

THE UNDERSTUDY

"The show must go on," said the director when the star dropped dead moments before act one. The star, not the understudy, would play the corpse tonight.

The understudy changed quickly. His performance was inspired. The star was flawless in his final role.

The understudy, fingering the syringe in his pocket, bowed to thunderous applause.

SHEREE PELLEMIER

ACCIDENTS

Reginald Cooke had buried three wives before he married Cecile Northwood.

"Tragic accidents," he told her.

"How sad," replied Cecile. "Were they ... wealthy?"

"And beautiful," said Reginald.

They honeymooned in the Alps.

Later, Cecile told her new husband, "You know, darling, my first husband died in a tragic mountaineering accident."

"How sad," replied Justin Marlow

MARK COHEN

AT THE CANYON

The newlywed heiress oozed, "Poopsy, the sign reads, `Clairvoyant Canyon. Call Out a Question. Wait for Answering Echoes.'"

Overhanging a guardrail, she called, "Does he love me?"

"-Does he? Does he?" came the echo.

Discomfited, she tried again. "Is unhappiness behind me?"

"-Behind you, behind you-" it prognosticated, just before her new beneficiary shoved.

CURT HOMAN

IN THE GARDEN

Standing there in the garden, she saw him running toward her.

"Tina! My flower! The love of my life!"

He'd said it at last.

"Oh, Tom!"

"Tina, my flower!"

"Oh, Tom! I love you, too!"

Tom reached her, knelt down, and quickly pushed her aside.

"My flower! You were standing on my prize-winning rose!"

HOPE A. TORRES