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At the end of each script is a list of what is included in the Production Packet for that show. A Production Order form is also included.

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MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE

An Audience-Participation Murder-Mystery

by

Eileen Moushey

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INTRODUCTION

MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE is written to be performed in conjunction with cocktails and dinner. All of the characters engage in improvisational scenes that describe their personalities, their relationships with each other, and provide clues to the crime that will occur. And, although unscripted, these scenes need to be performed in a loud and obvious manner, in order to draw attention. Additionally, every attempt should be made to include local references. This interaction and improvisation is made easier by the fact that a number of the characters will be "working" for the caterer and will have ample opportunity to mingle with the audience.

Following these scenes, (*and dinner*) a crime will occur. Two detectives, who've been attending "undercover", will conduct the investigation. This will take the form of an interrogation of each of the suspects. These suspects will, of course, attempt to lie about their motives, whereabouts, etc. But they will be "caught" by the amateur detectives who will give testimony against them. This scene is partially scripted, but it will be up to the actors to ad-lib reactions and embellish this portion of the evening.

Following the official interrogation, audience members will be able to question the suspects individually and offer solutions. Following dessert and "balloting", a solution scene will be played. The suspect who gets the most votes will, indeed, be the guilty party. There is a solution scene for each suspect.

Since no one actually "solves" the mystery, if you choose to award prizes, they can be for individual detectives. Your actors can choose them. Categories might include: "Most Determined Detective", "Most Confused Detective", etc. (See PRODUCTION MANUAL for ideas for prizes.)

A TIMETABLE FOR THE EVENT

6:00 Doors open. Registration.
6:15 Cocktails
6:30 MARJORIE RICHMOND arrives
7:00 Dinner
8:00 MARJORIE dies, interrogation scenes
9:00 Dessert, coffee, vote
9:30 Solution scene
9:45 Prizes, intro cast, etc.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARJORIE RICHMOND - Forties or older. Flamboyant. She's the author of several best-selling books on cooking and entertaining. She is accustomed to getting her own way and quite willing to cut down anyone who's in her path. Inspires fear in those around her. She is dressed to the "nines" including a long fringed scarf, which she loves to toss around.

JEFFREY QUINLAN - MARJORIE's much-younger husband. He's obviously married her for wealth and life in the fast lane. And he's lived to regret it. A nice guy - a bit spoiled, perhaps, with very expensive taste. A real charmer with the ladies, but really only loves one - KIM.

CHEF ROBERTO DI NAPOLI - Thirty to fifty. Dressed in the traditional apron and hat. Very dramatic and volatile. Also ambitious. He is a womanizer and flirt, although BLANCHE is the one who sets his heart racing.

KIMBERLY ALLEN - Twenties. Works for the caterer. Not overly bright. Knows what she wants and goes after it. Not a virgin. By a mile. Been downtown on the bus a few times, but plays the child when it suits her. Madly in love with JEFF.

BLANCHE REARDON - Thirties. Works for the caterer. She is

nursing a broken heart. It was one year ago tonight that the love-of-her-life, her fiance' Chuck, was killed by a hit-and-run while at work (*he was the Orange Barrel Co-ordinator for the city of Akron.*) BLANCHE is vaguely aware of ROBERTO'S attention.

MILTON FLOOG - Any age. A Class A dweeb. He wears thick glasses (*until he loses them*) and is generally a klutz. He is also hopelessly enamored of KIM, who barely tolerates his attentions.

DETECTIVE JOE CARMEN - A real cop's cop. Blunt, ambitious and hard-hitting. Joe Friday on speed.

DETECTIVE HANK MIRANDA - Unlikely police material. A nice guy who believes in giving everyone the benefit of the doubt. The Alan Alda of the Police Department.

NOTE: Despite the obvious disparate styles and personalities of the detectives, JOE and HANK complement each other well. As partners of long standing they get along for the most part. Squabbles and impatience surface at times, but nothing serious. Like a marriage, their relationship has its ups and downs. In fact, they are attending the mystery "undercover" - posing as a married couple. Hank is the "wife" and is in drag. No one is fooled. (*We used an actor who was quite large, and hairy, and had a moustache. The effect with the wig and high heels was wondrous.*)

SCENE ONE - THE SUSPECTS GATHER

The audience arrives, registers and mingles. MARJORIE and JEFFREY have not arrived.

BLANCHE is serving canapes. She is generally unhappy and on the verge of tears. She makes reference to the date - it was to have been her wedding day. At this point she won't want to reveal any more than that. Doesn't want to put a damper on anyone's fun, etc.

