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## SEANCE AT THE

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(your location)

An Audience-Participation Murder-Mystery by  
Eileen Moushey

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### INTRODUCTION

The "mystery event" is an audience participation activity designed to entertain and intrigue the diehard mystery fan. As originated in England, these events were weekend affairs that used castles and manor houses as locales. Cruise ships, trains, and hotels were next as the popularity of the mysteries continued unabated. Production costs and elaborate settings, however, also forced the ticket price to be beyond the means of the typical mystery fan. SEANCE attempts to remedy this.

SEANCE is "portable." It can be performed in any facility that has the following:

1. A "safe" room. This is where the stage managers can keep props, hand-outs, prizes etc. Also, it serves as a hiding place for actors prior to their entrances.
2. A theater (or large room that can be arranged as a theater with stage etc.) The first and third sections of SEANCE are short plays and should be presented as such.
3. A large area that can be used in the second section of the mystery: THE CLUE HUNT. Boundaries should be clearly marked.

SEANCE was written to be performed in one evening, but it can be adapted to occur overnight, breaking before the solution scene is played. If dinner is to be included in the event, it should be served before the main action gets underway. A buffet supper fits in nicely with the clue search and while guests are mulling over their solutions. The PRODUCTION MANUAL, which is sent with Production Materials, covers the myriad ways that you can adapt the timeframe and insert food into the event.

SEANCE can be performed for as many as five hundred people at a time. Great care and co-ordination is needed for the clue search and team (rather than individual) competition is utilized.

Running time for SEANCE will vary greatly, depending on the nature of the clue search. As after-dinner entertainment, it is possible to simply plant clues at various tables, allow time to arrive at a solution, and then play the final scene.

SEANCE is comprised of three sections:

- I. THE DASTARDLY DEED. This is a totally scripted, one-act play. Madame Zodiak, world-famous astrologer, is speaking, or attempting to speak, on the stars and how they guide our lives. She is joined onstage, at various times, by her husband, Taurus; her scatterbrained assistant, Gemini; and a heckler from the audience, Dr. Leo Turnbull. Madame never begins her lecture, however, because she is poisoned and dies before our eyes. There are obvious suspects, but those with motive had no opportunity, and vice-versa. It will be up to the young security guard, Horace Cope, to lead the guests in their quest for clues. Part I takes approximately 1 hour.
- II. THE CLUE HUNT. This section can be as elaborate or as simple as you want. There are ten clues and finding them can be as easy as opening an envelope, or as difficult as de-coding a cryptogram. The clue search can be tailored to fit the facility, the group, and the time involved. Part II takes anywhere from 15 minutes to one hour.
- III. THE SOLUTION SCENE. The actual solution (after the guests have offered theirs) is played out as in the first scene. (With a few surprises, of course!) The mystery is declared officially solved, the cast is introduced, winners are announced, and prizes are awarded. Part III takes approximately 10 minutes.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**MADAME ZODIAK:** Real name-Lottie Blench. Forty to sixty years old. Very flamboyant and larger than life. She looks and acts like a celebrity. Dresses outrageously with scarves trailing, big jewelry etc. Madame is absolutely sincere in her astrological beliefs. She also believes in re-incarnation, astral projections, poltergeists and anything of that ilk. She is tolerant of non-believers and, in fact, pities them.

**TAURUS:** Real name-Jimmy Smith. Madame's husband. At least fifteen years her junior, very good looking. The open shirt, gold chain type. Very much the showman. Slick and sleek.

**GEMINI SCHWARZ:** Madame's assistant. Same age and coloring as Taurus. Nervous, gawky, confused. Wears frumpy clothes, sensible shoes, thick glasses and is, in general, not an attractive package. Will undergo a physical transformation for the final scene.

**PROFESSOR LEO TURNBULL:** Any age. Of imposing bearing. Agressive. Wears lab coat. Turnbull is a Ph.D. in chemistry at Akron U.

SECURITY GUARD HORACE COPE: Youngish, baby-faced. Naturally shy and non-aggressive, but capable of taking over. Air of command not immediately evident because of posture etc.

Also needed are at least two director/stage managers. One will function as a Host/Hostess. Both will facilitate the clue search, although more help may be necessary depending on the size of the crowd.

Posted as the guests enter the theatre is a sign which indicates that the mystery begins at that point. Just inside of that is another placard with Madame Zodiac's picture under a "Next Attraction" banner. The guests will have time to mingle etc. before the event begins. Madame and Taurus will be among this group, drinking, talking, etc. Cope will also be there but standing against a wall, "on duty." Turnbull will be there acting disgruntled and glaring at Madame's picture etc. The event begins.

## PART I---THE DASTARDLY DEED

(The "stage" is bare. Or you may choose to have a "set" - which is indicative of a mystery. All that is really necessary is a podium SL for MADAME to use. And three chairs. These can be either pre-set, as part of your "mystery" set, or brought onstage by the HOST/HOSTESS as the characters need them. As the HOST/HOSTESS welcome all, MADAME and TAURUS have "joined" a team. LEO is hanging about in the back of the hall, and COPE is standing obviously and uncomfortably along the side wall. GEMINI is nowhere to be seen. Just as the HOST/HOSTESS finishes the welcome, she is "interrupted" by the other stage manager. An ad-libbed, "hurried and worried" consultation takes place, with checking of watches etc. This goes on for several moments until the stage manager exits to confer with MADAME and TAURUS. MADAME moves to the back of the house and TAURUS joins the worried Host onstage.)

