

MURDER!

and other fun things....

GEOFFREY STODDARD

MURDER AND OTHER FUN THINGS

A play in three acts

by

Geoffrey Lynn Stoddard

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Cast of Characters

CHATEL VON CASH:

Wealthy widow. Because of her wealth she feels she has the right to look down on everybody, and therefore, does not bother to remember names. The only person she looks up to is her psychic advisor, Sylvia. Chattel has been married 28 times, each to very wealthy men who all died under very suspicious circumstances. She loves martinis.

PLANKTON:

Chattel's longtime butler. He is snobbish and really does not like Chattel but is nevertheless loyal (nobody knows why).

OH GREAT MYSTICAL SYLVIA:

Sylvia is a clairvoyant to the very rich - but a very phony one. She is moody and prone to losing her temper, at which times truth of her sordid past always comes to light - accidentally. She wears a long robe.

DETECTIVE SCHENECTADY:

Private detective. Like Chattel, he loves martinis but can never seem to get one. He has a mind like a sieve and has trouble piecing together coherent sentences. One theory has it that he is thinking too far in advance and therefore loses his concentration, another being that he is merely an idiot.

TIFFANI:

Chattel's maid. She is a bubble-headed valley girl type who carries a deep hatred for Ginger, the

gardener. She has the mental acumen of a bulldozer.

GINGER SNAP:

The estate gardener. He is very gay and flamboyant. He is prone to over-the-top theatrics with broad gestures. He hates Tiffani with the heat of a thousand white-hot suns.

COUNT PEDIGREE ROMAINE SAUERBRATEN GOULASH PTOMAINÉ III:

Chattel's personal Chef, and has a penchant for cooking exotic dishes... some of a cannibalistic nature. He is a Peter Lorre type and tends to slink about while always sizing people up as potential meals.

PROPS

-Act One-

Wristwatch (Chattel)
Glass candy dish (coffee table)
Bag of hard candy (bar)
Magazine (coffee table)
Vodka bottle (bar)
Green olives
Toothpicks
Drink shaker (bar)
Ice cube tray and ice cubes (bar)
Oversized martini glass
Feather duster
Magic 8 ball
Drink flask
Purse
Compact
Man's wallet
Cell phone
Toaster

-Act Two-

Folding pocket Knife
Cell phone
Long swizzle stick with an olive stuck on the end
Kitchen knife
Garden sheers
Large stack of white towels
Paper airplane with writing on it
Driver's license
Wallet
Medical gloves
Plastic hand lotion bottle with pump top
Candle
Pair of underpants
Martini Glass
Latex gloves

-Act Three-

Gun
Martini Glass

ACT ONE

SETTING:

A living room. Center stage sits a couch with a coffee table before it. Right center is a small round table with two chairs on either side of it. Up right is a tall bar.

AT RISE:

Plankton walks in from center entrance with a feather duster. He dusts the top of the bar before heading gracefully to the back of the couch and dusting it. He next dusts the end table and plant before rounding the couch and dusting the coffee table. Returning to the bar he withdraws a bag of candy from beneath and returns to the coffee table to fill the glass bowl. Glancing around the room to make sure he is alone, he then pops a piece of candy in his mouth, finds it distasteful and spits it right back into the bowl. Plankton then dusts the coffee table. Next he dusts the round table and then steps behind the bar, stashing the candy below. Plankton withdraws a vodka bottle, drink shaker and ice cube tray. Ice is added to the shaker and then vodka. The drink is shaken lightly. He then reaches down and withdraws the oversized martini glass, pouring the drink into it.

PLANKTON

(Speaking to no one in particular.)

Madam, your drink has been prepared.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL enters UC with her purse on her left arm and walks to the back of the couch, staring straight ahead the entire way. She comes to a halt and holds her hand out to accept the martini.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON shakes his head.
He walks over to place the
drink in CHATTEL'S hand.)

CHATTEL

Thank you, Jeeves.

PLANKTON

The name is 'Plankton', madam.

CHATTEL

Like I care, darling. I am filthy rich and you work for me.
Therefore, I am important and you are not. In fact, were it not
for my compassionate nature I would not even allow a lowlife like
yourself into my mansion.

PLANKTON

Madam has the compassion of a rabid wombat.

CHATTEL

Yes, I am rich, but it must really stink to be you.

PLANKTON

I see that madam had her usual bowl of Cream of Bitch for
breakfast this morning.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL begins to take a
drink, then stops. Looks at
the drink a moment before
holding it out to PLANKTON,
all while continuing to
stare straight ahead.)

