

Scene 1

SETTING: BENNETT's Office.

AT RISE: Morning.

(As the music cue fades, BENNETT stands facing the audience. During the speech, he works his way over to his chair and sits down. As this happens, JENNY appears and eases herself into a chair facing him.)

BENNETT

Sometimes I can still see Jenny, as clearly as if she were here right now.

I can still see myself trying to warn her, the last time I saw her. Jenny, impetuously in love, heedless of the impact on her son and daughter, and on me, if I'm being honest about it. Jenny, who never responded well to warnings, who trusted for no good reason that things would turn out well.

I was her lawyer, and I would have been more than that to her, if she had let me. And I knew, I just knew, from the moment Dorsey had turned up in her life, that he was bad news. Don't put him in your will, I said. Think of your son. Think of your daughter, I said.

But she just laughed that silvery laugh of hers ...

(JENNY, onstage and sitting down, laughs)

... and told me:

JENNY

No, Bennett, you darling old thing. I know you only want to protect me, but I know what I want. Dorsey makes me happy. If anything happens to me, everything goes to Dorsey. Period. End of discussion. Now, where do I sign?

BENNETT

(to audience, suiting his actions to his words)
Filled with apprehension, I pushed the will forward, the will she'd asked me to write for her, and slid a pen across to her. And to my surprise, she'd reached past the pen, and seized my hand.

JENNY

(Seizing his hand and clasping it for a moment)
You've always been there for me, Bennett, and you always will be. I know that! And that's why I'm perfectly comfortable signing this!

BENNETT

(to audience, as JENNY releases BENNETT's hand and takes the pen and signs the will)
Yes, good old reliable Bennett, that was me! I wondered how much my paralegals, standing in the doorway, waiting to witness Jenny's signature, understood of what they were seeing. Did they sense the long solitary years of hopeless admiration? Did they intuit what it had been like for me, living for the occasional touch of her hand, while Jenny married, and then became a mother, and then a widow? Or how it had felt when Dorsey had come on the scene, dashing my last hopes?

(JENNY exits, and DORSEY and DORSEY'S GIRLFRIEND fill the two seats, as cue music plays.)

Just looking at Dorsey and the woman, I knew.

(DORSEY and DORSEY'S GIRLFRIEND enact what BENNETT is describing.)

Sitting across from me, they weren't even subtle. The back of his hand brushing her knee, and her possessive glances at him. This must have been going on while Jenny was still alive.

Poor Jenny! How I wished there were some way to interfere with this tawdry show. But what could I do? There was no way to avoid carrying out Jenny's instructions, and transferring Jenny's considerable fortune to her boyfriend - and so, inexorably, to the girlfriend! Helplessly, as if I were in a bad dream, I spent the next half hour briefing the two of them about how the Estate should be probated in light of Jenny's will that I had in my possession, and about the mechanics of making them terribly wealthy.

(DORSEY and DORSEY'S GIRLFRIEND exit, as transition music plays, and continues playing throughout the next speech.)

I had judged it indiscreet to mention to them the conference I'd scheduled a half hour later: with Garth and Candace, Jenny's two children. It was a melancholy pleasure when my secretary showed these two in.

(GARTH and CANDACE enter as if they had been escorted. BENNETT shakes their hands enthusiastically and sympathetically, and motions them to sit down, which they do, as he speaks. Transition music fades out during the next speech.)

They're charming young people. Exactly the kind I would have liked to call my own if - that was a thought I didn't finish.

I was blunt with them.

(Addressing GARTH and CANDACE.)

Dorsey gets it all. That's the way it has to be.

(GARTH nods glumly. CANDACE is not convinced.)

CANDACE

How can you let that happen?

BENNETT

What can anyone do? She signed a will right in this room giving it all to him.

CANDACE

You know he killed her!

BENNETT

I know nothing of the sort, Candace. The medical examiner said her injuries were entirely consistent with being thrown from her horse.

CANDACE

Or with being thrown off her horse!

BENNETT

There's not a shred of evidence to support that notion,
(to audience)