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MURDER COUNTRY STYLE

An Audience Participation Murder Mystery

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

TUCKER STUMPP Fifties. A grizzled good old country boy. Never married.

EUGENE STUMPP Thirties. Not an attractive guy. A possible "missing link" in the evolutionary chain. Looks dumb but he's not. Tucker Stumpp's nephew. Eugene's father was Tuck's brother Will.

FLINT STUMPP Thirties. Tall and goodlooking. A pretty face and that's about it. Ambitious. Another nephew of Tucker's, but not a real Stumpp. He was adopted by Tuck's brother Billy and his wife, Ginny.

DOREEN STUMPP Thirties. Manhungry. Chases after anything in pants. Tucker is her uncle. Her father, Ned, was Tuck's youngest brother.

MAE RUE STUMPP Thirties. Doreen's twin in more ways than one. Very competitive with her sister and cousins.

NOTE: For the twins, we used two ladies who bore no resemblance to each other. But both wore identical long, curly, red "Reba McIntyre" wigs and it worked.

PATRICK J. O'MANION Thirties. The bodyguard. Strong, silent, apparently humorless. Dedicated to his job. Is wearing "mirrored" sunglasses.

AMES PARKER Any age. He's the tour "manager" and gofer. He's really a hired killer, contracted to shoot Tucker. His real name is PARKER "Pitchfork" AMES and he works for "The Country Godfather" Charlie "Pap" Ames.

C.B. DAVIS Twenties. A female rookie cop. She wants to be tough and unafraid and a capable law enforcement officer. But she looks more like everyone's little sister.

PRELUDE

Publicity for the event revolves around the mystery and the guest appearance of the Stumpp Family who will sing their hit recording, "Roadkill."

The mystery begins as the audience arrives, registers, and finds their teams. Logistics and the adaptations you might wish to make (timetable, food, etc.) are thoroughly covered in the Production Manual. When we staged it, we served food before the show - "barbecue" - and home-churned ice cream sundaes during the Part II - the clue hunt. For the sake of clarity, this script is written with that format.

The Stumpps will arrive individually, except for the girls who arrive together. They are all dressed in identical shirts and denim - jeans and/or skirts.

TUCKER is expansive and friendly and loud as he "works the crowd."

FLINT is suave and confident and out to charm the ladies.

EUGENE tries to be suave and confident but it doesn't quite "work".

DOREEN AND MAE RUE are friendly and nice to the crowd, especially the men, but will bicker with each other. At some point they will separate and complain to other family members about the other. They will also "pester" Patrick J.

PATRICK J. will be circulating with TUCKER. If anyone gets too close, he will "gently" nudge them away.

TUCKER will tell him to "calm down, these folks here are my fans. They're my people." PATRICK J. will also be scanning the crowd and can also check people as they come in, look in purses, etc. He is very much "security".

AMES is also present, checking with each of the Stumpps to see if he can get them anything, etc. He'll run back and forth from the stage area with headsets, sound equipment, etc. "making sure everything is ready for the show". C.B.

DAVIS is there as a participant and registers, meets her team, etc.

About 15 minutes before "curtain," AMES will go to the box office where he will be given a brown wrapped parcel. It is addressed to TUCKER STUMPP, C/O (your location). The return address is simply "A fan." It is ticking. AMES will "look" for Tucker with this package for several minutes, asking participants' help, etc. When he finds TUCKER, he'll give him the package. Immediately, PATRICK J. will rush to TUCKER, yelling for him to drop it, it could be a bomb, etc. When he reaches TUCKER, he grabs the package and throws himself down on top of it, yelling for a bucket of water. One is quickly produced, and PATRICK J. quickly submerges it. He then opens it. It is an alarm clock with a note attached, "Time is almost up, Stumpp." For our event, we used the following timetable:

6:30 Doors open

7:15 Actors circulate, "barbecue" is served.

7:45 "Bomb" threat.

7:50 Pre-show music began

8:00 Part I "The Play"

9:00 Part II "The Clue Hunt" Ice Cream Sundaes

served; Solutions turned in

10:00 Part III "The Solution"

10:10 Cast introduced, winners announced, prizes
awarded.

PART I THE PLAY

(The stage is set simply with bales of hay, a wagon wheel, and things "country." A single pool of light, center stage illuminates a stool and a guitar. A voice announces)

VOICE: "Ladies and gentlemen, the Akron Civic Theatre is proud to welcome the artist whose hair is shot with silver, whose heart is shot with gold, and whose records are shot with platinum. He's the good ol' boy that three times was voted Country Music Magazine's "Entertainer of the Year." Give a warm welcome and a big "Hiyee" to Mr "Roadkill" himself, Tucker Stumpp!!!"

(TUCKER comes onstage and sits on the stool with the guitar. At the same time, PATRICK J. comes out, far stage right. He will continue scanning the crowd as TUCKER is talking. TUCKER'S monologue is accompanied by soft guitar and/or banjo music in the background.)

A note about music: When we did the show, my "Stumpps" were all accomplished singer/musicians. We even composed a "Roadkill!" If your actors can sing and play, that is terrific. But taped music can be used, with the family "lip synching." You may also purchase our CD which includes our version of "Roadkill" and lip synch to that.)