Ahem! Hobbs?! You know better than that.

PLANKTON

Of course, madam. My bad.

(PLANKTON reaches inside
coat pocket and produces an
olive on a toothpick. He
then drops this in her drink
at such a height as to
splash the drink.)

CHATTEL

Dress, James, dress! I am far too fabulous to have my fabulous dress splashed with a fabulous martini.

PLANKTON

It is fortunate that none of it got on your skin, madam. We would not want you to melt, now, would we? Allow me, madam...

(PLANKTON takes the drink from CHATTEL'S hand, dusts the front of her dress off with the feather duster and then returns the glass to her hand.)

Aside from sitting around chugging martinis like a sump pump, might I inquire as to madam's plans for the day?

CHATTEL

You might not. Can't you see I'm busy, Pearson?

(CHATTEL takes a sip of her drink.)

PLANKTON

The name is 'Plankton', madam.

(PLANKTON waits for CHATTEL to finish her sip.)

Now might I inquire as to madam's plans for the day?

CHATTEL

Not yet, Potter. So many martinis, so little time. Busy, busy, busy.

(CHATTEL takes a sip of her drink.)

PLANKTON

Madam...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL up her hand, cutting him off. She takes one more sip from her drink.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON briefly looks away
in disgust.)

Is madam now sufficiently pickled? If so, please allow me to inquire as to madam's plans for the day?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL saunters around to the front of the couch as she talks and sits in the center. The purse is placed on the coffee table before her.)

I have a very busy schedule, Peppermill. Has the staff been released from their shackles in the basement yet?

PLANKTON

Madam, the Department of Labor, the FBI, the CIA, the PTA and several cafeteria organizations made you discontinue the practice of 'shackling' over a year ago. You are lucky that they did not throw your uppity ass in prison, madam.

CHATTEL

Busybodies. Always sticking their noses in other people's business.

(sighs heavily)

I do so miss the good old days.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON brings out feather duster and takes a couple swipes over the back of the couch.)

(speaks under his breath)

Yes, madam.

CHATTEL

Did you say something, Gangrene?

PLANKTON

Will madam be needing me for anything else? Perhaps madam needs to poop?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL gives him a quick
condescending glance.)

I will call you if I need you, Hoghead.

PLANKTON

I look forward to it like the plague, madam.
(PLANKTON turns to leave.)

CHATTEL

(whining childishly)

No, wait. Stay here and read to me, Finster.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON turns back to
Chattel.)

We have talked about this, madam. I am the butler, not the
reader. I do not read. I buttle.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL becomes indignant
while staring straight
ahead.)

Exactly who works for who, Flotsam? If I ask you to read to me
then I expect you to read to me.

PLANKTON

Madam can blow it out madam's ear.

CHATTEL

I shall remember this at Christmastime, Prattle. I would not be
surprised if you were not to get your usual Christmas bonus this
year.

PLANKTON

Oh, what a shame, madam. I do so look forward to my yearly
hairball.

(PLANKTON dusts the top of
her head.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL waves off the
feather duster.)

Of course you do. I make them myself. It's the little homemade
gifts that mean so much.

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE enters room, out of breath and looking delighted.)

Miss Chattel! Miss Chattel!

(PTOMAINE spies CHATTEL on the couch and rushes to the left side.)

Thank you so much. I never expected such a generous gift.

CHATTEL

(to PLANKTON)

Take notes, Porker. This is how you show gratitude, darling.

(She holds out her left hand to Ptomaine.)

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE takes her hand and kisses it repeatedly.)

I will never forget this act of generosity, Miss Chattel.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes her hand back.)

Of course you won't, darling.

(She begins to take a sip of her martini, but suddenly stops and turns to PTOMAINE.)

Wait a moment. I gave you a gift? I must have been...

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON moves down to the right-rear of the couch.)

Soused?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL looks up in thought.)

No.

PLANKTON

Potted?

CHATTEL

No.

PLANKTON

Juiced?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL begins to frown.)

No.

PLANKTON

Liquored up?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL is now becoming quite annoyed.)

No.

PLANKTON

Stoned? Stewed? Plastered? Crocked?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL turns and glares up at PLANKTON.)

You are enjoying this a little too much, Mink-oil.

(She turns back to Ptomaine on her left.)

I was going to say that I must have been asleep.

PLANKTON

Passed out.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL turns to glare at him, then looks back to PTOMAINE.)

What gift are you talking about?

PTOMAINE

The body in the kitchen, Miss Chattel.

CHATTEL

Body? What body? There is a body in the kitchen?

