LAURA. *(Crosses to R. of liquor cabinet.)* Do you think they listened in on that phone call?

SHELBY. (*Crosses to R. front sofa*.) I didn't get the gun.

LAURA. Gun? What do you mean?

SHELBY. I was followed.

LAURA. (*Impatiently.)* Where?

SHELBY. I didn't realize it till I hit the road back of your house. And then it was too late. So I just pulled up and stood in your garden for a while. If they ask me I can tell them it was a sentimental journey.

LAURA. What made you go up there?

SHELBY. Didn't you want me to?

LAURA. Whatever gave you that idea?

SHELBY. (*Crosses to c.)* Let's not kid each other. What else could you have called me about last night?

LAURA. To tell you I was alive. I thought you'd be interested.

SHELBY. I knew that.

LAURA. Oh!

SHELBY. I thought you were being cautious because you knew they'd be watching my calls.

LAURA. *(Crosses to Shelby.*) How'd you know I was alive?

SHELBY. Because I knew it was Joyce.

LAURA. Then you were here. (*Crosses to L. of liquor cabinet, then with biting fury.)* Damned decent of you to bring your own liquor. You can use my apartment, but you're such a gentleman that you draw the line at taking my liquor.

SHELBY. You needn't be so bitter. I lied for you. I put myself in a spot because I tried to protect you.

LAURA. Funny and I thought I was protecting you.

SHELBY. I didn't come here to quarrel with you. We've got to understand each other. Let's not waste time.

LAURA. *(Crosses to Shelby.*) I spent the last five days trying to decide how I felt about you… and it wasn't till I saw that bottle that I knew.

SHELBY. You're not being fair.

LAURA. I've been much too fair. I've made every possible excuse for you. I rationalized so hard that I became the heavy and you the victim. Look, Hunt, I told myself, you knew he had faults but you

went for him. You wanted him so hard you tried to make him over.

SHELBY. (*Crosses to sofa R., sits L. arm*.) Laura, this is ridiculous.

LAURA. And all the time you were playing Lady Bountiful you never stopped to think that everything you did for him was an implied criticism. That he may have resented you. And why shouldn't he go for a beautiful girl who thought he was perfect? So I came back all contrite and understanding to find what? The flower of Southern manhood, suh, standing guard over the honor of the lady he'd just two-timed in her own bedroom!

SHELBY. I honestly tried to call it off.

LAURA. *(Crosses to Shelby.*) Then why? Why, Shelby? Whatever else I thought of you, I never thought you'd be so crude as to spend a night in my apartment with someone else. *(Crosses to chair L.)*

SHELBY. (*Rises.*) I swear to God I never meant to see her again. But she kept calling me… she sounded desperate,,, threatened suicide unless I saw her again!

LAURA. *(Sits chair L.)* Here! You had to come here!

SHELBY. I couldn't have her at the club. And she was staying here. I only came to talk to her... *(Crosses to behind chair L.)*

LAURA. …and there were two glasses beside the bed. Bessie told me.

SHELBY. She was hysterical. I'd told her she'd have to accept the fact that it was over. She kept on crying. I got her a drink.

LAURA. And the two of you sat there drinking?

SHELBY. (*Crosses to phonograph*.) Yes. Until the doorbell rang.

LAURA. Don't leave me in suspense. What happened?

SHELBY. (*Turns to her*.) We didn't want to answer, but the light in the bedroom could be seen from the street. I told her to go to

the door and tell them she was staying here. I stayed in the bedroom

LAURA. Discreet of you.

SHELBY. The doorbell rang again. Then she opened the door and I heard the shot. I ran in the room was dark except for the light from the hall. Before I could reach her the door slammed...

(*Pause.*) I nearly fell over her body-I switched on the light-and bent down to.. *(Sits chair D. L.)* She was dead. *(Another pause*.) My first instinct was to call the police. I went to the phone.

I was about to pick it up when suddenly it occurred to me..

LAURA. *(Rises, crosses to R. of liquor cabinet.*) That it might be embarrassing for you to be found here. with her body, in my house. SHELBY. I wasn't thinking of myself.

LAURA. (*Crosses to below steps c.)* It'd be pretty ironic, wouldn't it, if it was one of her lovers who rang the bell?

SHELBY. She had no lovers.

LAURA. Don't flatter yourself. Joyce was pretty free with that long white body.

SHELBY. You have no right to say that.

LAURA. *(Crosses to L. sofa R.)* Or more ironic still, if no one rang it. If you killed her because you found she had another lover. *(Turns to him.)*

SHELBY. (*Rises, crosses two steps.)* Damn you, Laura!

LAURA. *(Sits L. arm sofa.)* You've a virgin mind, Shelby, that knows not what its body does.

SHELBY. (*Crosses to behind chair R*.) You're not going to cover

yourself by accusing me. *(Laura looks steadily at him for a moment.)*

LAURA. (*Quietly.*) Are you implying that I had anything to do with that murder?

SHELBY. You loaned her your apartment. You were the only one who could have known we'd be here.

LAURA. It's fantastic.

SHELBY. Why? You're still in love with me. That's why you came back Friday night

LAURA. You've got it all figured out, haven't you? With the usual Carpenter gallantry. Well, just try and prove it was me. Just try to prove that doorbell rang at all! (*Rises, crosses to Shelby. Laura crosses front of coffee table, around it, stops between it and sofa. Picks up pack of cigarettes, takes one*.)

SHELBY. *(With great control.)* I only hope you've got an alibi for that gun.

LAURA. *(Throws pack down*.) Why?

SHELBY. Because the B.B. shot that killed her was the same size as those in your shells. (*Laura puts cigarette in holder, looks for match. Shelby pulls out lighter, crosses to her, holds it out. She jerks away.)*

LAURA. You can't call me a murderer and light my cigarette. *(Crosses to table u. R., gets matches, crosses to L. of sofa, lights cigarette. Shelby crosses to D. R*.) Are you (Crosses to Shelby. dropping matches on coffee table.) are you going to tell McPherson that you think I did it?

SHELBY. *(Arms folded in front.*) You'll handle McPherson. Just

keep on the way you started. He's a pushover for you. (*Laura*

*slaps his face.*