

SUITE 510
A 10-MINUTE PLAY

©2002 Susan Middaugh
1057 Elm Road
Baltimore, MD 21227
410 536 1956
smiddaugh@aol.com

Synopsis:

A woman writer, working alone at night in her office, encounters an intruder who threatens to kill her.

Cast of Characters

Mary Gallagher, a free-lance writer in her mid-30's, has spunk, sings off-key
The Intruder, a middle-aged man with a wild look, wears business attire

Set Requirements:

A desk and chair and a few simple props.

Suite 510
Time: early on a winter's night

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Setting: a writer's cubbyhole in a rundown office building

Furnishings are Spartan. A radiator is at one end of the room, a door faces the audience. Mary is at her desk, reading the mail.

MARY

Dear Miz Gallagher. Your story idea about the food cravings of pregnant women arrived today. As a single non-smoking male, it is hard for me to understand why a woman would want to eat cigarette ashes, clay and ice chips. Please try us again on another subject.

P.S. Have you considered the tabloids? They pay very well.

(Throws the letter on the desk and tears open another envelope)

Tabloids? You sleaze bag. (Pause) Dear Miz Gallagher. How nice to hear from you again. We would love to see the article you propose on letter writing, provided you can get it to us in 10 days. We'll pay \$500 on spec, of course.

(Starts dancing)

All right. Way to go.

(Singing off key)

I've got the world on a string, sitting on a rainbow. Got the string around my ---

(Loud male voice can be heard from the other side of the door.)

THE INTRUDER

Cut the racket.

(Mary stops singing.)

MARY

This is my office. I'll sing whenever I darned well please. (Loud) Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.

THE INTRUDER

Knock it off and open the door.

MARY

Did you see the sign? No soliciting.

THE INTRUDER

(Rattling the doorknob)

I have a package for you.

MARY

I'm not expecting anything. Go away. I have work to do.

THE INTRUDER

(Banging even louder)

The only job you have right now is opening this door. Pronto.

MARY

Who are you?

THE INTRUDER

Stop stalling. You know very well who I am.

MARY

Go away or I'll, I'll--

(She picks up the phone.)

Hello, police? This is an emergency. There's a man outside my office who's threatening me. The address is 16 West Lansing Street. Suite 510. Please hurry.

THE INTRUDER

(High threatening laugh)

What are you doing, lady, talking into your shoe? The phone is dead.

(Frantic, she tries to raise the window sash. It won't budge. She pulls a nail file from her bag. There is a rattle and a click. The Intruder, a wild-looking man, enters.)

MARY

This has gone far enough. Get out of my office.

THE INTRUDER

No. You killed my sister.

MARY

(Backing away from the door, she trips.)

You must be mad. I never--

THE INTRUDER

Don't give me that. Albany. Hit and run. Two years ago.

MARY

No. No. You're mistaken. I--

THE INTRUDER

No mistake. I've been looking for you ever since.

MARY

You must have me confused with --

THE INTRUDER

That's right. Blame someone else. Your kind always does.

(Mary moves behind her desk.)

MARY

Look, mister. I'm very sorry about your sister. I didn't kill her. I've never been to Albany.

The INTRUDER

Lies. Lies. You're always telling lies.

MARY

You're wrong. I don't know you and I didn't know her.

The INTRUDER

The driver didn't know my sister either.

MARY

Don't come any closer. Or I'll scream.

THE INTRUDER

There's no one in this building except you and me.

MARY

The hairdresser downstairs is open late on Thursdays. He'll--

THE INTRUDER

Not tonight. I saw him leave. You're out of luck, sister.

MARY

I've never been to Albany. This is senseless. I'm the wrong person.

THE INTRUDER

I've come a long way. Time to even the score.

(He lunges, she runs
behind the desk.)

MARY

But I'm innocent. Why would you want to hurt me?

THE INTRUDER

My sister went out to pick up a quart of milk for her two-year-old daughter. She never knew what hit her. Bam. That fast.

MARY

Victor, the night watchman. He--

THE INTRUDER

Victor's all tied up right now. In the cellar. He's not going anywhere, lady. You're on your own.

MARY

What did Victor ever do to you?

THE INTRUDER

He tried to stop me from getting into the building.

MARY

My husband is coming to pick me up in a few minutes. He'll --

THE INTRUDER

I'll be finished with you before your husband arrives, lady.

MARY

I'm not the person you're looking for.

THE INTRUDER

Too late to back down now. Get ready to go to hell, lady.

(He pulls out a necktie
and snaps it.)