TUCKER: Hiyee, everyone. Hiyee. *(This is TUCKER's "signature" entrance.)* It's good to be here in.....*(to offstage)* where am I again? I'm just kiddin'. I know where I am. Akron, Ohio. I reckon there's about as many country fans here as there are in Nashville, ain't that right? First time I played Akron, I was with my Daddy. You might remember him. Tommy Joe Stumpp. They called him "Pappy" Stumpp. He had himself a string of hits back in the forties. Songs like, "Jail Bait", "Cow Fever", and "The Ballad of Frisky McBride". Pretty soon, he put Ma in the act. And as each of us boys were born, we joined right in. First Willard, then Bill, then me and, finally

Ned. Hell, we musta played every state fair in the country back then. When Pappy and Ma retired and went to live down in Arooba, me n' my brothers carried on the Stumpp musical tradition. We called ourselves the Stumpp

Boys back then. Willy, Billy, Tucker n' Ned. *(laughs)* We had ourselves some good times and we made some mighty fine music. Now I imagine you all have heard the story of what happened but it won't hurt to repeat. 'Specially since it's kind of an anniversary tonight. You see, fifteen years ago, on (insert date here), 19_ the Stumpp Boys died in a plane crash outside of Buttonville. That's in Canada. All but me. I was supposed to be on that plane too, but I'd done a little "partyin'" the night before and missed the flight. Ya gotta understand my brothers were good family men. I was the wild 'un. And here they was dead and I was still alive and kickin'. After that, I spent a good many years tryin' to kill myself. Figured I shoulda died with the others. Booze, pills, skydiving, fatty foods. You name it I tried it. I was hell bent on destroyin' myself. And y'know what saved me? What kept me from bein' just another old hasbeen, drunken cowboy singer? Family, that's what. Family and music 'Cause my brothers left me with somethin' real important. Their kids. And together, me and them kids became the Stumpp Family Singers. And that's the reason we're here tonight singin' for you kind folks. And it's the same reason I ain't lyin' in a gutter somewhere. Y'see, I owed somethin' to Willy, Billy, and Ned. And their kids. That's why I'd like you to meet those kids right now. First off, Willy's boy, Eugene. *(EUGENE enters from SL)* Hiye, Gene. Stand up straight, son. *(EUGENE does.)*

EUGENE: Hiye, Uncle Tuck. *(He slumps again as soon as TUCKER isn't looking.)*

TUCKER: My brother Billy was married to the sweetest, prettiest li'l gal you'd ever wanta meet. Ginny. Ginny Stumpp, God rest her soul. An angel if I ever met one. But when my brother married her she already had a son, even though she wasn't married. That was a big thing back then, not like today when unwed motherhood is a category at High School Award Banquets. But, anyway, Brother Billy just looked past Ginny's mistake, married her, and was raisin' her boy just like he was his own. And since he died, I've been tryin' to do that, too. And here's that little bastard now, Flint Stumpp. *(FLINT enters from SR, striding confidently across the stage.)*

FLINT: Hiye, Uncle Tuck. Hey, and all of you, Hiye. Can I have a hiye, back? *(The audience will give a "hiye")*

TUCKER: Flint here thinks he's our warmup act. Now, I came along after Willard and Billy and after me there was my baby brother, Ned. And, of course, like youngest kids everywhere, he just had to outdo his big brothers. So he didn't just have his babies one at a time. He had himself some twin girls. Doreen and Mae Rue! Come on out here! (*DOREEN and MAE RUE enter from opposite sides of the stage.*) **MAE RUE** and **DOREEN:** Hiye!! Hiye!!

TUCKER: Now we'd like to start this off, by singin' a song that's always been a favorite for us and, well, if you like it, maybe when it's over you'll give us some applause and a "Hiyee!" or two. ...(*He names it. They sing or "lip synch". Following applause, a shot is heard coming from the back of the room, through a slightly opened door..*)

PATRICK J.: (*As he goes center stage and stands in front of the STUMPPS.*) Everyone remained seated. Do exactly as I say. (*To the STUMPPS*) Listen carefully, I'm going to move slowly to the left. Use my body as a shield and move with me. (*He begins moving slowly to the left. FLINT is crouching and moving slowly to the RIGHT, until he notices and catches up with the rest. TUCKER remains seated. After the kids are delivered stage left, he returns onstage.*) Mr. Stumpp!! I can't protect you if you won't cooperate. (*From offstage, all the kids urge him. "C'mon, Uncle Tuck.*)

TUCKER: No, sirree. I came here to do this here concert and sing for these nice folks, and I ain't budgin'. 'Sides, that shot came from way back there. Whoever fired it is long gone, while you been messin' around down here. Safest place in this whole damn theater is this here stage. (*The kids hurry back onstage.*)

PATRICK J.: All right, Mr. Stumpp. Look, all of you just stay put while I check out the balcony. (*He rushes down the aisle and out of the house*)

TUCKER: (*To the audience*) And here, I'll bet some of you never thought the Stumpps were that excitin'. Why, name another concert where you get music and an assassination! Eat your heart out, Garth Brooks!

EUGENE: Don't joke, Uncle Tuck!

MAE RUE: No, it ain't funny. One of us coulda got killed!