HOST: May I have your attention, please. We are terribly sorry but there has been an unfortunate delay in the plans for this evening. We've just received a phone call and evidently the van bringing the actors for tonight's mystery broke down just south of Lodi. We've sent another car for them but it will probably be at least an hour or two until we can begin. However, in the meantime we have arranged a little something to entertain you. The next attraction at the \_\_\_\_\_ is a series of lectures by the world-famous astrologer, Madame Zodiac. Madame is here tonight and has gracefully consented to speak to you. And here to introduce Madame is a young man known simply as "Taurus." (Applause, applause. Everyone leaves stage except TAURUS.)

TAURUS: Thank you. Thank you. I'm sure you are all disappointed that your little mystery game is delayed. However, if you believe as I do that nothing is by chance, nothing happens without a reason, then you will acknowledge that perhaps it was meant to be. There are forces in the universe that dictate these things, that shape our destiny. There is no such thing as accidents, ladies and gentlemen, your future and mine are pre-ordained. For that reason, I hope that instead of being disappointed that your plans for this evening have changed, you will be eager for the experience that is "Zodiac." But in order for you to fully appreciate what is about to happen, you must be OPEN. You must be patient and ready to accept. Let your hearts be free. Unleash your spirits. Decide only that you are an unwritten book, an unopened blossom, an uncracked egg. Join me now in some simple exercises designed to relax and prepare you for what you are about to experience. Remain seated. Totally relax your body. Take a deep breath. Let it out s-l-o-w-l-y, slowly, and, as you do, let all your tensions, worries, preconceived notions and prejudices flow from you. Good, good. Now, let your head fall forward. Now back. Relax. Easy now. Let your mouth drop open. That's it. Now, reach down inside for that deep guttural growl that is the last shackle that binds you to the rock of an unbelieving world. Bring it up, bring it up. Now! (Taurus emits a fierce noise, very reminiscent of a "dry heave".) Again! (Again) Whew. Isn't that wonderful? Don't you feel just great? By the way, that same exercise is wonderful if you feel yourself tensing up while driving. Now, let us go on. There is a very, very special lady waiting to talk to you. But first, I'd like to tell a little bit about her. She's written five books on astrology, including the best-selling Stars and Cars. For those who haven't read it, this book explained how to chart the horoscope of an automobile, using its assembly date in Detroit as its birth date. From there you can choose a car that was astrologically compatible with you. Stars and Cars, to date, has sold over 1 million copies from the check-out

counters of K-Marts alone. In addition to the books, Madame was also the personal astrologer to the late Robert Reed of "The Brady Bunch" as well as the only seer to correctly interpret the dream sequence on "Twin Peaks." She has lectured all over the world and next month will be the keynote speaker at the International Convention of Astrologers to be held at the Ramada Inn at Flagstaff, Arizona. She is here tonight to entertain, enchant and educate you. Ladies and gentlemen, open your eyes and hearts and let the stars shine in as you give a very warm welcome to (gestures to back of hall) MADAME ZODIAK! (MADAME ZODIAK enters SL aisle to applause and the theme from "Star Wars. As she makes her

way down the aisles she waves royally, blows kisses and stops to shake hands with people sitting on the aisles. Meanwhile, TAURUS is applauding wildly, milking the audience, urging them to stand, etc. He helps MADAME Z onstage and stands with her at the podium. During MADAME'S speech, GEMINI wanders in the balcony, trying to figure how to get onstage. She is a drab little mouse with a perpetually confused look to her. She carries a large bag over one shoulder, a full pitcher of water in one hand, a glass in the other. Around her neck are MADAME ZODIAK'S glasses on string holders. She makes her way slowly down the aisle spilling water, tripping a bit, etc. She is obviously a bumbler.  
)

MADAME ZODIAK: Thank you, thank you, ladies and gentlemen, and my dearest Taurus, for that wonderful welcome. The vibrations in this room right now are positive, very positive. I'm so grateful to be here tonight to speak with you about how astrology can change your life. It's changed my life many times. Most recently 6 months ago, which is when I met my darling Taurus here. Yes dear, I'm going to tell the story of how we met. Give me a kiss and go sit down. (He pecks her cheek and sits - as far SR as he can. This can be a pre-set chair, couch, whatever...or the Host can supply him with one. The important thing is to DISTANCE himself from MADAME.) He gets so embarrassed when I talk about him. Anyway, I was in Australia with my secretary, Gemini. We were on a tour promoting my latest book. It's about astrology and baseball. I call it Stars and Strikes Forever. Anyway, we were staying at a beachfront hotel on the southern shore. It was late and we had a full day ahead, so we decided to go to bed early. Only I couldn't sleep. Insomnia does not usually trouble me, perhaps because I'm at peace with myself. Well, I tossed and turned until 4:00 in the morning when I finally gave up, got out of bed and attempted to do some Zen, in order to relax. I assumed the Lotus position, chanted my mantra "Oooooommm," but nothing worked. By this time Gemini had awakened. So, together we looked at my horoscope for the coming day - to see if there was a clue to my restlessness. (Delivered at breakneck speed.) Now follow me on this: My birth sign is Pisces, sign of the fish. My rising sign is Cancer. Both of these are referred to as water signs. In addition to this, we are at present in the Age of Aquarius. Aquarius, who is referred to in mythology as the waterbearer. Do you see a pattern emerging? This alone was not that terribly unusual, but then I noticed something else. The planet Uranus was in the 12th house, which as you all know is the natural house of Pisces and Neptune. The symbol for Uranus is a variation of the letter H. Then Gemini mentioned that we were only two degrees longitude west of the International Date Line. That's when everything became clear. Pisces, fish, water sign, water bearer, H and two degrees. (Dramatically) That was it!! The final sign -- H, two degrees. Or could that read H2O? Do you see, how simply and obviously the stars were pointing me to water? So right then and there Gemini and I stripped and ran down into the sea. We must have swum for hours because the sun was completely up by the time we emerged, drained yet relaxed. Now you may ask -- how did Taurus fit into all this? Well, as we were on our way upstairs Gemini suggested we stop at the hotel beauty parlor to have our hair done, as we were both in quite a state. And just who do you think was the hair stylist there? Yes. My own Taurus. He fixed my hair and won my heart. We were married 2 weeks later and have been blissfully happy ever since. Isn't that a fascinating story? But it's not really what I'm here to tell you tonight. (starts looking about.) This evening I would like to teach you how to take a rudimentary knowledge .... Excuse me a moment. Taurus, dear, where are my lecture things -- notes, glasses, ...