KIM is also serving. She is very sweet and helpful and points out her favorite kind of canape. She checks out the men, and isn't above a little flirting.

MILTON is also serving. He is wearing thick glasses and he spends a great deal of time looking for KIM. He's clumsy and awkward (*holds the tray too high, for example.*) He is obviously in love with KIM. He may commiserate with BLANCHE about this, but she always manages to turn it back to her own problems.

CHEF ROBERTO DI NAPOLI is moving all around the room, sampling the food, instructing servers, etc. He will charm the ladies and generally "work" the room.

JOE and HANK will arrive. HANK is really trying to play the "Mrs." but JOE will be clearly be uncomfortable with THAT.

MARJORIE and JEFFREY enter. And, that's exactly what it is. An ENTRANCE! CHEF ROBERTO will rush to her and make a huge fuss over her. She is the famous cookbook and entertainment author, MARJORIE RICHMOND. Could it be she is there to interview him for her latest book - *THE GREAT CHEFS OF OHIO?* He will do his best to impress her. In fact, after this he does some heavy-duty groveling.

MARTIN, KIM, and BLANCHE will also want to get a look at the famous writer. A crowd will gather.

KIM will be visibly upset when she spots JEFFREY. JEFFREY will be visibly upset when he spots KIM.

JOE will not be overly excited by MARJORIE's appearance, although HANK might want to ask for her autograph since he has all her books.

ROBERTO will introduce MARJORIE to the audience. MARJORIE will be imperious (*her version of gracious*) and remark how she loves coming to Akron. Especially since her hobby is "barrelling" - driving down the highway and seeing how many she can hit with her specially designed Cadillac.

At this BLANCHE will drop her tray, scream, and faint. MILTON will rush to her side and throw a glass of water in her face. BLANCHE will not be grateful. Upon being helped to her feet she will go to MARJORIE and interrupting (*if necessary*) ask when she last came to Akron. It was, of course, ABOUT one year ago.

KIM will witness BLANCHE'S scolding of MILTON. He'll then begin pestering her and beg her to go out with him, promising all kinds of excitement - miniature golf, karaoke, etc. He will be insistent, grabbing her, etc. until she is forced to throw water in his face. He will exit (*to the "kitchen", where he will "lose" his glasses.*)

ROBERTO, upon hearing of BLANCHE'S faint, will rush to her with a show of concern. BLANCHE'S doesn't believe him, suggests he try these techniques with all the women who obviously appreciate them. She loves Chuck, she's always loved Chuck, she always WILL love Chuck. BLANCHE walks away. ROBERTO calls out loudly after her. "BUT HE'S-A DEAD GUY, BABY. WHY DO YOU WANNA GO ON AND-A LOVE A DEAD GUY? IT'S A NOT SO GOOD IN BED, YOU KNOW? IF-A ONE-A DA PLAYERS IS-A LITTLE BIT DEAD!"

The detectives will "interview" BLANCHE and make sure she is

okay. JOE is continually on the lookout for "potential, quasi, pseudo, and ipso facto" foul play. HANK will want to know who does her hair.

JEFFREY will attempt to talk to KIM. She is torn. She'll tell him to go away but then be drawn to him. He will take a tray from her (*giving it to a bystander*) and attempt to arrange an assignation. Before this gets very far, however, we will hear the not-so-melodious tones of MARJORIE calling for JEFFREY. JEFFREY will ignore her at first, then reluctantly go to her.

MARJORIE does not like to be kept waiting. JEFFREY tries to excuse it by claiming to be "daydreaming". MARJORIE "wakes him" by throwing a drink in his face and then ordering him to fetch another.

SCENE TWO - A DINNER TO DIE FOR

When originally performed, MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE it was performed with a buffet dinner. It works equally well with a "sit-down" dinner. Various activities described within this scene may need to be adapted slightly.

BLANCHE is serving. She is once again near tears. If asked she'll just say it's because this should have been her wedding day. And exactly one year ago, her fiance' was killed.

ROBERTO will be supervising the serving, giving pointers, etc. When he sees BLANCHE'S state, he will try to comfort her but she just tells him to get lost. Obviously depressed, he will ask the advice of men in the line. Then it will occur to him to ask for KIM'S help. He will draft an audience member, from the buffet line, to take KIM'S station and serve for a while. He will discuss the situation with her - how BLANCHE can't get over Chuck, and how she lives only in the past and for revenge. KIM will offer that it's probably because of the tragic way that Chuck died. He was the victim of a hit and run. KIM will advise him to give up.

MILTON is also serving. But because he's lost his glasses he has a difficult time.