FLINT: Now, come on, I don't think that's very likely. I expect it was just a car backfirin' or a door slammin' or *(br ight idea)* or someone popped their gum real loud. You know how sometimes you can be chewin' away and you get like this little air pocket and if you bite down on it just right, it makes a sound just like a gunshot. I expect that's what it was.

DOREEN: He's right! It happens all the time. I'm surprised that "popping chewing gum" ain't emerged as a theory in the Kennedy assassination. You know, "was it a third shot or was it Wrigley's Spearmint.?"

EUGENE: Not Wrigley's. Bubble gum. Bazooka. *(He acts like he's shooting a gun. The kids all laugh. FLINT is puzzled.)*

TUCKER: That's enough. How 'bout as we're waitin' we keep on singing. These folks here want some Stumpp music, don't ya? If ya do, say "Hiyee!" **KIDS:** *(and, hopefully, audience)* Hiyee.

FLINT: Bazooka. I still don't get it.

EUGENE: We'll sit down tonight and go over it, nice and slow, for ya, Flint.

TUCKER: Hush up now and quit pickin' on the bastard. *(To the audience)* Now just to fill in the little gaps in gunfire here, we'd sure like to sing you another little tune. This here's a little song that's been mighty good to us this past year. Maybe you all have heard it on the radio. Fact is, it was number one on the charts for eighteen weeks. It's a little song called, "Roadkill." *(We hear just some opening chords OR the entire thing - depending on what you want to use - and then AMES appears, complete with pantyhose mask and takes aim at the Stumpps. He fires one shot. TUCKER grabs his chest, the girls scream, panic etc. PATRICK J. reappears and a gun battle in the audience ensues. C.B. stands and yells "police" while drawing HER gun. AMES is cornered and backs up onto the stage. He holds the gun on the crowd, on C.B., and on PATRICK J. before turning slowly toward the STUMPPS. It is evident that TUCKER has been hit, but he's not dead. Slowly, AMES turns and aims toward the STUMPPS. A single shot rings out. PATRICK J. has shot and killed him. Both he and C.B. come onstage.*

PATRICK J. goes to TUCKER. C.B. goes to AMES. After ascertaining that he is dead, she will go through his pockets, finding the contract and putting it in HER pocket.) **C.B.:** How is he?

PATRICK J.: I can't tell. I thought he was hit. How's that one?

C.B.: Dead. You nailed him right through the heart.

PATRICK J.: You okay, Tuck? Should we get you to a hospital?

TUCKER: It's funny. I could feel it hit me. But I ain't bleedin' and I ain't dead, so I guess he missed. (*idea*) Wait! (*He reaches in his breast pocket and produces his harmonica.*) Look, it's got a ding in it. Bullet musta hit my harmonica and bounced off.

PATRICK J.: I never heard of anything like that. (*To C.B.*) What's he carryin'?

C.B.: A 44. (*She pockets it.*)

PATRICK J.: You should be dead, Tucker. There is no way a harmonica should have been able to deflect a bullet from a 44.

MAE RUE: Well, he ain't dead. That's all that matters.

EUGENE: Now, was I right, or was I right? About hirin' Patrick J.? Remember how you all laughed at me and all and Tucker said we didn't need a bodyguard. Well, I guess we're all laughing out of the other side of our faces now huh? Ol' Gene was right, again.

FLINT: Geez, Eugene, you was right, okay. I mean are we gonna have to listen to this for the next twenty or thirty years?

EUGENE: Well, thanks to me we all got the next twenty or thirty years. How about a little gratitude here?

DOREEN: Oh, yes. (*To PATRICK J.*) We all owe you so much, Patrick J.. How can we ever show it? I'd like to thank you, private and personal, P.J.. How's that sound to you?

PATRICK J.: Send me a card, okay, Doreen. *(He crosses to AMES and C.B. and bends over the body. Then he reaches down and removes the mask. FLINT and EUGENE follow. They gasp when they recognize him.)*

TUCKER: Who is it, boys?

EUGENE: Gee whiz, Uncle Tuck. It's Ames.

DOREEN: I never did trust him. He had a real shifty look..

MAE RUE: Oh, hell, Doreen, you liked him just fine at the beginning. We just about had to turn the hose on the two of you in Memphis.

DOREEN: Oh, and I suppose the two of you were just playing Scrabble on the bus with him all the way from Gary.

C.B.: *(To PATRICK J.)* You know the "perp"?

PATRICK J.: Yeah, he was the road manager. Or the gofer. His name was Ames Parker. He kinda did everything around here.

MAE RUE: Well, not everything. Trust me.

C.B.: Listen, how about we get him out of here, and then I need to ask you all a few questions. *(EUGENE, FLINT, and PATRICK J. drag the "body" offstage.)*

DOREEN: *(Crossing to C.B.)* Honey, just what are you doin' up here? My Patrick J. has got the situation completely under control.

MAE RUE: Whatta ya mean, YOUR, Patrick J. Listen here, Doreen, I'm getting pretty sick and tired of you buttin' in where you ain't been invited.

DOREEN: Oh, just hush up, Mae Rue. You're just jealous 'cause me and Patrick J. are in love.

MAE RUE: JEALOUS!! And why would I be jealous of you, seein' as how Patrick J. wouldn't spit on your behind if it was on fire.

