frightened me.

CLEEK. Yes. I noticed. You bounced. *(He pours booze from his flask into her glass.)*
And call me dad.

LOLLY. Scotch?

CLEEK. Yes. I try not to be caught unawares.

LOLLY. Very clever.

CLEEK. I'm a very clever man. It's a shame about my son, though, don't you think?

LOLLY. What about him?

CLEEK. He doesn't think I'm very clever. In fact, he disagrees with me on nearly everything.

LOLLY. He doesn't -

CLEEK. Don't be so simple, Lolly. You think I don't see how disappointed he is with me?

LOLLY. He doesn't think you're a bad man. You have differences. That's all.

CLEEK. He's going to work with the unions, is he? Good luck. Running a company the size of mine requires a certain kind of ruthlessness.

LOLLY. Yes!

CLEEK. A ruthlessness that I'm afraid to say, my son lacks.

LOLLY. Sir?

CLEEK. So, you should kiss me.

LOLLY. I beg your pardon?

SLIPPERY AS SIN

CLEEK. Do you know what drove prehistoric man to survive, Lolly? What impulses they followed from sun-up until sundown?

LOLLY. I don't –

CLEEK. Eating, killing and screwing. That's it. It's all they wanted to do. It's all they needed to do.

LOLLY. I should go.

CLEEK. No, you shouldn't. Let me tell you something, Lolly. I tried for many years to go about my business with some degree of ethical standards. As a young man, I prided myself on my honesty and integrity. But the world doesn't care about honesty. In fact, it openly mocks integrity and honesty. Humans are no different from animals. We change laws, we build churches, we write speeches...all for the sole purpose of finding new ways to eat, kill and screw. You want to scare a man half to death? Tell him he longer has the right to do one of those three things. Personally, I have found that if you keep people hungry, it's easier to keep the other two impulses under control. But you and I don't have to worry about keeping our impulses under control.

LOLLY. No?

CLEEK. No. Because we come from strong, productive, American families. People like us are allowed.

LOLLY. Allowed to do what?

CLEEK. Allowed to follow our basic impulses. You remember what they are, don't you Lolly? (*Cleek begins advancing on Lolly.*)

LOLLY. Oh, gosh...um...let me see...there was eating.

CLEEK. There was, yes.

LOLLY. (*Scared.*) And...um...kill...um...killing.

CLEEK. Two out of three.

LOLLY. And the last one was...was...

CLEEK. Say it, my dear. (*Cleek grabs Lolly and tries to kiss her. She slaps him across the face. Cleek smiles.*) Well. That was unexpectedly delightful.

LOLLY. Stay away from me.

CLEEK. Come on, Lolly. What's one kiss? We're family, after all.

LOLLY. Eww.

CLEEK. Follow your basic impulses. It's what we all do. It's what I'm doing right now.

LOLLY. Please. Don't.

SLIPPERY AS SIN

CLEEK. Come on... *(Cleek grabs Lolly's arm. She yanks it away, causing him to leave a scratch on her arm.)*

LOLLY. Ow!

CLEEK. It wasn't my fault, dear. If you'd just cooperate - *(Thunder, lightning...the room plunges into darkness.)*

LOLLY. Oh, God.

CLEEK. Where are you, my dear? *(No response.)* Come here right this instant! Oh, Great Gravy... *(Lightning strikes again and we see that a man in a black mask and cloak has entered the room. Once more the room plunges into darkness.)* What was that? Lolly? Is that you? Harry? Dorrington? *(The lights come back on and Cleek finds himself face to face with the man in black. The mask covers his entire face, except for his eyes.)* Oh, God... who are you? Who are you?! *(The man in black clutches Cleek around the neck and begins to strangle him. Another burst of thunder and the lights come back on. Lolly is standing in the corner of the room and sees the man in black with his hands wrapped around Cleek's neck. She gasps in horror.)*

LOLLY. Diabolicus! *(The man in black pulls out a knife and draws the blade across Cleek's throat. Lolly screams. Lolly screams some more. Lolly continues to scream. The man in black drops the body and it lands in a heap on the floor. He puts the hood back on pulls his cloak around him and begins to exit.)* Wait! *(The man in black turns to look at her.)* Thank you. *(The man in black exits. We begin to hear other voices congregating on the room as they respond to the screams. Harry is the first to enter.)*

HARRY. What is it, Lolly? What's wrong? *(Lolly points to Cleek's body)* Dad! *(Dorrington enters.)*

DORRINGTON. Stand back, Harry. I'm afraid we're too late. *(Sarah enters, still in the same clothes from the previous scene.)*

SARAH. What in God's name is going on? *(She sees Cleek.)* He's dead! Ha! *(Suddenly realizing she shouldn't laugh.)* Oh God how tragic! We should take off his jacket. *(Sarah walks toward Cleek but Lolly stops her.)*

LOLLY. He's dead, Aunt Sarah. Removing his jacket won't change that. *(Morrison enters.)*

MORRISON. Is everything all right? I was in the kitchen making croissants when I heard - *(Sees Cleek and gasps.)*

LOLLY. He slashed him across the throat. I saw him do it.