As MARJORIE and JEFFREY go through the buffet line and meet the other characters, there will be obvious reactions. BLANCHE will be deeply suspicious and glare. ROBERTO will grovel and flatter. When MARJORIE isn't looking, JEFFREY and KIM will touch hands across the serving table, and JEFF will pass her a note (*in full view of plenty of witnesses.*)

The detectives will proceed as the other guests, although it will be patently obvious that JOE is getting a little tired of his "wife."

The audience is seated, eating dinner and enjoying the musical entertainment.

BLANCHE is circulating, filling water glasses. She'll pick a man to tell that he looks just like her "Chuck". She'll ask what he does. She'll then describe how her Chuck was the Orange Barrel Supervisor for the City of Akron. It's so ironic that his life's work became the instrument of his death.

KIM is also circulating, asking if everything's okay, etc. She'll pick a sympathetic older lady and tell her that she looks just like her Mom. And her Mom was so smart. You could tell her stuff, ya know. And she'd tell ya what was the right thing to do. Like if you knew someone - okay - if ya loved someone and they were really unhappy because somebody else was like real mean. Cruel, like, well you have NO idea how wicked some people can be. So if you like really love this person - not the bad one - but the other one. I mean, how far can you go to help the person you love?

MILTON is being his usual klutzy self, near-sighted and looking for KIM. He will meet up with ROBERTO, who is working the room, telling one and all that when he is included in MARJORIE RICHMOND'S next book, *The Great Chefs of Ohio*, his career will be made. They will commiserate on unrequited love.

ROBERTO makes a decision. He will no longer pursue BLANCHE. After he is famous, women will be falling all over him. He chooses one now and spends the rest of dinner attempting to get a date. MILTON, however, realizes he has a slim chance of becoming famous. KIM is the only girl for him and she will realize it soon and will become his wife. It is becoming obvious that, on the subject of KIM, MILTON is a few croutons short of a salad.

MILTON, BLANCHE, and KIM will help with removing dishes, etc.

ROBERTO will come to pay homage to MARJORIE several times. It will wear thin with her.

MARJORIE will send JEFFREY to fetch another drink, while she goes to the "ladies." She exits.

On his way to the bar JEFF will come face to face with KIM. In full view of the diners he will grab her, declare his love, promise that somehow they'll be together and finally, give her a passionate kiss. (*This must be done VERY dramatically.*) As they break apart KIM, stunned, will ask take a (*preset*) glass of water and throw it in her own face.

MILTON, squinting, will ask an audience member if that was KIM, who was she with, what were they doing, etc. He will be furios, muttering threats against JEFFREY, etc. He will try to find JEFFREY (*blindly, asking for help, directions, etc.*) and will accost him just as he is rejoined by MARJORIE. Mistaking MARJORIE for JEFFREY, MILTON will demand that he keep his hands off his fiance', etc.

KIM will hear the commotion, join the fray, and deny ever being MILTON'S date, much less his fiancee', etc. BLANCHE joins in the ruckus, which escalates until ROBERTO hurries over. He attempts to placate MARJORIE and succeeds in restoring order. When he can finally be heard, he apologizes to MARJORIE, and

dramatically fires all of them. They file out, grumbling and making remarks. MARJORIE appears to be satisfied.

JEFFREY excuses himself to go the men's room. MARJORIE downs her drink and heads to the bar. (*Where she will get a glass of water.*) ROBERTO follows, still apologizing. (*And also getting a glass of water.*) MARJORIE stops, turns and finally informs ROBERTO that she knows why she is getting the royal treatment, and he might as well "knock it off". It won't do any good because she has already decided not to include ROBERTO in her next book. She doesn't really like Italian chefs. "They're soo....ethnic. Lovely meal and all that, but sorry, Roberto."

ROBERTO is stunned. "Letta me getta this straight, hokay." When he does, and she agrees that he's got the picture, he tells her that "You're a one-a beeg-time Bitch, you know." She replies that she thinks he needs his Italian big mouth washed out. And while she doesn't have the soap, she can certainly supply the water. And throws her glass of water in his face. And he throws his in hers. This leads to her exit, she doesn't need to be treated this way, etc. ROBERTO follows, screaming Italian.

By this time dinner should be over. Several things will be occurring simultaneously. All of the actors except MARJORIE will station themselves in hiding places throughout the theatre. The HOSTESS will go onstage.