MARY

Don't come any closer. I have a black belt in karate.

THE INTRUDER

Yeah, and I'm Whistler's Mother.

MARY

The police will catch up with you.

(Picks up a ruler.)

THE INTRUDER

Gotcha worried, don't I?

(Mary starts banging on
the radiator with the
ruler.)

MARY

(Screaming)

Help! Help! I'm in suite five-ten. Help me some---

THE INTRUDER

You're wasting your time. Nobody's home.

(Mary grabs a whistle from her pocketbook, blows into it and bangs on the windows.)

THE INTRUDER

You'll have nightmares about me, lady.

(Mary picks up her nail file.)

MARY

Stand back. Don't come one step closer.

THE INTRUDER

Easy, Mrs. Gallagher. Despite what you might think, I didn't come here to hurt you.

MARY

My husband won't stop until he tracks you down and grinds you into a pulp.

THE INTRUDER

(The Intruder removes his mask and reveals a handsome face. Then he pulls out a business card.)

Jim Kelly, AGT Security Systems. With our alarm system installed in your home or office, you'll never be bothered by characters like me again.

MARY

This was all a joke?

THE INTRUDER

We like to think of it as a dramatic sales pitch which highlights the need for our product in a compelling way. Our company president studied guerilla marketing in college.

MARY

You terrorized me for 10 minutes and now you expect me to buy your product?

THE INTRUDER

(Coughs politely)

Nail files, rulers. Tonight you discovered how ineffectual you'd be at defending yourself, Mrs. Gallagher. Is that something you'd want to talk about in the elevator or the water cooler?

MARY

I could not possibly think about signing anything tonight. You've rattled me so with your guerilla marketing. Besides, I need time to read the contract--

THE INTRUDER

Fine. I'll be back tomorrow night. About 5:30?

MARY

Six o'clock.

(He exits smiling. She collapses on the desk.)

FADE TO DARK

(Next night. Lights up)
Mary is at her desk.

THE INTRUDER

(Knock at the door)

Mrs. Gallagher, it's me. Jim Kelly. Can I come in?

MARY

(Opens the door)

Asking permission, Mr. Kelly? Your Mr. Hyde has turned into a polite Dr. Jekyll. You are a good actor.

THE INTRUDER

Uh, thank you. Our company president trained me.

MARY

You've had plenty of chance to rehearse, I'll bet.

THE INTRUDER

Yes, guerilla marketing has been very good for our business. Do you have any questions about the contract?

MARY

When I was in college, I admired Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

THE INTRUDER

Great men, important leaders. But they weren't businessmen.

MARY

True. Are most of your clients women?

THE INTRUDER

Many. Now about the contract. I've got another appointment.

MARY

I do have one question. Just a moment.

(She reaches inside her desk
and pulls out a gun.)

I don't like you or your company's tactics, Mr. Hyde.

THE INTRUDER

Whoa, hold on a second. I'm sorry for the way I treated you yesterday. We do it to make a point. You need our product.

MARY

And you made your point very well. Loud and clear. Intimidation

is the only sales pitch you seem to understand.

THE INTRUDER

Stop pointing the gun at my face, Mrs. Gallagher. Your hand is shaking. That thing could go off. You wouldn't want that on your conscience. A nice peaceful lady like you.

MARY

I didn't hear your apology, Mr. Hyde. Say it again, this time on your knees.

THE INTRUDER

(He kneels.)

I'm sorry for frightening you, Mrs. Gallagher.

MARY

Frighten doesn't do justice to my state of mind yesterday. Terrified is closer to the mark. Do you know how that feels? Do you?

(She cocks the gun near his ear.)

THE INTRUDER

Yes. Now I do. (Pause) This is a game, right? To even the score.

MARY

Is that what your job is to you, Mr. Hyde? A game? A chance for you to terrify women into buying your product? You ought to be pistol whipped.

(She raises her arm. He cringes.)

THE INTRUDER

If you kill me, you'll go to jail.

MARY

But you'll be dead. I'll have the satisfaction of that, you weasel. Besides, I'll claim you broke into my office and demanded money. You were wearing a mask. I had to defend myself.

THE INTRUDER

Please, Mrs. Gallagher. I have a wife and two kids at home.

MARY

I have a family too. That didn't make any difference to you yesterday. So put away the violin. All you care about is bringing in new business any way you can and the customer be damned. Now get the hell out of my office before I forget everything Gandhi ever said.

(He runs out of the room.)

(Mary pulls the trigger and a flag marked "Surprise" pops out of the barrel of the gun.)

THE END