

MURIEL: Muriel O'Neill.

BITSY: Aren't you one of the dancing girls?

MURIEL: Yes. I am the lead.

BITSY: Then I suggest you go lead. The show will begin soon.

MURIEL: Yes, ma'am. *(She makes a swift exit.)*

BITSY: *(To HEINE)* And who might you be?

HEINE: I am delivering the special shipment that was ordered for the evening.

BITSY: The Louisiana crayfish?

HEINE: No. This delivery is of the liquid variety.

BITSY: Oh. The champagne. Very good. Judge Thrasher tells me that his connection deals only in the highest quality.

HEINE: Our champagne is served in the courts of Europe. It satisfies kings.

BITSY: Yes, well, tonight we just have to satisfy a few senators and a lame-duck governor. Tell your boss that I will thank him in a concrete way through Judge Thrasher. I will see that you are taken care of, as well. *(Seems to take him in for the first time)* I must say, I like your manner. Your boss is lucky to have you.

HEINE: Thanks, I'll be sure to tell him.

*(MYRTON hurries in, surprised to find BITSY and HEINE.)*

MYRTON: Oh.

BITSY: I have been looking for you.

MYRTON: And I for you, Madam. I have checked on the delivery of tonight's beverage, and I am pleased to announce that it has arrived and has been put on ice.

BITSY: Yes, yes, I know all about the champagne. Is everything else—

MYRTON: Under control, Madam. The boys have opened their gifts and are ready to be presented to the guests.

HEINE: I see boys in the hall carrying on like a Wild West show I once take in at Madison Square Garden.

BITSY: *(Glaring at MYRTON)* An unfortunate occurrence. They should have been kept in the library. *(To HEINE)* These are youngsters from a school for juveniles in trouble. This is what you might call a pet project of mine: helping the delinquent youth of the city avoid a life of crime.

HEINE: This is a most noble enterprise. A life of crime is not what it used to be.

BITSY: Yes, these are dangerous times indeed. Now I must get back to my guests. Thank you for your service. Before you leave, you are welcome to enjoy a bite of supper in the kitchen. Myrton, show him the way. And then bring on our Santa Claus and all the boys! *(She exits.)*

HEINE: I hope Mr Albright knows how to treat a lady like that.

MYRTON: There is only a former Mr Albright.

HEINE: He croaks?

MYRTON: He is alive and as well as can be expected. Madam and Mr Albright went their separate ways about a year ago. *(He opens the door and waits for HEINE.)*

HEINE: A long time to be alone.

MYRTON: Mrs Albright keeps a very active social calendar. This way to the kitchen.

*(HEINE and MYRTON exit.)*

*(BLONDY cautiously opens the door and peers in.)*

BLONDY: He's gone.