TAURUS: Gemini was bringing them from the hotel. She should have been here ten minutes ago.

MADAME ZODIAK: (To audience.) I'm very sorry, I'll be with you in a moment. My assistant usually has everything arranged....Taurus, dear, do you suppose she may be lost?

TAURUS: How could she get lost? I sent the limo back for her.

GEMINI: (Loudly.) Here I am. I'm coming. Yoo hoo! I made it. Madame! Mr. Taurus! I'll be there as soon as I climb down. (She starts to climb over balcony railing)

MADAME ZODIAK: Gemini! Not that way! There are stairs! Yes, yes, back there.

GEMINI: (As she moves to do so.) Oh, I see. I'll be there in just a second with all your things. It'll only take a minute....(S he mumbles to herself as she moves off.)

TAURUS: Honestly, Lottie, why don't you get yourself a decent assistant? The stupid girl can't type, can't keep appointments straight. Now she's messed up this lecture. She's a walking disaster area.

MADAME ZODIAK: Hush, she'll hear you. Why, I couldn't work without little Gemini, you know that. Don't forget -- her signs are absolutely compatible with mine. It's uncanny, really.

TAURUS: Ah c'mon, Lottie. The broad is hopeless, signs or no signs. Just look at her. And the amount of money you pay her is obscene.

MADAME ZODIAK: What I pay her, or you, or anyone is what I choose to give. I do not choose to discuss it now, or ever, again. Am I making myself clear, Taurus?

TAURUS: Perfectly.

MADAME ZODIAK: Good. (To GEMINI, who is now starting down the SR aisle) Come on, come on, Gemini, my girl. I need my things.

GEMINI: Coming, coming. I'm sorry, Madame. This place is so huge. I think I made a wrong turn, somewhere.

MADAME ZODIAK: That's alright, dear. Have you got everything?

GEMINI: I think so. Water, glass. (She puts them down on the podium.) Glasses. (She takes from around her own neck and puts on MADAME.) Notes. (She takes an unwieldy stack from bag and proceeds to drop on floor.) Oh, dear, now they're out of order. Give me a second and I'll fix them.

MADAME ZODIAK: (Indulgently) That's alright, dear, I'll muddle through somehow.

GEMINI: (From bag) Gum.

MADAME ZODIAK: Oh good, I'll have one now. (She takes stick, begins to chew.)

GEMINI: (Taking things from bag) Matches, ashtray, cigarettes. I think that's all you need.

MADAME ZODIAK: I'll be just fine. Now let me introduce you to the audience.

GEMINI: (Looking up, noticing audience the first time.) Oh no! I couldn't. Look at all of them.

MADAME ZODIAK: Ladies and gentlemen, this is my secretary, assistant and dearest little friend, Gemini Schwarz. I can't begin to tell you how helpful she's been to me these past three years. We met under fascinating circumstances, too, which I recounted in my second book, Stars R Us. (She stops to take out a cigarette, puts it to her lips, and is immediately engulfed in attack of coughing.) I guess I don't need this, do I? (She coughs again and GEMINI gets throat spray out of the bag.) Excuse me, but this weather really plays havoc with my throat and mouth.

GEMINI: (While MADAME is using spray.) Here's your chapstick, Madame.

MADAME ZODIAK: Thank you dear. (She applies chapstick.) I'm dependent on so many little things like this and Gemini makes sure I have them all. Why don't you go sit down, Gemini, dear? (GEMINI sits, SC, in a pre-set chair, or in one supplied by the HOST/HOSTESS.) Now -- let us start to examine how the stars can guide you in your life choices. Astrology can help you select the right career, the right mate, even the right investment choices. (At this point PROF. LEO TURNBULL, who has been muttering to the people around him, becomes much louder. He becomes a heckler.)

LEO: BUNK!

MADAME ZODIAK: (Pausing, then "ignoring") Astrology allows us to make predictions based on birth sign, latitude and longitude of birthplace, exact time of birth, and other factors. For example, several years ago I wrote and warned OJ to beware of white broncos, but he chose to ignore me, of course... probably thought I was referring to horses ....but at least I have the satisfaction of knowing I was right...

LEO: BALONEY!

MADAME ZODIAK: (Pause, peering out.) I knew Shirley Maclaine in another life. When she was Mary Magdalene I was her best friend, Sadie...

LEO: ABSOLUTE BALDERDASH!

MADAME ZODIAK: (Holds glasses to eyes, but doesn't put them on. During the following scene she will suck absentmindedly on the temple piece of the glasses.) Who is that?

