

Bullets Over Broadway

INT. HELEN SINCLAIR'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sid Loomis and Helen Sinclair are arguing. Sid (Helen's agent) is trying to convince her to take the part in David Shayne's upcoming play.

HELEN

You must be joking! You want me to play some frumpy housewife who gets dumped for a flapper? Don't you remember who I am? Don't you know who you represent? I'm Helen Sinclair!

SID

Definitely! You are definitely Helen Sinclair! I look at you and say Helen Sinclair! But who better to play that role?

HELEN

Under who's direction? Some novice!

SID

He's the author.

HELEN

Of two flops.

They talk over one another.

SID

Julian says it's the directors who messed up those projects.

HELEN

Oh Julian...Julian Marx! I do plays put on by Belasco or Sam Harris. Not some Yiddish pants salesman turned producer! My ex-husband used to say, "If you're gonna go down, go down with the best of them!"

SID

Which ex-husband?

HELEN

Oh, I don't know which ex-husband. The one with the mustashe.

SID

Listen to me, authors are very often the best directors of their own work.

HELEN

She's dowdy. The ingenue has all the hot lines. Even the female psychiatrist is a better role.

SID

But the role of Sylvia Poston is the *lead*.

HELEN

Sylvia Poston...even the name reeks of Orbach's. I do Elektra. I do Lady Macbeth. I do plays by Noel and Phil Barry or at least Max Anderson.

SID

Helen, listen to me, this is a major part in a serious play. And let's face it, Helen, you have not been in a hit in a long time. In a long, long, long time.

HELEN

I'm still a star!

(beat)

I never play frumps or virgins!

The doorbell rings.

SID

You are a star because you are great. And you are a great star! But let me tell you something Helen, in the last couple of years you're better known as an adulteress and a drunk and I say this in all due respect.

HELEN

Look, I haven't had a drink since New Year's Eve.

SID

You're talking Chinese New Year's?

HELEN

Naturally! Still! That's two days, Sid, do you know how long that is for me?!

(beat)

What is it Josette?

JOSETTE  
It's some flowers.

HELEN  
Well, bring them here, will you?

SID  
Helen, I gotta tell you...the offers aren't pouring in like they used to.

HELEN  
(re: flowers)  
They're from David Shayne.  
(quoting the note included with the flowers)  
"As a small artist to a greater one, that you merely consider my play is all the fulfillment I require." Hmmm...what's he like?

SID  
I hear he's terrific. A genius ready to emerge.

HELEN  
I have to be billed over the title.

SID  
Where else?

HELEN  
Approval of the leading man. The star's dressing room.

SID  
This is not even a question.

HELEN  
Approval of all photos of me. It's still not a very glamorous role but maybe I could meet with David. Maybe we could go over the script. Maybe there's a few ways we could find to brighten her up. Hmmm?

She picks up a decanter - primed to drink from it.

HELEN (CONT'D)  
Why am I nervous?

She drinks.

END SCENE