SCENE THREE - MURDER ON THE MENU

HOSTESS: Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My name is _____. It is my responsibility, at this time to present an audience participation murder-mystery here at the _____. As some of you may know, I have done been doing this for (*several years, this is my first one, whatever!*) What you do not know is that I have been increasingly bothered of late with the preoccupation we have for violence and murder. It's lead to a crisis of

conscience for me. Do I really want to contribute, in any way, to the growing trend in America... the trend that says murder is fun. Murder is a game. Murder, is, big business for *(real name)*. The answer, ladies and gentlemen, is "NO". How can I earn money turning murder and killing into an evening's entertainment? I've got to live with myself. So I hope you understand. There won't be a murder-mystery here tonight. Or any other night. I'm retiring from the murder for entertainment game. No, no, please. Understand. I just can't do it anymore. Not that it hasn't been fun. Because it has. We've had some very good times, my amateur detectives and I. And I'm still proud of the work we did, sick as it may be. Because whatever it was, we gave it our all. So, no mystery, ladies and gentlemen, but a song for you to ponder on your way home tonight.

She launches into "MY WAY" and, mercifully, following one verse, is interrupted by shots from the lobby.

The two detectives stand, take charge, instruct all to stay in their seats, etc. MARJORIE, bloodied, staggers down the aisle. The detectives keep everyone back and call for doctors, etc. as she collapses dramatically. The Body Removal team goes into action and removes MARJORIE accompanied by the HOSTESS. JOE will ask for volunteers (5 - 10) to search the theatre to find the murder weapon and any of the people who were involved in the argument with the victim earlier in the evening.

While they are gone, JOE and HANK introduce themselves as detectives with the Akron Police Department. JOE explains that the (HOSTESS/ORGANIZATION NAME) has an unfortunate reputation. They do "these murder game things" and before you know it, the coroner has one more stiff on ice. The Chief thought that it might be a good idea for the two of them to attend, undercover.

HANK: And if two guys were to attend, people might get suspicious, or think they were...y'know, odd.

JOE:and this way we just blended in? Do me a favor, will ya, Hank? Take the wig off.

HANK does. Although JOE admits that he thinks maybe HANK enjoys the Donna Reed disguise just a little too much.

The HOSTESS will return and announce that MARJORIE RICHMOND has died. Which makes it murder, according to the Detectives, who are quick to pick up on this sort of thing.

When the murder weapon (a gun) is found, JOE will take it. The person who finds it may deliver it with care, to avoid smudging fingerprints. Or they may just handle it. JOE will either congratulate or castigate. ("Do you ever watch TV? Heard of fingerprints?")

Hopefully, by this time the other "volunteers" will have rounded up BLANCHE, ROBERTO, JEFFREY, and KIM. JOE will bring them onstage, where the HOSTESS will supply each with a chair. He will also thank his "deputies" and ask each:

- 1) Where the suspect was found?
- 2) Did they say or do anything that may have a bearing on the case?
- 3) Did they give any trouble?

The interrogation will begin.

SCENE FOUR - Q & A

The format of the interrogation is based on audience "testimony". JOE basically directs things from onstage while HANK moves around the audience. HANK and HOSTESS will have hand "mikes" which they will use "Donahue-style" to elicit responses.

JOE: Ladies and gentlemen, once again (*or for the first time*) _____ is the scene of violence and murder. Famed author and entertainment expert Marjorie Richmond was shot and killed here tonight. Murdered. And one of the people on this stage is the murderer. (*They voice indignation*). All of them were involved in a very ugly argument with Ms. Richmond earlier this evening. And they were not in the theatre with us at the time of the murder. Motive. Opportunity. They had it. Plus, I might note, none seem shocked or saddened by Ms. Richmond's death. (*They will all immediately be VERY shocked and saddened.*) For a point of reference at this time, I want each of them to stand and give their names and their relationship to the deceased.

BLANCHE: I'm Blanche Reardon, I work for the caterer and I never saw that woman before in my life.

ROBERTO: I'm-a Roberto DiNapoli and I'm- da chef. And of course I knew dat woman. She was a some big deal, you know. But, hey, donna be lookin' atta me. I'mma no kill her.

KIM: I..I..I'm Kim Allen and I just met Mrs. Richmond tonight. For the first time.

MILTON: My name is Milton Flog and I just got here five minutes ago. Somebody was murdered?

JEFF: (Crying) My wife. My darling wife. How can I live without that sweet woman?

JOE: You're Mr. Richmond?

JEFF: Quinlan. Jeff Quinlan. Marjorie used her maiden name for professional purposes. Poor little Marjie. Who could do...

ROBERTO: Hey, don' getta me wrong, hokay....But I think just about everyone who meeta thatta woman wanta puncha her clock, whatta you say?

JOE: I say that all of you have some questions to answer.

BLANCHE: Yeah? And I suppose you're the guy to ask them? Who are you, anyway? And who's the guy in the dress?