LEO: Nonsense. Total nonsense. This is the most outrageous example of ...

TAURUS: Hey, you, sit down and be quiet! The lady is trying to talk.

LEO: (To the audience, as he advances toward the stage.) Come on! What's wrong with you!! Why are you just sitting there? Do you believe this CRAP?

TAURUS: That's it -- GET OUT!!! If you can't sit down and shut up you can just get out! Lottie, they aren't paying you enough.....

LEO: Anything they pay you is too much...you may fool some of these suckers with your astrology hokum, but you don't impress me. I happen to be a scientist, a real .....

TAURUS: Can't we get somebody to throw out this nut?

LEO: (Moving toward stage.) I'm a nut? I'M A NUT?? Oh no, sir. I'm a Ph.D. Compared to your "WBD". As in "wash and blow dry."

TAURUS: By God, I'll throw you out myself!

MADAME ZODIAK: No, no, Taurus. Let the man speak. The stars shine on all of us. Let him vent his anger. Let him spew his bigotry. I can take it. Astrologers have endured centuries of persecution. We are accustomed to debates with closed minds. We will allow him to speak. (She sits in SL chair.)

LEO: (At podium.) Oh, thank you, (with exaggerated politeness) "Madame Zodiak." People! Wake up! Why do you allow yourself to be subjected to this exercise in chicanery? (MADAME Z starts to cough, continues throughout, growing louder.) Madame Zodiak, who, by the way, began life as Lottie Blench, is a very, very rich woman. Most of her money was acquired through the sale of idiotic astrology books and so-called personal consultations with the rich boobs who were stupid enough to fall for her clap-trap. But she has also.....(to MADAME Z) Are you alright? (She points to water. He pours 1/2 glass, hands to her, she drinks.) She has also made some very shrewd real estate transactions. One of these transactions enabled her to acquire land that the (local college) desperately needs. She agreed to donate the land if she was allowed to speak there later this month. She's using tonight as a little dress rehearsal for her invasion of the University. Imagine! An academic forum to put forth her asinine theories.

TAURUS: Hey, watch your mouth, buddy.

MADAME ZODIAK: (Returning to podium.) Professor . . .

LEO: Turnbull. Leo Turnbull. Doctor Leo Turnbull.

MADAME ZODIAK: Doctor Turnbull, what I am doing is not illegal or immoral in any way. Many times when a large donation is made to a college they will respond by naming a building after the donor. But instead of "Zodiak Hall", I asked for a time to speak to the students. Without charge. Although, usually, I can command quite a hefty speaker's fee.

LEO: Criminal. Absolutely criminal.

MADAME ZODIAK: Also, I do not see anyone else protesting my appearance. Perhaps others are more willing to accept that there are still truths to seek, paths to walk down, caves to explore.

LEO: Don't start with me, lady. It's bunko artists like you that make it tough on legitimate scientists like myself. We work on mundane, non-glamorous research on a shoestring budget, while big money grants go to projects on ESP, poltergeists, out of body experiences. I have said it before and I'll say it again, bunk, bunk, BUNK.

MADAME ZODIAK: There are those who said "bunk" to Galileo. They said "bunk" to Einstein. They said "bunk" to Masters and Johnson.

LEO: (Furious.) How dare you! How dare you compare yourself to those geniuses of science. You....you charlatan!..... You witch!.....They used to burn your type at the stake and I'm beginning to think it wasn't such a bad idea. (MADAME Z begins to show signs of the poison taking effect.) They shouldn't allow you and your gang to speak in a bingo hall, much less a..a....What is wrong with you? (MADAME ZODIAK staggers center stage clutching stomach, gasping open mouthed etc. The others stand and watch horrified as she falls dramatically into LEO'S arms and then to the floor. Ad-lib confusion, etc.)

GEMINI: Madame, madame!

LEO: Let me go, woman!.....You're not fooling anyone with this fake fainting routine.....

TAURUS: (Rushing to take her from LEO.) Lottie, Lottie, what's wrong?

GEMINI: Maybe we should get a doctor.

TAURUS: She'll come 'round in a moment. Lottie, Lottie.....

LEO: (Taking pulse.) I'm afraid she won't be coming around.

GEMINI: You mean....?

TAURUS: She's dead? (Leo nods.)

GEMINI: (Scream. Scream. Scream.)

TAURUS: Shut up! Shut up! (He stands, letting MADAME Z's body fall, her face turned US)

GEMINI: Oh God, oh my God. I'm going to faint.....I'm going to faint! (She heads toward water and starts to take drink).

LEO: Don't touch that water! (She stops, looks at him.) There's a good possibility it's been poisoned.

GEMINI: Poisoned?

TAURUS: You're crazy, man! The woman had a heart attack or stroke or something. Probably from the browbeating you were giving her....

LEO: Look at her face. (They form semicircle US of body.)

GEMINI: Oooh.

TAURUS: Yuck.

LEO: Classic sign.

GEMINI: She's....green.....

LEO: (Bending over.)....And unless I miss my guess.....her tongue will be....(Opens mouth.) TAURUS:

Oh, wow....red....

LEO: Bright red. The Yuletide Syndrome. I think we can safely assume that Madame Zodiak died after ingesting a very rare and deadly poison.....the venom of the Australian Sea Serpent. An autopsy will tell for certain.

GEMINI: Autopsy....but that means.....the police.

TAURUS: Ah,hell.