DOREEN: Would too!

MAE RUE: Would not!

DOREEN: Would too!

TUCKER: Girls. Put a sock on it, will ya? Little girl, did I hear you say you were a cop? A pretty little thing like you? How old are you, honey?

C.B.: I'm twentyfive. And, yes, Mr. Stumpp, I am a policewoman. And...and...a big fan of yours. *(She shakes his hand.)* I am so excited to meet you, Mr. Stumpp. So excited.

TUCKER: Call me, Tucker, honey.

C.B.: All right...Tucker.

TUCKER: No, I meant what I said. Call me "Tucker Honey."

DOREEN: Watch out for Uncle, Cop Lady. There are more little bastards across the USA compliments of Tucker here, than Warren Beatty and Wilt Chamberlain combined.

MAE RUE: It runs in the family. Like musical ability. Overactive youknowwhat drive.

DOREEN: Why don't you just say it, Mae Rue. "Sex" ain't a dirty word.

MAE RUE: You oughta know, Doreen.

TUCKER: Now, girls, I told you to put a sock on it and.... *(The boys return, led by PATRICK J.)*

PATRICK J.: *(Crossing to C.B. and shaking hands.)* I'm Patrick J. O'Manion. Just call me Pat.

DOREEN: *(Coyly)* We call him Patrick J.

MAE RUE: That isn't all she calls him. She calls him things like "Buttermilk Butt" and "Biscuit Buns". It's enough to make a body puke.

FLINT: You a cop, little girl? I find that hard to believe.

C.B.: Well, you'd better believe it, Mr. Stumpp. I'm C.B. Davis. Officer C.B. Davis with the Akron Police Department.

FLINT: You can just call me Flint, honey.

DOREEN: Tuck already beat you to that one, Flint.

FLINT: Damn! I hate it when he uses my best lines.

C.B.: I was here tonight, offduty, strictly for the concert. But at this point, I'm going to take over this investigation, since I am a law enforcement officer. That means I'll have some questions for all of you. First of all, how and why did Mr O'Manion come to work for you?

FLINT: Well, we'd been getting these threatenin' letters. You got 'em, Gene?

EUGENE: Yeah. *(He pulls them out of pocket and gives them to C.B.)*

C.B.: *(Reading.)* "Stamp out Stumpp." "The only good Stumpp is a dead Stumpp." "Kill Stump for Elvis." You show any of these to the police?

DOREEN: *(Sarcastically.)* No, 'course not. We were just gonna have 'em framed so's we could hang 'em in the red saloon at home.

MAE RUE: I keep tellin' you, Doreen, that's salon, not saloon. And it ain't RED, it's carmine.

DOREEN: Of course we showed them to the police! But they weren't interested. *(Once again, coyly)* Well, they were INTERESTED, but not in the letters. If you get my drift.

EUGENE: Doreen, entire hockey teams have gotten your drift.

MAE RUE: Ain't that the truth, though! Y'ever hear 'bout Doreen and the booster club in high school?

FLINT: Now, cousins, let's not go off the subject here. We've got to stick to the subject here. Won't get anywhere if we get off the the subject here. The subject here..Anyone recall the subject here?

TUCKER: The subject is the threatenin' letters I have been receiving and the subsequent attempts on my life.

FLINT: Only, until tonight, we weren't sure it was Tuck that was due to get killed.

EUGENE: The letters weren't addressed to anyone in particular.

DOREEN: But the attempted murders tonight were all aimed at you, Tuck.

FLINT: Yep. They sure were. I was pretty damned relieved, too. I don't mind sayin' so.

TUCKER: Yep, I guess I was the intended victim. First the bomb. Did you see that, honey?

C.B.: Yes, I saw it. And, Mr. Stumpp. . .

TUCKER: *(Wagging finger)* Uh, uh, uh.

C.B.: "Tucker, honey." Please. Call me Officer. Or if you can't do that, call me C.B.

TUCKER: C.B.? Like the radio.

C.B.: Yeah. My daddy was a trucker. His handle was "Copper". I guess I took it to heart. So, go on with the story. You got these letters, the police couldn't help....

FLINT: Yeah. They said that the letters weren't threatening enough.

EUGENE: I wonder if that bomb threat woulda been enough! I'd say a bomb threat would be enough!

DOREEN: I was petrified.

MAE RUE: We coulda all been killed!

DOREEN: If it hadn't been for my Biscuit Buns, we coulda all been blown to bits...

MAE RUE: He ain't your Biscuit Buns!

DOREEN: Is too!

MAE RUE: Is not!

DOREEN: Is too!

MAE RUE: Is not!

EUGENE: Geez, take a breath, will' ya!

TUCKER: Sock, girls, sock.

FLINT: Ladies, ladies. Please. Don't argue over Patrick J. He's gettin' all embarrassed. He don't belong to either one of you. Patrick J. belongs to all of us. *(To DOREEN)* He's not yours. *(To MAE RUE)* He's not yours. He's OURS. Well, I mean, not "ours" like we're all interested in him the same way. I mean, we all just have come to know him and respect him and all. He's become kinda of an "honorary Stumpp". You know what I mean, don't you Patrick J?

PATRICK J.: Unfortunately, I do, Flint.