ROBERTO: Thatta you date? Sheez, you not a bad-lookin' guy. You can-a do better.

JOE: That's my partner. We're undercover detectives from the Akron Police Department. I'm Carmen. Joe Carmen. He's Hank Miranda.

KIM: But doesn't that make you.....?

JOE: Carmen and Miranda. Yeah. Leave it alone, sister. So Hank, what do ya think we should do, just run 'em all in?

HANK: Gosh, no, Joe. Remember the last time we did that. The Chief didn't like havin' the station cluttered up with suspects. *(To audience)*. The Chief's a real neat nut. *(To JOE)* I think maybe we could question 'em here and eliminate the innocent ones. Though, I gotta say....*(to the suspects)* Now, don't take this personal or anything, but I'm a cop and we're just naturally suspicious. And don't get offended or anything by what I'm about to say. But I'm a fraid that, well....it looks like it's possible that...Oh, gosh. . .

darn I'm just going to blurt it out! I think maybe some of you are not being entirely truthful. There. It's out in the open. And, it is just my opinion. I could be wrong. I've been wrong before. Why, back in '88 there was this guy we picked up....

JOE: *(Interrupting)* Hank?

HANK: Yes, Joe.

JOE: They're lying through their teeth.

HANK: Think so, Joe?

JOE: I'd bet the wife and kids, Hank.

HANK: Don't do that, Joe. Millie hates it when you do that.

JOE: Look, I know they're lying, but how can we prove it?

HANK: And how do we determine if it's good lying or bad lying?

JOE: There's a difference, Hank?

HANK: Good lying is what innocent people do when they're scared they might get blamed for something they didn't do even though to the rest of the world they look guilty as hell and they know it. Like that time last year when someone backed into the Chief's new car and the next day you drove in with a big dent in your fender and brown paint scrapes the same color as the Chief's. And you told us they were from a runaway UPS truck. No one believed that story for a minute...

JOE: That was true, Hank! If I hadn't driven into the path of that truck, innocent women and children could have been

maimed or killed. Not to mention all those people waiting for packages.

HANK: Right, Joe. That's my point.....

JOE: I got a commendation from United Parcel Service. You got a commendation from a respected delivery service, Hank? They wrote me a letter, too.

HANK: I believe you, Joe.

JOE: (*Checking pockets*) I may even have it on me. I'm proud of that entire incident, Hank. Where did I put it? I usually carry....

HANK: Uh, Joe?

JOE: (*Still looking*) Yeah, Hank...

HANK: Ya think maybe we should move on?

JOE: Um, right. So, Hank, you're sayin' we should question these folks, find out if they're lyin', and if so, is it good lyin' or bad lyin'?

HANK: Sounds like a plan to me, Joe. And even though we were here during the entire dinner and everything, it occurs to me that we may have missed something.

JOE: I don't know, Hank, we don't miss much.

HANK: Nevertheless, Joe, maybe we could impose on these good people to speak up if they saw or heard anything that is at odds, as it were, with the statements being given by our suspects.

JOE: Of course they'll speak up. They'd better. It's what

being an American and an Ohioan and an Akronite is all about. Ratting on your fellow man. Damn fine idea, Hank. Damn fine. I'm proud to be your partner at times like this.

HANK: Thanks, Joe. It's the training showing. I've never regretted those years in ROTC.

ROBERTO: Hey, is itta too much to ask that we-a move this along. I gotta make-a pasta for two hundred tomorrow. Big party. Big deal. So I gotta getta some rest tonight, hokay. Hey, whatta you think? Atta rigatoni, she's a gonna jump into da pot all by-a herself?

JOE: Well, Mr. DiNapoli,

ROBERTO: I'mma no meester. I'mma CHEF ROBERTO.

JOE: Well, Chef, since you're in such a hurry, perhaps you'd like to go first.

ROBERTO: It's a hunky-dory with me. I'mma got nothin' to hide.

JOE: Shoot.

ROBERTO: Shoot? What? Oh, I get it (*gestures like a gun*). You're a funny guy. So see, this is how she goes. I'mma come here witha my people and-a all dissa wonderful food. And I meet-a all dese a-wonderful people. And who comes in but a-this not-so-wonderful woman. Anda I ask one offa my people, I say, "who issa that bigga mout person?" Annda they tella me she's-a Marjorie Richmond who writesa these-a books and articles. Anda of course I know who thatta is, although between you and me I tella you something, okay? (*stage whisper, conspiratorially*) I donna like her books. She's a not so good, you know. And then I see she's notta so nice. But Imma nice guy. I smile.