LEO: Is there a policeman in the house? (Scans group, ignoring any hands except COPE'S) You. Are you a policeman?

COPE: Yes.....I mean, I'm extra security.....I'm basically just here for crowd control....

LEO: Well, get up here. Take charge. Come on, man. Do something! Has someone called an ambulance?

COPE: (Coming onstage.) I don't usually do this kind of thing ...

GEMINI: Poor Madame! (Starts to cry noisily.)

TAURUS: Ah, gee...now she's really starting up. C'mon, Turnbull, help me get the stiff out of here before she starts wailing again. (They drag MADAME'S body behind the curtain. GEMINI begins crying, louder than ever.) TAURUS: Aw, put a cork in it, will ya, Gemini?

GEMINI: I can't help it. She was so good to me.

TAURUS: Pull yourself together. Hell, she was my wife but you don't see me falling to pieces all over the place.

LEO: Admirable restraint. (To COPE.) Aren't you going to examine the body?

COPE: Right. (Goes behind curtain. Returns immediately.) She's dead.

TAURUS: Hey, good detecting. Turnbull here says it was some kind of poison.

LEO: Venom of the Australian Sea Serpent. Very rare. Always fatal. Takes only the tiniest, infinitesimal amount to produce deadly results. And within five minutes. Shouldn't you be writing all this down?

COPE: Oh ,yes.....(To guest in front row.) Do you have a pencil, piece of paper or something? (Gets one, comes back.) ..O.K., right... (Writing.) Australian Sea Serpent. Fatal. Um...how small a dose would kill?

LEO: Oh . . . an infinitesimal amount.

COPE: (Writing.) In..fin....How do you spell that?

LEO: For Pete's sake. Look -- about one-twentieth of a teaspoon would be enough to knock a horse flat in 3 minutes. Oh, don't write all that.....

COPE: Oh yeah. Um...so like a little teensy bit...

LEO: Yes, a little teensy bit would kill a human being in 5 minutes or less. And there's no antidote. Whoever poisoned the old windbag wanted to make sure . . .

COPE: Oh wow, yeah. Well...um...I guess maybe I should question all of you.

LEO: You guess? Look....what's your name?

COPE: Cope. Security Officer Cope.

LEO: Cope. What's your first name?

COPE: Horace.

LEO: Horace. Horace Cope. Why am I not surprised? Anyway, Horace, let me give you a little advice. You gotta take charge here. These people are pretty slick and unless you are assertive and in command, you could very easily lose control of the situation. (To COPE'S look of disbelief.) I'm serious. You are the closest thing to the law in this room. You are the MAN. C'mon. Get tough.

COPE: (Standing up taller, steely-eyed.) Yeah, you're right.

LEO: This could be your big chance, Cope. Solve this one and you've made a name for yourself.

COPE: Got it. Thanks, Professor. Oh, by the way, how do you know all that stuff about poisons and that?

LEO: That's my specialty. Poisons, their chemistry, classification and effects. My dissertation was on oven cleaners. (The sound of an ambulance is heard. TAURUS holds back the curtain as if watching MADAME'S body being taken away. Or, if possible, a stretcher with attendants can enter, go backstage, "load" MADAME and exit through the audience.)

TAURUS: Hey, here's the boys with the meat wagon. (To others' appalled looks.) I heard it on T.V.

GEMINI: Good-bye, Madame, thank you.....for everything (She begins to cry, is comforted by COPE).

TAURUS: Oh, yeah. So long, Lottie. It's been grand. (To COPE.) Now what?...

COPE: O.K. I am gonna question you. Why don't you all sit down?

LEO: Well, you seem to have everything under control now, Cope. You won't be needing me. If you do, I'll be down at my lab.

COPE: Um, Professor... actually I'd like you to stay. There are a few more questions I'd like to ask you.....

LEO: Me? That's ridiculous. Surely you don't think.....

COPE: Please sit down. Over there.

LEO: I'll have you know I'm a respected member of the academic community.

COPE: (With authority.) Sit! (LEO sits. COPE is "getting into" being Joe Friday.) We'll start with you, Taurus. Up here. Name.

TAURUS: Taurus.

COPE: I mean real name.

TAURUS: Okay, okay....It's Jimmy. Jimmy Smith. Lottie renamed me "Taurus" because my birthday is May..... Anyway, I was born under the sign of Taurus, so Lottie .....

COPE: I get the picture. And you two met in Australia 6 months ago?



TAURUS: Yeah, you heard Lottie tell the story. I'd traveled the world, doin' hair, you know, but it was like destiny led me to Australia.....

COPE: Australia. Home of the Australian Sea Serpent.

TAURUS: Wait a minute.....

COPE: Who stands to inherit now that Madame Zodiak is dead?

TAURUS: I guess I do.....

COPE: How much?

TAURUS: All of it.

COPE: How much?

TAURUS: Three million.

COPE: Whew! And you get it all? (TAURUS nods.) Every dime? (TAURUS nods.) No special little bequests?

TAURUS: No.

COPE: That's a lot of money. Pretty strong motive for murder, wouldn't you say?

LEO: (Standing.) I certainly think it is.

COPE: Sit, Turnbull.

TAURUS: Hold on here, Cope. Think back to the murder. I was onstage with Lottie, but for the last fifteen minutes I was all the way over there. How could I have poisoned her? Professor Smart Ass here told us the poison took only 5 minutes to work and I was nowhere near her for longer than that. Nope, I didn't poison the water from across the room. Sorry, Cope, old buddy, good try.

COPE: Five minutes, Turnbull?

