

THE SHOE

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CAST

Charles Cnkjolwinshanski (nuh-KOWL-win-*shan*-ski) - a private detective
William Bentley - The Prince of Wall Street
Sandra Donner - a television news producer
Cindy Ellerby - a business executive
Waiter - a good Joe

SCENE

A unit set, staged minimally.

The stage is set minimally, with a small desk and chair stage right and a dining table with a white tablecloth left. LIGHTS UP: A Venetian blind pattern. MUSIC UP: Sexy saxophone music, like *Harlem Nocturne*.

CHARLIE ENTERS. He puts on a tie and jacket, using the audience like a mirror

CHARLIE

My name's Charles Cnokjolwinshanski (nuh-KOWL-win-shan-ski). Yeah, I'm a Pollack. You want to make something of it? The Joes and Jills I hang out with can't say it either, so they call me Charlie Knuckles. I'm a private detective. A guy suspects his wife is cheating, a businessman thinks his partner's a crook, somebody's daughter runs off with the latest variation of James Dean, they call me. I make two hundred a day plus expenses.

Charlie puts on a trench coat

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I got a call from the swanky part of town, the kind of address a guy like me never gets on an engraved invitation. I met my client in a restaurant where the napkins alone were more expensive than anything I own.

SOUND UP: restaurant noises. LIGHTS cross-fade to stage left. WILLIAM BENTLEY enters. Charlie puts on a snap brim hat and crosses to him

WILLIAM

Thank you for coming, Mr. -- ?

CHARLIE

Charlie.

WILLIAM

I'm William Bentley. Perhaps you've heard of me. They call me the Prince of Wall Street.

CHARLIE

Prince like in Prince Charming, or Prince like in Machiavelli?

WILLIAM

I'm impressed. You know your classical literature.

CHARLIE

I did four years on a bum rap. Had a lot of time to catch up on my reading.

WILLIAM

I always thought it was better to be feared than to be loved. But I have fallen in love now, deeply in love.

CHARLIE

Sorry to hear that.

WAITER enters

WILLIAM

Drink?

CHARLIE

Never touch it.

WAITER exits

WILLIAM

Friday I went to a charity ball. I met a woman there. To say she was beautiful would be an understatement. Her eyes were a glimpse of heaven, filled with the moon and the stars.

CHARLIE

That's trouble all right.

WILLIAM

We danced for hours, cheek to cheek. I felt like I'd met the empty half of my soul. Just before midnight, I told her I'd fallen in love with her.

CHARLIE

(laughs)

WILLIAM

You don't believe in love at first sight.

CHARLIE

Did she?

WILLIAM

She ran out of the room. I caught up with her at the elevator, but too late. The doors closed and she was gone.

CHARLIE pulls out a notebook

CHARLIE

What's her name?

WILLIAM

She never told me. The hostess didn't know either. Apparently she crashed the party. All I have is this.

WILLIAM places a woman's shoe on the table.

CHARLIE

That's a shoe.

WILLIAM

I'm praying that's not the extent of your detective skills. I know it's hers because I'd spent the last four hours memorizing everything about her.

CHARLIE

I'm a private eye, Mr. Bentley. What you need is a psychic.

WILLIAM

I'll pay you to give it the old school try.

CHARLIE

I make four hundred a day, plus expenses.

WILLIAM hands him a check

WILLIAM

That's a flat rate. Find her, and I'll give you another one just like it.

CHARLIE

I just moved everything else to the back burners.

WILLIAM hands him the shoe

WILLIAM

Be careful with it.

CHARLIE

I don't get it. Why this dame? A guy like you could have any woman in the world.

WILLIAM

I've had the kind of women money can buy. This one's different. Find her for me. I'll be very appreciative.

WILLIAM exits. LIGHTS fade stage right, and Charlie enters a spot down center. As Charlie speaks, WAITER changes white tablecloth to black.

CHARLIE

Bentley had it bad -- or maybe he wasn't telling me the whole story. You get a sense for that sort of thing in my line of work, a tingling under the skin, and right now I was itching from head to toe. I took the shoe to a high-class boutique. They told me it was expensive and well-made. But the designer label had been removed, and they couldn't tell where it came from. So I put in a call to Sandra.

The waiter exits.

LIGHTS RISE SR. SANDRA DONNER enters with a stack of files. She makes notes as if the fourth wall were a bulletin board

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Sandy had come to me a few years back because she thought her husband was cheating on her. I tailed the guy, took a roll of pictures -- and Sandra took him to the cleaners. She used the money to study TV Journalism and now she was a producer of the nightly news. So I dropped by the station.

LIGHTS CHANGE: CENTER SPOT FADES as Charlie enters Sandra's space

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Hello, sweetheart.

SANDRA

Charlie Knuckles. I'd rather see the devil himself. Two years, Charlie. You haven't called once.

CHARLIE

I brought you a present.

He sets the shoe on the desk

SANDRA

Most guys bring flowers.

CHARLIE

My client's paying top dollar to find the other half of that pair. I was thinking you could run something on your program.

SANDRA

It's a network show, Charlie. We don't do lost and found.

CHARLIE

Not even for William Bentley?

SANDRA

The Prince of Wall Street? Hm.

CHARLIE

The guy's in love with the woman who dropped it. I figure that's got some human interest. Use my number. I'll handle the calls.

SANDRA

What's in it for me?

CHARLIE

Ten percent.

SANDRA

No. I want dinner for two, Top of the Mark.

CHARLIE

Top of the Mark's a classy place.

SANDRA

A girl likes being treated with a little class every now and then. And sometimes she likes pizza and the late show, if the right guy's around.

CHARLIE

It's a deal. Run the item, I'll spring for the date.

SANDRA

One more thing, Charlie. The date is with you.

Sandra exits. Charlie turns to the audience.

CHARLIE

Well, whatta ya know? Looks like the bitter divorcee is over her grief. Well, I don't mind helping her get back in the swing. After all, what's a friend for?

LIGHTS CHANGE: DOWNSTAGE SPOT. Charlie steps into the light.