I say "Hallo, Mrs. Richmond Imma so happy you comma here" and bull sheet like dat." And when-a dinner, she was over, I was onna my way back to da kitchen and I hear a shot and I getta scared. Hey, atsa scary sound, da binga da binga. So I hide inna _____ until dat person (*comment upon them*) come anna bring me here. That's it. Atsa all. Imma, what do you call it, innocent bystander.

JOE: 'Atsa it? I mean, that's it? (*ROBERTO nods and shrugs*). Hank?

HANK: To tell you the truth, Joe, I only saw the Chef a couple of times and he wasn't acting suspicious. I'm inclined to believe the guy, Joe.

JOE: That's good enough for me. Thank you, Chef, you can go get your cooking sleep.

ROBERTO starts to leave. Hopefully, there will be an outcry from the audience. Otherwise, HANK can stop him and urge the audience to comment and/or question. The information to be elicited includes:

- 1) ROBERTO was fawning all over MARJORIE.
- 2) He adored her books. He was hoping to be included in the next one, The Great Chefs of Ohio.
- 3) She had told him in no uncertain terms that she had decided NOT to include him in her book. And she humiliated him while doing it.
- 4) They'd had a water-flinging argument and he was furious with her.
- 5) He was enamored of BLANCHE.

ROBERTO will not take all this "sitting down" and will interact, question, and get "personal" with his accusers. The other suspects can take part in this section if it will encourage the audience. But it is primarily JOE who guides this section. He can get as wild as

he wants, even bringing people onstage to identify suspects, etc.

When ROBERTO'S interrogation is "played out", he will cue JEFFREY'S interrogation by saying.....

ROBERTO: Hey, why you a pick onna me? Imma not the only one who dint lika dat old bag. You gonna talk to somebody, you outta talk to her husband. He's a gonna getta big bucks I betcha. I betcha he's a gotta one million reasons to bump offa dat dame. I betcha.

JOE: He's got a point.....Jeff. That's your name, correct?

JEFF: Yes. Marjorie called me Jeffrey, but most everyone else just used Jeff. I can imagine I would be your first suspect. And I'll save you the trouble of checking. Yes, I am the heir to Marjorie's fortune. Approximately 5 million. Except there is one small problem, Detective. I loved my wife. Really loved her. Desperately. Deeply. Oh, I know there was a difference in our ages. And I realize, more than anyone, how she could be difficult and well, kinda mean, sometimes. But you didn't know her like I did.

JOE: Tell us how you met.

JEFF: It was exactly a year ago. I...I...had just come out of a relationship and was working at a body shop in Kenmore, Dings and Things. Marjorie brought her Caddy in. She'd hit something on the highway. I found out later it was kind of a hobby with her. She called it "barreling". Anyway, we got to talking when I gave her a lift back to the hotel and well...I guess that was kinda it. We were married about a month later. Look, I know it looks suspicious, but I loved her so much....you'll never know! (*He breaks down.*)

JOE: (*Forcefully. "Grilling"*) You don't really expect us to believe that do you? Come on, Quinlan. Drop the act.

Nobody is stupid enough to buy that story.

HANK: (*Wiping his eyes.*) Joe. Ease up. The poor guy just lost his wife. I'm sorry, fella. I can only begin to imagine how painful this must be. Come on down and I'll buy you a drink.

JEFF starts to exit and, as before, there should be a general outcry. As soon as KIM is mentioned, she will be brought into the interrogation. She will at first deny ever knowing MARJORIE. The following will be elicited from the audience:

- 1) The note which passed between them in the buffet line. KIM will produce this from her bra. It arranges an assignation and denounces MARJORIE as an evil woman bent on destroying their happiness.
- 2) JEFFREY'S conversations with KIM - declares his love.
- 3) KIM'S conversation with the ersatz "MOM".
- 4) The "kiss".
- 5) Any other "witnessed events"

When possible and plausible, JEFFREY will join in. He admits to knowing KIM. They met when he was a caddy at Barberton Brookside Golf Course and she was the Salad Girl. It was BM - Before MARJORIE. But neither KIM nor JEFF will admit anything. When their interrogation is played out, KIM will lead into MILTON'S.

KIM: This is so ridiculous. Of course I didn't love Jeff. I couldn't. He was like married already. And I...I...already had a boyfriend.

JOE: You did?

JEFF: You did?

MILTON: You did?

KIM: (To MILTON) Well, of course I did, you big silly. I think you musta lost your memory when you lost your glasses, Miltie. How long we been together, honey? Tell the nice policeman.

MILTON: Together? You and me? I don't know....