MAE RUE: Is too!

PATRICK J.: You see, Officer. C.B. When the letters started, the family got a little scared. And because of the tour, they decided they needed to hire a bodyguard. That's where I came in. I was hired as a bodyguard.

DOREEN: NOT!

PATRICK J.: I do have experience. I was with the Secret Service for awhile. But I kept getting the detail that guarded Chelsea Clinton. She's a nice kid and plays a mean game of UNO, but I began to wonder if that's all there was. I'm ashamed to say I yearned for danger. Excitement. Something more stimulating than running out for Presidential Big Mac's at 2 in the morning.

MAE RUE: He's so deep. That's why I love him!

PATRICK J.: As you may be able to tell, I have questioned my decision now and again.

C.B.: How long ago did the letters start?

EUGENE: 'Bout a year ago. They'd always arrive with a post mark from the city we'd just played. Like whoever it was, was followin' us.

C.B.: How long ago was Parker hired?

EUGENE: 'Bout a year.

FLINT: (*The light dawns.*) Wow. Both of 'em. A year ago. Do you know what I think?

EUGENE: This oughta be good. No, Flint, what do you think?

FLINT: I think there might be a connection! I don't think it's just a coincidence that ol' Ames started workin' for us at the same time as them letters started comin'!

EUGENE: Wow! What an idea! And the fact that Ames was takin' potshots at us while wearin' Doreen's pantyhose would also tend to confirm this theory, wouldn't you say, Flint?.

DOREEN: How'd you know it was my pantyhose?

MAE RUE: Probably 'cause of all the initials.

TUCKER: Ames is also the one that brought me that package. Old Patrick J. saved my skin there, too.

DOREEN: He's so brave. That's why I love him.

C.B.: S'cuse me, but that looked like a practical joke to me. It was a clock. Not a bomb. And it occurred to me that it just mighta been a publicity stunt. It's not like you aren't above a little of that, Tucker Honey.

TUCKER: Not over something like this, little girl.

FLINT: The letters had scared us pretty bad. Well, not me. But the others were really nervous.

TUCKER: Well, I wasn't scared. Matter of fact, I fought tooth and nail against Eugene hirin' Patrick J. Tooth and nail.

DOREEN: Life without Patrick J. I can't even remember it.

MAE RUE: I don't want to remember it.

DOREEN: *(Agreeing.)* Doesn't bear thinkin' about.

TUCKER: But since we didn't know who just who was the assassin's intended victim, I finally gave in. If it was just me, shoot, I can handle that. But maybe one of the kids was the target, and I couldn't chance it. Must say, seein' as how things worked out, I'm mighty grateful, Patrick J., mighty grateful. **C.B.:** Tell me, Pat, were there any other attempts? Prior to tonight, I mean.

PATRICK J.: Just once. And I'm not even sure it was an attempt. See, we were playing *(He names a nearby city)* and

DOREEN: Isn't it cute the way he says "we were playin' Morgantown."? Like he's part of the family.

PATRICK J.: And Tucker gets a call to come pick up Flint. We went to some alley down in the factory section of town.

EUGENE: With *(name of city)* it's sort of hard to tell where the suburbs leave off and the industrial sections begin.

FLINT: Shoot, that didn't have nothin' to do with the assassins! I just got in a friendly little game of poker and kinda got in over my head. A one time occurrence. Had a real bad string of luck that night.

DOREEN: After that he stopped wearing his "lucky sunglasses".

EUGENE: The ones like Patrick J.'s. *(Meaningfully)* With the mirrors.

FLINT: It was like everybody KNEW what my cards were. Damndest thing. But anyway, Tucker paid up and they let me go. Didn't break any bones or anything. And like I said. It was a ONE TIME occurrence. ONE TIME. I quit gamblin' that night and I haven't touched a card since.

EUGENE: *(To C.B.)* Flint used to bet on professional wrestling.

FLINT: Yeah, but not any more. Certain sources I know, certain

individuals connected to the sport, told me some pretty darn amazing stories 'bout pro wrestlin'. You wouldn't believe how many of them matches are fixed!

EUGENE: No!! Damn!

C.B.: *(To PATRICK J.)* Is he for real?

PATRICK J.: Yeah. Incredible. Hard to believe he's a member of Mensa. **C.B.:**

Isn't that the club for really smart people? *(PATRICK J. nods)* Wow.

EUGENE: We figured the entrance test must have been multiple choice and Flintlock here got lucky with his "eenie meenie's". But, anyway, back to our situation here, C.B. since it's obvious that Ames was behind all the threats, and he's dead, wouldn't you think it fair to say it's all over now. You know, case closed.

TUCKER: Well, I would think so though I do wonder why anyone would want to kill me. I'm just your basic good ol' country boy.

DOREEN: He was probably just some crazed psycho lunatic.

MAE RUE: Which would explain why he dated you. But I think Eugene's right. It's all over. Ames is dead and we can just go back to our music and the tour and all.

EUGENE: Fact is, with our "assassin" dead, there's no reason to keep Patrick J. on retainer.

DOREEN and **MAE RUE:** NOOO!!

DOREEN: Uncle Tuck! You gotta keep Patrick J.! I won't feel safe without him around!