LEO: Or less.

TAURUS: But hey, Cope -- you know who was near the water, and all of Lottie's things. Little Miss Gemini here.

COPE: Yes, I have a few questions for you, Miss. You can sit down now Mr... Taurus. (As GEMINI comes hesitantly forward.) Name?

GEMINI: Gemini Schwarz.

COPE: Real name, please.

GEMINI: That is my real name. It's one of the things that attracted Madame to me. (She starts to sniff.)

COPE: How did you meet?

GEMINI: I was working as a waitress at a Howard Johnson's in Butte, Montana. Madame sat in my section. She ordered the patty melt, onion rings and a....

COPE: I don't think we need to know all that.

GEMINI: So, anyway, we got talking, though it was hard 'cause it was Mother's Day and that's the busiest day for a

restaurant. People that only go out once a year will go out . . .

COPE: Please, miss, the point.

GEMINI: Oh.....well, I told her how I admired her 'cause horoscopes always fascinated me and so she offered to do my chart and it turned out from that that we were as perfectly compatible as two people could be. Astrologically speaking, I mean.

COPE: And this was how long ago?

GEMINI: Three years.

COPE: O.K. Now to get back to your movements today . . .

GEMINI: We checked into the hotel this morning, even though the lectures weren't scheduled to start til next week. We like a day or two to get settled. Mr. Taurus and Madame thought it would be fun to watch the mystery thing but I get scared easy so I said I'd join them later. Then someone from here called and said she was going to speak tonight so I just grabbed all her lecture things, hopped in the limo and got here as fast as I could.

COPE: And we all saw you enter. And we saw as you handled Madame's things.

GEMINI: Yes, I suppose I did.

COPE: During which time you could have easily slipped the poison into the water. You knew she would take a drink sooner or later, didn't you? And you were with her in Australia. Maybe.....MAYBE...you're not the helpless, awkward little fool you appear.

TAURUS: Oh, she is, Cope, trust me, she is.

GEMINI: No! No! No! I wouldn't have hurt Madame. She was so good to me.....She took me under her wing. Gave me a job.

COPE: But maybe you didn't think you were appreciated enough. Maybe you harbored deep feelings of resentment. Maybe you felt she took you for granted. MAYBE you thought she didn't pay you enough.

GEMINI: Seven thousand a month.

COPE: What?

GEMINI: That's what she paid me. Seven thousand dollars a month.

TAURUS: Hey, Cope, you wanta talk criminal.

COPE: Seven thousand a month. But.....why that much?

GEMINI: Madame said she wanted to take care of me now because when she died all her money was going to HIM. (Pointing to TAURUS.)

TAURUS: Righto -- The gravy train stops here, kid.

GEMINI: So you see, Mr. Cope, why I wouldn't want Lottie dead. Now, I have nothing. (Crying.) Except my memories.

LEO: Look, Cope, this is all extremely interesting and I really must compliment you on the forceful, authoritarian way you've taken charge here. However, I'm due back at the lab so if you'll just excuse me.....

COPE: You can sit down, Miss. Professor Turnbull, a few questions before you go.

LEO: Well, ah, oh I suppose I can spare a few minutes.

COPE: Name.

LEO: You know my.....alright.....Turnbull. Leo Turnbull. No middle initial and yes, before you ask, it's my real name.

COPE: You are a teacher and research scientist at Akron University? Correct? (TURNBULL nods.) Your specialty is poisons -- which is why you think you can identify which poison was used to kill Madame Zodiak.

LEO: I don't "think," Cope, I know. Only the venom of the Australian Sea Serpent would cause such a rapid death, followed by the Yuletide syndrome...the green face and red tongue. Classic case.

COPE: Yes.....I see....And how could this venom be administered?

LEO: By the bite of an Australian Sea Serpent.

COPE: No other way?

TAURUS: I don't see any snakes around here.

COPE: Could the poison be given, say, orally?

LEO: Orally?

TAURUS: He means by mouth, Turnbull.

LEO: I KNOW WHAT HE MEANS.....Yes, yes it could.

COPE: With the same results? (LEO nods) And it only takes a tiny, tiny amount to kill?

GEMINI: He said infinitesimal . . .

LEO: I KNOW WHAT I SAID. O.K., O.K. I see where this is going. You think I slipped it into that Zodiak woman's water. But I.....

TAURUS: Hey, you're the guy with all the poisons....Probably has a whole lab full of them.

GEMINI: And he hated poor Madame....You heard him. He called her all kinds of names. And he....he...said she should be burned at the stake.

LEO: Now see here, Cope.... Yes, I hated the woman....but if I really wanted her dead....Would I be dumb enough to do it in front of hundreds of witnesses? And then proceed to identify the poison? Now come on, would I?

COPE: You might. If....you thought that we all thought that you might think that we wouldn't think that you were that dumb...

ALL: Huh?

COPE: Wait, all of you, everyone sit for a minute while I think out loud. Madame Zodiak was murdered, poisoned, on this stage not 10 minutes ago. But, who is the murderer? (He moves behind each of the suspects in turn.) Is it Taurus, the deeply bereaved husband? He certainly will gain the most by Madame's death. He is the sole heir to her estate of several million dollars. But he was nowhere near Madame for fifteen minutes prior to her death. He never touched her or her things. Mr. Taurus had motive, but no opportunity.

Or was it Gemini Schwarz? She certainly had opportunity. She could have slipped the poison into the drinking water easily. We all saw her handling Madame's things. But why? Gemini will only lose by her employer's death. Not only is she not an heir, but her very generous salary will stop. So....opportunity, but no motive.