JOE: You're Milton Floog, aren't you? And you worked for the caterer as well, didn't you? Is it true you're in love with this young woman, Milton.

MILTON: Well, yes, I am but she...

KIM: Oh, now, Miltsie, you don't have to tell him all the personal stuff. All the private stuff. You see, Detective, everybody THINKS they saw evidence of an affair between Jeff and me. But all of that was just a cover. Really and truly. My heart was engaged elsewhere. And I was living for the day when I could be Mrs. Milton Floog. TELL THEM, MILTON. (MILTON is agog. Simply agog.)

JOE: Why did you have to keep this great love a secret?

MILTON: Yeah, why did we have to keep this great love a secret?

KIM: (Thinking fast.) Um....because of him (pointing to ROBERTO)...he had a rule about his workers...er...getting involved.

ROBERTO: Hah! Chef Roberto wouldna make such a stoopid rule. I'm Italian, notta German. Let me tell-a you about love, hokey dokey? Love, she's like-a garlic. You use a leetle bit and your food issa wonderful. You use a lot and she's a even better. I hope-a my people all have-a garlic inna their food anna love inna their lives.

JOE: Well, Missy?

KIM: I'm not saying anything further at this time.

JOE: Well, I'm sure our friends out there noticed some things about Milton.

The audience participates as before. The following information is elicited:

- 1) MILTON was hopelessly in love with KIM.
- 2) KIM could not care less about MILTON.
- 3) MILTON was insanely jealous of KIM and knew about her suspected affair with JEFF.
- 4) MILTON had lost his glasses and was blind as a bat without them. So much so that he mistook MARJORIE for JEFF.

When MILTON'S scene is played out, he will end it.

MILTON: I didn't do it! I didn't do it! You can't pin it on me, copper.

JOE: Copper?

MILTON: You can't pin this on me, copper. Go ahead and try. Sure I'm a chump. Sure I'm a sucker for a dame. Sure I let some bimbo pick up my dry cleaning without the ticket. But that doesn't make me the trigger man. Not by a long shot.

JOE: Watch the late show much, Milton?

KIM: BIMBO???

BLANCHE: On that note, I'd like to ask if we might soon be finished?

JOE: Ah, yes, the final player. Blanche Reardon. Where do you fit into this little story, Miss Reardon. Or is that Mrs?

BLANCHE: How about MS., Detective. And to answer your question, I do not fit into this little story at all. I only know Kim through the catering company, and I am not in love with her, Mr. Quinlan, Milton, or Chef DiNapoli. I am also not in love with you or your partner with the bad legs. I'm not in love with anyone, Detective. I'm an independent woman who doesn't need a man to define her existence.

JOE: That's wonderful, Ms. Reardon, but I don't recall asking about your love life.

BLANCHE: Well, um, I just setting things straight....so you know.

JOE: I'm more interested in your feelings regarding Marjorie Richmond.

BLANCHE: I didn't have any feelings one way or another. I had never seen the woman before tonight. There was no earthly reason for me to wish her harm.

JOE: Then I'm sure you won't mind if we ask our volunteer detectives here if they can tell us anything about you?

This leads into BLANCHE'S interrogation. During it the following will be revealed:

- 1) BLANCHE'S behavior (dropping the tray) during MARJORIE'S introduction.
- 2) Her tragedy - Chuck and how he died.
- 3) ROBERTO'S attentions - not a real clue, obviously, but some-one will make something out of it.)

JOE: Thank you. I don't have any more questions. Hank?

HANK: I'm cool.

JOE: Okay, here's what's going to happen. I'm sending the suspects out so that you can question them individually. Then I want you to help me and Hank by writing down your theories on the case and giving it to HOSTESS or one of her helpers. I understand that dessert will be served in the lobby as soon as you have turned in your ballot. I guess, that's what it is. Kind of a ballot. A detection election. Fair. Decided by the people. Democratic. The American way.

HANK: Damn! I love this country.

JOE: So do I, Hank, so do I. Let's get started.

The cast mingles with the audience and helps HOSTESS distribute "ballots". These must be turned in before participants can leave the theatre for the lobby dessert. Also at this time, the cast and HOSTESS, etc., will decide prizewinners in the categories selected.

The solution scene will depend on the choice of the people!

There are three parts to Scene Five - the solution scenes. Parts ONE and THREE are the same and are included here.

Part TWO contains the individual suspect/character solution and is NOT included here.

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SCENE FIVE - THE SOLUTION SCENES

The Solution Scenes will be different, depending on who is chosen by the audience. Part One is the same, regardless who is guilty. Each suspect then has his own Part Two. Part Three is the same for all.