MAE RUE: Oh, Uncle Tuck, you wouldn't be so cruel as to take my Patrick J. away!

DOREEN: Biscuit Buns, say you won't leave us!! *(They both put their arms around each other and cry.)*

FLINT: Tuck, you gotta do somethin'. I can't stand to see the girls so unhappy! Oh, please, Doreen, Mae Rue, don't cry. Cousin

Flint won't let that happen. Look here, Uncle Tuck, you just take Patrick J.'s salary out of the trust, hear?

EUGENE: Whoa, whoa, whoa. If we are talkin' about dippin' into the trust fund, I want to stick in my shovel.

TUCKER: Now, calm down, all of you, right now. I didn't say nothin' about lettin' the boy go.

DOREEN: (*Sniffing.*) That's good, 'cause I'd start sendin' you threatening letters myself if I had to.

MAE RUE: And I'd lick the stamps.

TUCKER: Patrick J., you've got a job for as long as you want. There! Everybody satisfied? And it won't be out of the trust fund! That money is sacred.

EUGENE: At least until we get our hands on it.

C.B.: What trust fund?

EUGENE: Our Daddies had a pact. They put all the money they made into a trust fund for us kids.

DOREEN: That way, if any of them got killed, we'd be taken care of.

MAE RUE: So when all of 'em died in that plane crash, we was set for life.

EUGENE: I don't call that trust being "set" for life. Y'see, Uncle Tuck is the trustee. And the way it's fixed, there ain't any specific time when we actually get the money. It all depends on when good ol' Tucker decides when we are mature enough to handle gettin' our shares. The problem is, it's an all or nothin' proposition. We all gotta be able to handle our two million apiece, or we gotta wait till he thinks we're ready.

TUCKER: Actually, Eugene, it's worth about two point five now. I was smart to get into utilities about a year ago. Market's doin' real fine.

DOREEN: Maybe you can tell that Eugene isn't exactly ecstatic over this little arrangement.

EUGENE: Well, hell, Doreen, I figure if I have to wait for all of you to mature, I'm gonna be able to use my share for a spot at the Sunnyside Senior Home.

MAE RUE: I will just not ever be able to figure you out, Eugene! What do you need money for? Uncle Tuck pays the bills, we get to travel all over this great country, makin' our music. It doesn't get a whole lot better n' that.

DOREEN: You oughta be ashamed of yourself, Eugene. Pushin' Uncle Tuck for that money. You know he's been an absolute financial wizard with it. How else could we afford Tuckerwood and Stumppland and the private jet and all?

C.B.: Tuckerwood?? Stumppland??

PATRICK J.: Tuckerwood is the family compound. Two hundred acres surrounding a mansion that would have made Leona Helmsley drool.

FLINT: Isn't she that black singer used to open for George Jones?

C.B.: And Stumppville?

FLINT: Yep. We went out a coupla times. Nice girl. Had a little bit of a moustache though. Kind put me off.

PATRICK J.: Stumpville is the theme park they're building outside of Kansas City.

DOREEN: And even though Uncle Tuck's done all that for us, Eugene still wants his money!

EUGENE: You are such a suckup, Doreen! Always have been. Ever since you were a little girl! Don't be fooled, C.B.. Doreen and Mae Rue want that money twice as bad as me. They've run up one monster bill at Sears.

FLINT: Now, Eugene, you got no call talkin' 'bout the girls like that!

EUGENE: You always stick up for them. You stick up for each other! I'm always left out. It's not fair! I hate this family!

TUCKER: Now, Eugene, don't say that! You know, I remember what my Pappy used to say...

FLINT: Oh, no, he's gonna talk about Pappy again.

MAE RUE: I hate Pappy stories.

TUCKER: My Pappy used to say that a family is like an ear of corn....

EUGENE: *(To C.B.)* This is the same Pappy that said a woman was like a stack of flapjacks.

TUCKER: ...on the outside they all look pretty much the same....

DOREEN: He was a cranky old man...

TUCKER: But you'll never know what you'll find on the inside. Could be row after row of sweet corn or a bunch of wrigglin' maggots. But no matter whether its eatin' corn, or feed corn, or Indian corn, or popcorn, all of them ears got somethin' in common. And you know what that is? *(C.B. shakes head.)* Silk. Good corn or bad, you're always gonna find silk. Let that be a lesson to you, honey.

EUGENE: You see why I want to get away from this family? I have to get away from this family.

PATRICK J.: Eugene wants to form his own group.

EUGENE: Eugene's Eurythmics. I want to try some high tech stuff. You know, new wave. Maybe even some rap. But, look here, I'm not the only one that wants to leave. Flint wants to try to make it as a single.

TUCKER: No, he doesn't! That true, Flint?

FLINT: No! Yes. I'm sorry, Uncle Tucker, it's just that, well, sometimes when we're singin' up here and that there spotlight hits me a certain way, I get this feelin'. This like big wave of...of feelin'. This feelin' that Elvis is up there in heaven, lookin' down at me. Encouragin' me, like. Sayin' "Go for it, Flintie, boy." And so, yeah, I want to be more than just the family bastard. I want to be just like Elvis. Only, I won't take drugs and I'm gonna watch my caloric intake. But, yeah, Uncle Tuck, I dream of bein' a solo artiste!

