

(**TOM** stops mid-sit and awkwardly straightens back up.)

BRIDGET. (cont.) Uh, I think my keys are there.

(He turns around to help her look. She throws her keys across the room. He goes to pick them up.)

THANKS! You...uh...help with the – milk.

(She pushes **TOM** towards **VERA**. **VERA** catches him, overjoyed, and grabs his butt. then she pulls him into the kitchen.)

Okay. Let's...camouflage!

(She puts the flyers in with a stack of her own boxes, places another box on top of it, and drapes all of them with a blanket from the couch.)

Perfect. (to kitchen) I'm just going to run downstairs and move the car.

(**BRIDGET** exits out the front door, leaving it open behind her. She turns to the left, where the stairs are. A small pause, then the 'ding!' of an elevator and **MR. SCHMIDT**, an overbearing man in his 60s, enters from the right.)

Start



TOM. (enters from kitchen) You're right, the charred taste goes away with the milk. Kind of. Oh. Hey, Mr. Schmidt.

MR. SCHMIDT. Officer? (excited) Don't tell me – she's finally died, hasn't she? Yes?

TOM. (mouth full) Naw, buht Vewra made thome cookie. Wan' won?

MR. SCHMIDT. No. (beat) Where the hell is Mrs. Charles?

TOM. Sylvia?

VERA. (entering from kitchen.) Hey copper, I found one that isn't quite as – Schmitty.

MR. SCHMIDT. Mrs. Walters. (awkward pause) Everything's fine in your apartment?

VERA. Everything's great except the fact my husband's still there. But since you're only the landlord, you can't fix that for me, can you?

MR. SCHMIDT. I see today is sarcastic day. Wonderful. Now look here, Mrs. Walters, where's your friend? We've got a few things to discuss.

VERA. What did you say?

MR. SCHMIDT. Mrs. Charles – where's Mrs. Charles?

VERA. Huh? Charlie who? Speak up.

MR. SCHMIDT. SYLVIA CHARLES.

VERA. WHAT ABOUT HER?

MR. SCHMIDT. WHERE IS SHE?

VERA. Haven't the faintest. (*exits into the kitchen*)

TOM. I think I should –

MR. SCHMIDT. No, you wait a minute. Are you on duty now?

TOM. Yes, and I really ought to –

MR. SCHMIDT. No. I need your help. There's been a lot of funny business going around my apartment building and I want to put an end to it, once and for all.

TOM. You mean break-ins?

MR. SCHMIDT. Well, in a sense. You see, a lot of visitors have been coming and going – and *not* checking in at the desk downstairs. *Elderly* visitors, and – are you gonna write this down, or what?

TOM. Oh! Right, of course. (*fumbles for notebook*) Has anyone reported anything missing?

MR. SCHMIDT. Well – no. But several noise complaints have been filed and a few residents have told me that they've had to buzz in strangers who were trying to visit *this* apartment.

TOM. Well, that's not a crime, really, sir.

MR. SCHMIDT. No, but it's fishy! What's an 83 year-old doing with a so many *old* friends? They have to start dying after a while, right?

TOM. Well, I'm not sure. Vera was just telling me that Sylvia's been working this nude –

SCHMIDT. And then there are all of those goddamn deliveries.

TOM. Deliveries?

SCHMIDT. Yeah, and they keep getting bigger. I don't know what she has shipped here all the time, but I just got a call from the desk man today saying UPS called about her boxes arriving earlier than expected and how they'd bring them over today.

TOM. I'm afraid I don't –

MR. SCHMIDT. Funny business, don't you see?

TOM. Kind of?

SCHMIDT. (*more to himself*) She thinks she can walk all over me, just because she has a rent-controlled apartment –

TOM. It's great, isn't it? Living smack in the middle of New York for a fraction of the cost.

SCHMIDT. Yeah. It's wonderful! You know what's really great?

TOM. What?

SCHMIDT. It's really great that her rent doesn't cover the heating bill for the month of December. I love eating the cost of that! I *love* spending money that I wouldn't HAVE to spend if some hotshot socialite moved in and paid me the NORMAL rent! But no. Do I have a socialite? No. I have Sylvia Charles, who has been here for 60 years and hasn't died yet.

TOM. Still kicking. (*toasts SYLVIA with the burnt cookie*)

SCHMIDT. There are a lot of bad people in the world. And there are all different kinds of thieves – *someone* here is taking advantage of New York City zoning laws, and worse – of me!

TOM. Really? (*enjoying this*) Who?

SCHMIDT. Are you following me?

TOM. (*teasing*) Sure I am. You're worried that someone might try to take advantage of Sylvia because she has a rent-controlled apartment. Right?

SCHMIDT. I – no –

TOM. (*playing with him*) But you don't think that somebody could take advantage of an 83 year-old woman? Who would be cold-blooded enough to try to extort her in some way?

SCHMIDT. Well – you never know.

TOM. Tell you what, how about I help you? I'll keep an eye on the apartment and I'll let you know if I see anything suspicious going on –

SCHMIDT. Really? (*Feels as though the tables have been turned but can't figure out exactly how that happened. Trying to regain control.*) Good. You do that. Here's my card. I want you to call me if anything happens – if people come over to visit, if she gets something in the mail, what time she leaves to walk the dog –

TOM. She doesn't have a dog –

SCHMIDT. Just do a little detective work.

TOM. I'll do that. (*happily and conversationally*) I always dreamed of being a detective, ever since I read those Hardy Boys books when I was a kid.

MR. SCHMIDT. Well that's nice, I guess. Just remember to call me if any funny business goes on here. (*exits out front door, turns to the right*)

TOM. (*calling after him*) Sure thing! Anything to help out Sylvia!

VERA. (*off, from kitchen*) HEY! I can't hear a damned thing. What's going on in there? Has Schmitty vacated the premises yet?

TOM. Yeah! He's gone.