And then there's Dr. Leo Turnbull, eminent scientist. Expert in poisons. He hated Madame and everything she represented. He could have poisoned Madame's water. Did he despise her that much? He had both opportunity and motive. Or is that just too neat? Which one? Which one? (This is the cue for all to stand and, ad-lib, argue among

themselves, protesting innocence, blaming each other etc. Finally, COPE commands quiet. Just as things settle, TAURUS speaks.)

TAURUS: We can argue all night but no one will ever know for sure who killed Lottie.

GEMINI: There's one person who knows who the murderer is.

ALL: Who?

GEMINI: (In a hushed tone.) Madame herself.

LEO: Great. Maybe we can call her long distance.

GEMINI: Why not? You remember, Mr. Taurus, how Madame really believed that spirits could communicate from the "other side?"

TAURUS: Yeah, I remember. She spent an entire month trying to reach Elvis. 'Course that was before we found out he's still alive and working at a Burger King in Altoona.

LEO: I wondered how long it would be before someone mentioned Elvis.

GEMINI: But you don't understand!!! Madame told me how to bring her back. She said we needed to get a large group of strong, sensitive, intelligent people together under one roof, and we have that. (She gestures to audience.) Then she said we should all join hands, like this....(She crosses her arms and attempts to take LEO'S hand.) LEO: Let go of me!!! Cope, why are you letting this continue?

COPE: Why not?

GEMINI: Exactly!!! Good for you! You have an open mind, Mr. Cope. Madame would have liked you. (She starts to sniff again.)

TAURUS: Just do it, would you, Gemini. Let's get this over with.

GEMINI: You're right, Mr. Taurus. And besides.... Lottie will be back with us in a minute so there's really no reason to grieve. Now. (The following is directed to the audience as well as those onstage. TURNBULL will be clearly impatient, TAURUS will be disinterested and COPE will be fascinated.) Everyone stand. Join hands like this. (With crossed arms.) Now we all need to hum a favorite song of Madame's....Let's see....She really loved the Bangles.....

TAURUS: Not as much as Nine Inch Nails, though....

GEMINI: True. I know!! We can do the song they played at your wedding. Alright, everyone....Join hands, like this, and sway back and forth. Good. Now we've all got to hum "Tie A Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree"... Could the lights be dimmed, please....Thank you. Together everyone. MMMMMMMMMM (As the humming continues GEMINI will extort everyone to stay together, don't break the chain and finally, to raise their hands above their heads. It will only stop as MADAME enters, humming herself. Her face is a lurid shade of green and her tongue is bright red. On seeing her, GEMINI will give a shriek, COPE and TURNBULL will stare dumbfounded. Only TAURUS will be capable of speech.) TAURUS: Holy shit.

AT THIS POINT, IF YOU OPT AGAINST A FULL SCALE CLUE HUNT, GO TO "HORACE LEADS THE WAY"

MADAME: Surprised to see me, dear ones? (To audience.) They didn't think it would work or they never would have done it. Welcome to "Seance at \_\_\_\_\_." Yes, I'm still dead. (GEMINI shrieks again.) I don't know about you, but I'm getting pretty tired of listening to that girl scream. (She turns, snaps her fingers and they freeze. She snaps again and points offstage and they file off, zombielike. To audience.) Being dead isn't exactly a picnic, but it's got certain

advantages. Now, little Gemini was right....I do know who murdered me. But it's against the rules to just come out and tell you, so I can only give little hints. Ten little hints, which you will have

to find. But I'll let (HOST/HOSTESS name) tell you all about that. And don't worry about our little group of suspects. They'll snap out of it in plenty of time to hear how you solved the case and unmasked my murderer. I know you can do it!! You must. So I may rest in peace. Work hard, children, and may the stars shine down on your endeavors! (She exits to spooky music.)

## PART II - CLUE HUNT

### FULL-SCALE HUNT

Following Madame's exit, the HOST/HOSTESS will introduce the next portion of the mystery. The Production Manual provides complete instructions.

In a full-scale clue hunt, the HOST/HOSTESS will introduce it as clue packets are distributed. The "ground rules" are stated at the beginning of this, but it is good to stress the following:

- Work together in teams, and take the clues in order, beginning with the one marked with the red star.
- Replace all clues as instructed. Failure to do so can result in disqualification.
- Read instructions carefully. In the long run it is to your benefit.
- Note areas which are "off limits" (the stage, or offices, etc.)

The audience is then sent off with a "Happy Detecting."

If your event does NOT include a clue hunt throughout the facility, a short break may be given, followed by "Horace Leads The Way".

During either clue hunt, the following clues will be discovered:

- 1) Habits can be killers.
- 2) The water and glass used by Madame Zodiak contained no poison.
- 3) Leo is a Leo.
- 4) Taurus is a Taurus.
- 5) No poison in the cigarette.
- 6) Gemini is a Taurus.
- 7) The throat spray contained no poison.
- 8) The gum chewed by Madame contained no trace of poison.
- 9) The chapstick used by Madame Zodiak contained no trace of poison.
- 10) The location where solution sheets should be turned in. (Optional)

During the clue hunt, the "suspects" will circulate and help participants. They remain "in character" throughout and can answer questions about the crime. They should attempt to stay as close to the truth as possible, without giving it away. They can most certainly refuse to answer questions, or become upset, etc....