TUCKER: (*Shaking his head.*) Son, that makes me mighty sad to hear that. After what your Momma told me on the day she died. "Tuck," she said, "Look after my boy. Help him grow up to be just like his daddy." His adopted daddy, I mean.....my brother, Billy. Your momma was a real special lady. All your mommas were special. I do so much talkin' 'bout your daddies, that sometimes you might forget that I loved your mommas, too. Each and every one. They have a place, here. (*Gestures to his heart.*) Not a day goes by that I don't look at you young folks and think of those ladies. And, I reckon 'cause I love you all so much I've been tryin' to keep you all to myself. By holdin' on to that trust fund. But if you all want your money now, well, I guess maybe the time has come....

DOREEN: Oh, Uncle Tuck, you don't have to...

EUGENE: Let the man finish his sentence, Doreen!

TUCKER: Well, maybe it's time for me to just call the bank and tell...

MAE RUE: Uncle Tucker, we didn't mean to push you for the money, it's just...

EUGENE: Shut up, Mae Rue.

TUCKER:Yep, maybe I should just call the bank and tell 'em I've decided....

FLINT: (*Sniffin'*) Geez, Uncle Tuck, if it means so much to you....

EUGENE: LET THE MAN TALK!!

TUCKER: Maybe, I should just dissolve the trust and give each of you your share and ...

C.B.: I'd think about that if I were you, Tucker Honey.

EUGENE: Who asked you? What are you a cop or a social worker? He wants to give us our money! So let him! Make the old guy happy. Butt out!

C.B.: I'm afraid I can't, Eugene. Because the man you knew as Ames Parker wasn't.

FLINT: Wasn't what?

C.B.: That wasn't his real name. He wasn't Ames Parker, he was Parker Ames. Parker "Pitchfork" Ames. He's a hired killer. A hit man. And he works for the Mob.

FLINT: You mean the MAFIA? But he didn't even look Italian.

C.B.: Obviously, you have seen one too many Francis Ford Coppola movies.

FLINT: Francis who?

C.B.: The "mob" isn't just Italian. There's Irish mob, and German mob and Canadian mob...

FLINT: I dated a Frances once. Don't think it was Frances Ford, though. And I'm almost positive we didn't copulate.

C.B.: There's a country mob, too. Pitchfork worked for one of the biggest families operatin' out of the Midwest. The Hodges. Ever heard of them?

DOREEN: I knew a Luther Hodges once. Had great big hands.

TUCKER: Pappy played golf with a Walter Hodges. No, no, I take that back. His name was Lodges. Walter Lodges. Haven't thought about him in years.

FLINT: Didn't Eugene have a girl friend name of Hodges.

EUGENE: No, I did not!

DOREEN: If Eugene had a girl friend at all, we'd remember.

MAE RUE: Eugene dates! Film at eleven.

C.B.: What I'm saying is this the man who was trying to kill you was a hit man, Tucker Honey. Hit men don't just go about practicing on innocent bystanders. Or famous country western stars. Hodges was hired to kill you. He went to a great deal of trouble, with all the notes and everything....

PATRICK J.: Is that usual? I mean, is that the usual modus operandi of your basic hit man?

MAE RUE: I just love it when he talks French.

C.B.: It's unusual, I'll say that.

PATRICK J.: It seems to me that a professional would want to get in quick, do the job, and get out.

C.B.: Ordinarily, that's true, Pat. But "Pitchfork" never took the easy route. He enjoyed the "game". He loved to stalk and tease his victims and he went to a great deal of preparation before striking swiftly and without mercy.

MAE RUE: Goodness! That sounds like the boy who took me to prom!

C.B.: But don't you see? Somebody PAID "Pitchfork" to kill you, Tucker Honey. Someone took a contract out on you. They went to Boyd Hodges he's kinda like the Godfather, and Boyd sent "Pitchfork" to do the job.

TUCKER: That's nuts! Who'd want to kill a good ol' boy like me?

EUGENE: You said that before, Uncle Tuck. But, obviously, some one did want you dead.

FLINT: You don't suppose this is all because you made fun of AchyBreaky on Arsenio, do you? Some of them Billy Ray fans are crazy.

DOREEN: All of them Billy Ray fans are crazy.

MAE RUE: ...Or...you don't suppose it's one of our crazy fans, do you, C.B.? I mean there's some real whacko's out there. (*To the rest*) Do you remember that girl used to follow Eugene and throw her underwear at him.

EUGENE: She was a nice girl!

DOREEN: Eugene, she pushed a shopping cart filled with telephone books and she wore one of them leather hats with the ear flaps. The police had to personally escort her from several of our concerts 'cause of the gerbils.

EUGENE: Just 'cause she had the hots for me instead of Flint that made her crazy?

FLINT: Well, at the very least, it didn't say much for her taste.

DOREEN and **MAE RUE:** Oooh, good one, Flint!

TUCKER: Stop this, all of you! *(To C.B.)* Now, look here, little girl. I can see from your face that you know something we don't. And I also happened to notice the piece of paper you removed from AMES' pocket. So why don't we just cut to the chase here, and tell me who's behind all this.

C.B.: Aw, gee, Tucker Honey. *(She removes paper from her jacket pocket.)* Pat? I can't tell him.