JOE will start things off, using some of the more bizarre solutions.

Scene Five - Part One

JOE: Hank and I want to thank all of you for your help.

Even though some of your ideas may have been, shall we say, far-fetched, some actually opened up some new avenues for us to explore, solution-wise.

HANK: Like, for instance...?

JOE: Like _____ who wrote *(he will read several, pointing out the people who wrote them. As he is finishing, HOSTESS will come and give him a slip of paper.)* Ah, the final results. *(He reads it with a look of disbelief.)* No, no, it can't be!

HANK: Who is it, Joe. Should I get the cuffs? Is it time to call for backup? Don't forget to read 'em their rights.

JOE: We won't need the Miranda, Miranda.

HANK: No Miranda, Carmen?

JOE: Not if it's true. What's written here. That tonight isn't the first time you've dressed as a woman. That you do it all the time. And you've actually built an entire second life as a woman. And not just any woman. By day you're Hank Miranda, cop, and by night you dress up and impersonate

Julia Child. But this sick obsession of yours has gone past fantasy and you came here tonight with the express intention of eliminating your cookbook competition. *(He takes out his gun and points it at HANK)*. You didn't think you'd get away with it, did you, Hank?

HANK: Joe, look, okay, maybe I've dressed up a few times when I didn't have to. But I'm not Julia Child. Honest.

JOE: I know you're not, Hank. That was just a little story I made up to break the tension.

HANK: You're a trickster, Joe. But it worked. I think everyone's a lot more relaxed now. It was a lie, Joe, but I think it was a good lie.

JOE: Thank you, Hank.

HANK: You're welcome, Joe. But say, if that piece of paper doesn't accuse me, what does it say?

JOE: It names the murderer, Hank.

HANK: NO! You mean the one that was elected by the people, Joe?

JOE: Better than that, Hank. This is the result of a forensic examination of the gun used to kill Marjorie Richmond.

He will thank (by name) the volunteer who carefully delivered the gun and preserved the fingerprints. OR he will say that despite the clumsy handling of the gun by _____, the fingerprint of the right pinkie was found on the gun.

JOE: *(Continuing, as he holds the paper aloft in one hand, and his gun in the other.)* The print found on the gun was compared to each of the suspects and these are the results. *The GUILTY ONE will grab the gun from JOE.*

GUILTY ONE: All right, get back, all of you! I've killed once tonight and I'm not afraid to do it again!

JOE: Well, I'll be damned, Hank, it worked. You're a genius.

HANK: Thank you, Joe. I thought it might.

GUILTY ONE: What are you talking about? What worked?

JOE: (*Showing him the slip of paper.*) See, _____, it doesn't say anything about fingerprints. That's because there were no fingerprints. It was a little plan cooked up by Hank to get the murderer to expose himself.

HANK: So to speak.

GUILTY ONE: (*Looking at the paper*) It's....it's a receipt for Queensize Pantyhose!

HANK: (*Reaching for it*) Oh, I'm going to need that for my expense account.

GUILTY ONE: Get back, Julia. And while you're at it, I'll take your gun.

HANK: I don't have one.

GUILTY ONE: A cop without a gun? I don't think so.

HANK: No, really, it's the biggest problem faced by detectives in drag. Where to put the gun. Now, some opt to carry it in their purse. Others wear a jacket. But this particular outfit just doesn't work with a jacket so I decided that if Joe had a gun we'd be fine.

GUILTY ONE: Hasn't exactly worked out that way, has it?

Part Three (same for all)

GUILTY ONE: So, that's it. And now, folks, I'm outta here. *(He/she starts to back up the stairs. Behind him/her is HANK, who goes up behind him and sticks a finger in his/her back.)*

HANK: Drop it.

GUILTY ONE: You can't fool me, Miranda, that's your finger. You said you didn't have a gun.

HANK: I was lying.

JOE: Another good lie, Hank.

HANK: Thank you. Give the gun to my partner, _____. Or take a chance.

(GUILTY ONE debates and finally gives gun to JOE. He turns and we all see that HANK's gun is really his finger.)

GUILTY ONE: Damn! I knew it!

JOE: Can't trust anyone nowadays, can you Hank?

HANK: No, Joe, you certainly can't.

THE END

MURDER, MEDIUM-RARE PROPS LIST

Preset glasses with a small amount of water - for drink throwing.
Two identical blouses for Marjorie. One is bloodied with bullet holes.

A poster announcing Marjorie's appearance (Optional.)

A book (carried by Marjorie) - with her picture on the jacket.
(Optional.)

A gun.

Slip of paper to use in solution scene.

Various restaurant props.

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