SARAH. Who?

LOLLY. Diabolicus!

SLIPPERY AS SIN

DORRINGTON. I knew it! Earlier, I saw someone through the window. Standing outside in a grove of trees.

LOLLY. I did too! But then he vanished. I thought it was just my eyes playing tricks on me.

SARAH. Think, Lolly! Did he go through his pockets?

LOLLY. I don't know.

SARAH. How do you know it was Boladiacus?

DORRINGTON. Diabolicus

LOLLY. He said his name.

SARAH. He just came right out and said "I am Diamilicus?"

DORRINGTON. Diabolicus.

LOLLY. He did.

SARAH. Why would he want to kill Randolph?

DORRINGTON. Why indeed?

HARRY. Should we call the police?

MORRISON. They'd never make it here. The storm washed out the only bridge leading to the island.

LOLLY. The only bridge, Harry! Don't you remember that? It was a very important detail!

SARAH. You could all swim for it! I'll stay here with the body.

DORRINGTON. Not on your life! I guarantee that even now, Diabolicus is watching this house, just waiting for one of us to step outside. No one is to leave here until morning. Is that understood? (*Everyone nods or says "Yes."*)

LOLLY. This is the part where you say "One of you in this room may be a murderer."

SARAH. Don't be ridiculous. None of us killed anyone.

HARRY. It's important that we don't succumb to paranoia or suspicion. Right Dorrington?

DORRINGTON. I disagree.

HARRY. Why?

DORRINGTON. Because one of you in this room may be murderer. Or, rather, an accomplice to murder.

LOLLY. But he was killed by Diabolicus.

DORRINGTON. And Diabolicus must be working with someone in this room. Randolph Cleek told no one that he was here, tonight. The only people who knew his whereabouts this evening are standing right here. One of you delivered a signal to

SLIPPERY AS SIN

Diabolicus once you knew Cleek was alone. A flickering candle in the window, perhaps. Something Diabolicus would have easily seen from the outside where he lay in wait. So, was it you Madame Sarah? Diabolicus would naturally be drawn to your exotic travels and questionable forays into the supernatural. Or perhaps you, Lolly? How do we know you're telling the truth about what you saw? Even Harry-

HARRY. Dorrington!

DORRINGTON. Let's play fair, Harry. Your father was forcing you into a job you never wanted. You had as much motive as anyone here.

LOLLY. Ooo! Now, that's interesting.

SARAH. Have you searched Cleek's jacket? There might be a clue there. I'll check.

DORRINGTON. That won't be necessary, Madame Sarah. I'll go over everything very thoroughly. Right now, I want to know where everyone was at the time of the murder.

MORRISON. As God is my witness, I was baking pastries.

DORRINGTON. We'll get to you, Morrison. Madame?

SARAH. I was in my room. Sleeping.

DORRINGTON. In your dress rather than a nightgown? Probably not.

SARAH. (*Looks down at her dress.*) Oh.

DORRINGTON. Come up with a more believable alibi and I'll get back to you. Harry?

HARRY. Dorrington, surely you don't think –

DORRINGTON. I haven't drawn any conclusions yet, Harry. You know my methods. Please answer the question.

HARRY. Lolly and I had been fighting. I went back to the guest room. I was alone.

DORRINGTON. Fine. Would you like to try again, Sarah?

SARAH. I was...okay...in my room. There were birds on the windowsill. I was feeding them.

DORRINGTON. Of course. Because midnight during a torrential downpour is ideal bird-feeding weather.

SARAH. Dammit!

DORRINGTON. Lolly?

LOLLY. At the time of the murder, I was standing directly in front of the murder.

DORRINGTON. Yes. And Morrison?

MORRISON. Pastries.

DORRINGTON. Right. Lolly, tell me exactly what you saw.

SLIPPERY AS SIN

LOLLY. Well, I was talking with Mr. Cleek, but then he tried to kiss me.

HARRY. I'm sorry, what?

LOLLY. I tried to fight him off, but he kept coming at me.

HARRY. Diabolicus?

LOLLY. No, your father. Try to keep up.

HARRY. Back up just a bit.

LOLLY. Anyway, Mr. Cleek - I refuse to call him dad – scratched my arm and I said ow! Then he said “That was your fault and you should just cooperate!” and then there was lightning – Pow! – and Thunder! – Pow again! – and then the lights came back on and Diabolicus was choking the life out of the sick bastard! Sorry, Harry.

HARRY. Why would my father attack you?

LOLLY. You think I'm making it up?

HARRY. My father may not have been the most ethical man, but he'd never attack his own son's fiancée.

LOLLY. But he did attack his son's fiancée.

HARRY. Prove it.

LOLLY. Here! (*She pulls up her sleeve and shows him the scratch on her arm.*)

HARRY. This can't be the whole story. What else happened here?

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