PATRICK J.: *(Reading)* "Mr. Hodges, please consider this paper to be our formal request for you to kill our uncle, Tucker Stumpp. In return, you will be paid \$20,000, in cash." *(All react with shock, outrage, and denial)*

PATRICK J.: And it's signed by all of them. *(He gives it back to C.B.)* I'm sorry, Tucker. *(The kids all crowd around C.B., looking at the "contract")*

FLINT: That there ain't my signature!

DOREEN: I always make my "o" like a little heart.

EUGENE: This is ridiculous. I never sent this.

MAE RUE: Well, I certainly didn't! I don't misspell my own name! Whoever spelled it used a "y" instead of an "e"

FLINT: But wouldn't that have made it "May Ray".

MAE RUE: My first name, you lunkhead. Ma"y" not Ma "e". But that's what I mean. Someone's tryin' to make it look like we all wanted Uncle Tucker dead.

TUCKER: *(Shaking his head sadly.)* Ya mean ya didn't? *(They react with a chorus of denials.)* I blame myself. I shoulda given them their money the first or second time they asked. Or the fifteenth, or the sixteenth. But I wanted to invest it for 'em. So they'd really have something. I shoulda just given it to 'em.

PATRICK J.: Wait a minute. There's something else about that

contract...May I see it again. (*C.B. hands it over.*) See, up here in the corner. It's a staple and several other corners of other pages. There was more than one page to this note.

TUCKER: I want you kids to know that I'm gonna try real hard to forgive you all. I'm gonna remember your Daddies and Mommas. And here I thought I was the lucky one. Even when we was kids, Willy, Billy, and Ned would get in trouble and get caught. Even though more times 'n not I'd been the instigator of our mischief. Hell, they all had the mumps real bad and it skipped me. I guess this is my payback. Sharper than a serpent's tooth is an ungrateful child. Or children.

PATRICK J.: I don't think it was all of them. I think that one of them hired the hit man and signed everybody's names. Thinking that we'd never figure out which one. I think that we were meant to find this contract. It was a plant. But the only way to know for sure is to find the other pages.

DOREEN: But this place is huge.

MAE RUE: How are we ever gonna find little pieces of paper like that?

EUGENE: Maybe we could get our fans here to help.

FLINT: Gosh, yeah. Our fans. They'd do anything for us.

PATRICK J.: And I know just the person to organize the search. Where's that *(HOSTESS's name)* who organizes these mystery clue hunts. *(HOSTESS enters and dismisses them. She explains the rules of the game and gives instructions for the hunt - if a hunt is to be used. The Production Manual explains all.)*

PART II THE CLUE HUNT

The Production Manual provides complete instructions for this section of the mystery. You can opt for a full-scale search of the facility, simply distribute the physical evidence, or anything in between. Regardless, however, there are **five** clues to Murder Country Style. These are the other five pages of the "contract" found on Parker "Pitchfork" Ames' body. They are handwritten, in a different "hand" than the contract. They are written below in true order. Participants, however, will not find (or be given) them in this order. And, as you can see, the pages are interchangeable. Depending on how they are arranged, various meanings will emerge.

Dear Boyd,

I've checked out our client's proposal and I'm going to go ahead and take the "contract" on

Tucker Stumpp. But I've got to move on it real, real fast because he is under a lot of money pressure.

I don't think I need to worry about the rest of the Stumpps. Far as I can tell, none of them should present a problem of any kind. Even the one that's

gone and hired that bodyguard. But I'm being real careful anyway and want you to send me a backup. I'm keeping an eye on our boy, the gambler because he really is no dummy. He's also

a bastard and takes after his old man in a lot of ways. Though at least he's nice to the women. Which ain't always easy. No one will have any trouble at all believing that either one's

paying us to take ol' Tucker out. So, even though it's crazy, it should work. I'll let you know when it's over, though you'll probably see it in the papers. Give my love to Cousin Clem.

Pitchfork

THE VERY BRIEF SOLUTION SCENE IS NOT INCLUDED IN REVIEW SCRIPTS. IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE THE ENTIRE ACTING COPY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ABOUT PRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT US:

330-678-3893

mysteriesbymoushey@gmail.com

MURDER - COUNTRY STYLE - Props/Set dressing

Clock wrapped in brown paper package with tag. (See script)

Set dressing as described in script. Anything else to give a “concert” flavor - musical instruments, microphones, etc. can be used as well.

3 guns that will fire blanks or starter caps.

Harmonica with “ding”

Mirrored sunglasses for Patrick J.

Contract on Tucker

Threatening letters

Envelope with cash

Something for body removal - We’ve used a stretcher, a hotel luggage rolling rack, a wheelchair, a furniture dollie, and we’ve simply dragged offstage. If you can get local paramedics to come in with a real gurney, etc., it’s a nice realistic touch.

The letter sections.

Clue packets and clue materials needed for your event.

Clue Packet (sent electronically) includes:

Answer key and flow chart

Blank flow chart to help in making your own clue hunt.

“Roadkill” lyrics

Production Manual

OPTIONAL

Printed version of Clue Packet available for a small fee. \$10.00

CD with music for various shows, including our “Roadkill” which \$7.00

can be used for lip synching.