

#2 Dunlap +
OSGOOD

DUNLAP. Yes, yes, Francis. Tell Mr. Hedges at the front desk to send Miss McFadden up as soon as she arrives. We'll check her in and bring up her bags afterwards.

FRANCIS. Yes sir.

(OTIS returns from the bedroom and the two bellhops move to the hall door.)

(They open it to find MRS. EVERETT P. OSGOOD standing there.)

FRANCIS. Oh, Hi Mrs. Osgood.

OTIS. Hi Mrs. Osgood.

MRS. OSGOOD. Hello boys.

(FRANCIS and OTIS exit.)

(MRS. OSGOOD moves into the suite, taking off her gloves. She is President of the Palm Beach Ladies for Unity and a dozen organizations like it. She is matronly and stylish and always a bit daft. One of the First Ladies of Palm Beach Society, she looks at the War Effort as if it were one of her cotillions.)

MRS. OSGOOD. Now then Mr. Dunlap, how did we do?

DUNLAP. (Indicating the suite:) See for yourself. One hundred percent renovated. And on schedule. As promised.

MRS. OSGOOD. Oh, it's lovely. Just perfect. Even better than before.

DUNLAP. It should be, for all the money it cost.

MRS. OSGOOD. I certainly hope the United States Army won't be asked to contribute to the cost of this renovation.

DUNLAP. Of course not.

MRS. OSGOOD. You see, these boys are putting their lives on the line for all of us here in America. They deserve to let off a little steam.

DUNLAP. Even if it means demolishing a hotel suite or two.

MRS. OSGOOD. Come now, don't be petty. The damage they caused couldn't have been that bad.

DUNLAP. Mrs. Osgood, I realize how important it is that you and your Palm Beach Ladies for Unity—

MRS. OSGOOD. (Proudly:) The PBLFU.

DUNLAP. (Beat.) Yes. As I was saying, I realize how important it is that you sponsor these little weekend leaves for our GI's.

MRS. OSGOOD. Oh yes, indeed.

DUNLAP. But don't you think there are more...suitable venues?

MRS. OSGOOD. Suitable?

DUNLAP. The Palm Beach Royale has been a staple of Palm Beach Society for close to fifty years. Presidents and royalty have stayed in this very suite.

MRS. OSGOOD. Well if it's good enough for royalty, it's good enough for our boys on the battlefield.

DUNLAP. (*Indicating a wall:*) Mrs. Osgood, this last weekend we found a young GI stuck through the wall.

MRS. OSGOOD. As I said, they need to let off steam.

(*Beat.*)

DUNLAP. The *wall*, Mrs. Osgood. *The wall.*

MRS. OSGOOD. I'm sure there was a perfectly good reason.

DUNLAP. He was wearing nothing but a lampshade, singing "Begin the Beguine."

MRS. OSGOOD. So what's your point?

DUNLAP. My point is—

MRS. OSGOOD. (*Cutting him off:*) Really of no interest to me. Mr. Dunlap, as long as this war is on, and as long as my husband is Chairman of the Board for this hotel, the Palm Beach Royale, and everyone on its staff—including yourself—will continue to give their all to support the War Effort. Whether that be by hosting USO functions, organizing fund drives... (*Beat.*) ...or pulling GIs out of its walls. Is that understood, Mr. Dunlap?

DUNLAP. (*Beat.*) Perfectly.

MRS. OSGOOD. I'm so very fond of you. I would hate for you to have to start looking for employment at another "staple of Palm Beach Society."

DUNLAP. As would I.

MRS. OSGOOD. (*Delighted:*) Then we understand each other.

DUNLAP. Yes Madam. I assure you, we will continue to do our very best to accommodate your boys in uniform.

MRS. OSGOOD. Excellent. Now then, let's discuss tonight. Is everything on schedule?

DUNLAP. Yes Madam. Everything, *and I do mean everything*, is set and ready to go. Every last detail has been attended to.

MRS. OSGOOD. The ballroom downstairs?

DUNLAP. The chandeliers are gleaming. The woodwork is polished. The orchestra has been rehearsing all day.

MRS. OSGOOD. This is a very important night Mr. Dunlap.

DUNLAP. Don't I know it.

MRS. OSGOOD. This is the largest War Benefit the Palm Beach Ladies for Unity has ever thrown. There are reporters here from all over the world. Just think, tonight's benefit will be broadcast live on radios from sea to shining sea.

DUNLAP. The technicians are setting up their equipment downstairs as we speak.

MRS. OSGOOD. The ears of the nation will be looking down *upon us*.

DUNLAP. And, I assure you, the Palm Beach Royale will sparkle like the diamond she is.

MRS. OSGOOD. Of course she will. I have complete faith in you. (*Beat.*) What about the entertainment?

DUNLAP. What about it?

MRS. OSGOOD. Has everyone arrived?

DUNLAP. Everyone, except for Claudia McFadden and Athena Sinclair.

MRS. OSGOOD. Goodness, let's hope they don't arrive at the same time.

DUNLAP. Could you imagine?

MRS. OSGOOD. And Claudia McFadden will be staying here in the Presidential Suite?

DUNLAP. Yes.

MRS. OSGOOD. And Miss Sinclair?

DUNLAP. A suite on another floor, on the other side of the hotel.

MRS. OSGOOD. Perfect. And the show?

DUNLAP. Everything's set. Everything's perfect. I've timed every act down to the second. Miss Sinclair will perform at precisely 8:40. She'll be done and offstage by 9:00. After that, we have Jimmy Durante. Miss McFadden doesn't take the stage 'til 9:30. By that time, Athena Sinclair will be back up in her suite. They'll never see each other.

MRS. OSGOOD. That's good. Miss McFadden was adamant that she at no time be on the same stage, or for that matter be in the same room, with Athena Sinclair. It's a shame really. The last National War Fund Benefit those two headlined raised over sixty thousand dollars. People went just to see if they'd kill each other.

DUNLAP. They won't get anywhere near each other. I guarantee it.

MRS. OSGOOD. Good man. We don't want any unnecessary drama. Tonight's benefit is too important.

DUNLAP. As you know, Mrs. Osgood, I run a very tight ship. Nothing happens at the Palm Beach Royale, unless I allow it.

(Suddenly the hall door bursts open and DORA DEL RIO enters the room. DORA is the quintessential gossip reporter. She is Hedda Hopper on speed.)

DORA. Darling, I... *(Seeing it's DUNLAP:)* ...Oh crap, it's only you.

DUNLAP. Miss del Rio. What a nightmarish surprise.

DORA. I've come to chat with Claudia McFadden.

DUNLAP. Who?

DORA. Very funny. Is she here yet?

DUNLAP. I haven't the vaguest idea what you're talking about. *(To MRS. OSGOOD:)* Mrs. Osgood, I don't believe you've had the... what's the word I want?

DORA. Pleasure?

DUNLAP. Not so much. *(The word comes to him:)* "Occasion" to meet Miss Dora del Rio?

MRS. OSGOOD. I'm afraid I haven't.

DUNLAP. Miss del Rio has the...*distinction*...of writing a column for *The Palm Beach Tattler*.

MRS. OSGOOD. I'm afraid I'm not familiar with that publication.

DUNLAP. Lucky you. *(Back to DORA:)* Now then, Miss del Rio, allow me to show you the door. Or shall I call security.

DORA. I was told Miss McFadden would be staying in this suite.

DUNLAP. You were told wrong.

DORA. What if I told you Miss McFadden invited me here herself.

DUNLAP. I would say you were lying.

DORA. Rumor has it she's planning an all-out assault on Athena Sinclair. She's still fuming from the last benefit they did together.