### INSTEAD OF A CLUE HUNT - HORACE LEADS THE WAY

If you decide, for a variety of reasons, to forego a full-scale hunt, the following scene will supply your "detectives" with the clues necessary to solve the mystery. It became, in effect, a "second act" which very much involved the audience but in a different way.

The following takes place as Madame's ghost appears at the end of the play section of the mystery.

MADAME: Suprised to see me, dear ones? (To audience) They didn't think it would work or they would never have done it. Welcome to Seance at . Yes, I'm still dead. (GEMINI shrieks again.) I don't know about you, but I'm getting pretty tired of listening to that girl scream. (She turns, snaps her fingers and they freeze. She snaps again, and waves them offstage, and all but HORACE file of, zombie-like. HORACE remains "frozen" until after MADAME'S GHOST exits.) Being dead isn't exactly a picnic, but it has certain advantages. Now, little Gemini was right. I DO know who my murderer is. But it's against the "rules" to just come right out and tell you. Although, I will give you a hint or two. Like

"HABITS CAN KILL YOU". Oh, and maybe you should ask our suspects about their BIRTH SIGNS. Now, I'm not going to say any more! You will just have to figure it out yourselves! I know you can do it! You must! So I may rest in peace! Work hard, children, and may the stars shine down on your endeavors! (She exits to spooky music. HORACE gradually

"thaws")

HORACE: Oh, wow, I mean, did you see that? A real, live ghost...I mean a real, dead....I mean... ....You know, don't you, that the police aren't going to believe any of this? Nobody's gonna believe any of this! But Dr. Turnbull is right.....this could make my career....If I can solve this case, why, there's no security job in the business that won't be mine for the asking. But I can't do it alone. Look, will you help me out here? Really. Give me hand. How about it? (There will, hopefully, be loud vocal assent.)

Okay, first things first. The ghost gave us some leads. She said... what did she say? Oh, right, BIRTH SIGNS. That shouldn't be too hard. Um, okay, I need a volunteer. Just a quick little errand. (He will get one. If not, the HOST/HOSTESS will step forward.) I need you to go and ask Miss Gemini about her birth sign. (GEMINI should wait until the "volunteer" has ascertained her BIRTH SIGN before going to the safe room to undergo her "transformation." The rest of the cast should be in the back of the room, or somewhere else in evidence. HORACE will then solicit volunteers to discover the BIRTH SIGNS of LEO and TAURUS. He should proceed with the rest of the scene, interrupting at certain points to question the "volunteers" about the suspects' "signs". During all of this, HORACE is to do a great deal of ad-lib and "working" the audience.) Okay, so what else did Madame say? Something about "habits"?.... Right, right, "HABITS CAN BE KILLERS". Well, she certainly had some habits, didn't she? (Picks things up, one by one). Cigarette, throat spray, chapstick, gum, and, of course, the water. But how will we know which one? Ladies and gentlemen, we do not have the time to have these things tested at a lab. There's only one way we will know which of these things killed Madame. (With a great deal of obvious fortitude, he picks up gum, holds it for all to see, and pops it in his mouth and chews it.) I feel fine. Maybe a little heartburn and my back's been killing me, but, outside of that, I feel fine. So, the gum must be okay. I'll even have another piece. (He does.) Teaberry. I have the urge to do "the shuffle". Now, is there any one of you who is brave enough to try one of the other items up here? Come, come, don't be shy. I'll even let you pick from what's up here. Volunteers? (Hopefully, there will be some, or you can use "plants." HORACE will ask names, where they are from, next of kin, etc. After they have chosen from among the items and "used" it, HORACE will watch closely for signs of "poisoning", etc. He should keep them all onstage, in a line-up, for as long as possible - doing exercises, etc. Periodically, he will call for those who've been investigating BIRTH SIGNS to report. When everything has been tested and nothing appears to be "poisoned"...) )

HORACE: Well, that's that. None of this stuff seems to be poisoned. (To group onstage.) Gee, I'm sorry. I guess you guys can sit down now. I mean, one of you should be dead by now. Okay, so what do we know? None of this was poisoned, but the old lady said "Habits can be killers." Oh, yeah, and about astrological signs - Gemini is a Taurus. Leo is a Leo. Taurus is a Taurus. It doesn't make sense. Look, I have a few more questions for these three, while you try to come up with answers, okay. The HOST/HOSTESS will tell you how to submit a solution. Do your best.

The HOST/HOSTESS and clue helpers will distribute solution sheets. The questions posed on the solution sheet are: a)  
How was Madame Zodiak killed?  
b) By whom was Madame Zodiak killed?  
c) Why was Madame Zodiak killed?

After the detectives have found all the clues, either through the clue hunt, or the scene, it is time for them to submit solutions. If a sitdown dinner is used, this is a good spot for dessert. As soon as solutions are "graded" and winners determined, the final scene can be played.

**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](mailto:mysteriesbymoushey@gmail.com)

## PROPS

stretcher and/or dolly - something for body removal

plastic carryall with: throat spray, Madame's notes, gum, cigarettes, lighter, ashtray, throat spray, cha

pstick

chewed-on glasses on chain

pitcher

glass

green makeup, red food coloring (some cinnamon can give same effect) for Madame  
notebook, pen to plant in audience small table CD

player

**INCLUDED IN PRODUCTION PACKET** sent electronically

Sample clue packets, with answer key and flow chart Blank  
flow chart so you can design your own clue hunt.

Madame's brochure, front and back sides

Production Manual (which is the same for all shows.)

**OPTIONAL**

All the contents of the Production Packet can be printed and mailed to you for a small fee.