PTOMAINE

Oh, don't worry, I think it's a recent kill so it should still be fresh.

CHATTEL

Oh, I see. You are talking about one of the livestock.
(CHATTEL begins starts to
take a drink.)

PTOMAINE

No, Miss Chattel. It's a full-grown man. He looks delicious.

CHATTEL

(Again CHATTEL's glass is
stopped before reaching her
lips.)
Why is there the body of a full-grown man in my kitchen, darling?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE looks from CHATTEL
to PLANKTON then back to
CHATTEL, somewhat confused.)
You mean it wasn't a gift?

CHATTEL

I should say not. I receive gifts, I do not give them.

PTOMAINE

(hopeful)
Can I keep it anyway, Miss Chattel?

CHATTEL

Absolutely not. I am far too rich to have the dead body of a
full-grown man rotting away in my kitchen. Kindly dispose of it.

PTOMAINE

But, Miss Chattel, he's a pretty big guy - think of all the
leftovers.

CHATTEL

Who is the dead man in my kitchen, Roof-rot?

PLANKTON

I do not know, madam. I shall look into this.

CHATTEL

Yes. You do that, Prime-beef.

PLANKTON

(to PTOMAINE.)

This way.

PLANKTON AND PTOMAINE

(They both exit UC.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes a sip of her martini. She then spies the candy dish on the table. Lifting the bowl she takes a piece and sticks it into her mouth. A moment later she makes a distasteful face and spits it back into the dish. She sets the dish down, leans back and takes another sip of her martini.)

GINGER

(GINGER peeks around the corner of the entry.)

Miss Chattel?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL does not look around.)

Who is there, darling?

GINGER

(GINGER cautiously steps into the entry fully.)

It's me, Ginger Snap, your gardener. May I come in a moment, please?

CHATTEL

My time is very valuable, darling, but I always make plenty of time for my staff. Come in. You have 30 seconds.

GINGER

(GINGER glances about the room cautiously.)

Is Tiffani in here?

CHATTEL

No, darling.

GINGER

(GINGER enters room and quickly walks to the right side of the couch.)

Thank you, Miss Chattel. I was wondering if you knew who owned the camel parked out front. I need for them to move it because it's stepping all over my Periwinkles, eating my Buxus, and I won't even begin to tell you what it did on my Ranunculus.

CHATTEL

Darling, I am far too busy, much too important, and infinitely too rich to be bothered with such trivial matters. Go ask Brainbucket about that.

GINGER

The butler? Yes, Miss Chattel. Do you know where I can find him? I'm afraid to go wandering around the house because whenever I run across Tiffani she hurts me so.

CHATTEL

I believe he is in the kitchen checking out the body, darling.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI enters room UC.)

Like, Miss Chattel, I just finished making up the...

(She spots GINGER and comes to a halt.)

Oh, like, it's you. What are you, like, doing in the main house?

GINGER

(Ginger glares at her.)
(speaks with malice)

Tiffani... Wouldn't you like to know?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI rushes over to the left side of the couch, opposite GINGER.)
(to CHATTEL)

Miss Chattel, he's, like, in the house again. You want me to, like, get the electric cattle prod?

GINGER

Hey! Miss Chattel, you said she couldn't do that to me again. It hurt.

(GINGER rubs his arm.)

CHATTEL

The gardener is here to ask a question, Tiffani. He is allowed to be inside.

GINGER

(GINGER sticks his tongue out at Tiffani.)
(to CHATTEL)

What were you saying about a body in the kitchen, Miss Chattel?

CHATTEL

I don't know, darling. I guess there is a dead man in there.

GINGER

A dead man? Oh! What a waste! Who was he, Miss Chattel? Where did he come from? What color eyes does he have? I just know he was my dream man.

TIFFANI

(to GINGER)
Ohmygod. Like, you are such a Tuh-winkie.
(to CHATTEL)
Miss Chattel, please let me, like, get the cattle prod.

CHATTEL

Now, Tiffani. I granted the gardener a full 30 seconds. If he is not gone by then, you can zap him.

GINGER

Oh! I am not a piece of livestock... although Alfredo told me I was a stallion in the bedroom. Oh! That bitch! Left me for another man.

TIFFANI

I think I am going to, like, vomit.

GINGER

It could only improve your breath. Bitch.

TIFFANI

Like, skank.

GINGER

Whore.

TIFFANI

Like, bastard.

GINGER

Loser.

TIFFANI

Like, telephone.

GINGER AND CHATTEL

(Both look at TIFFANI in surprise.)

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI looks at them both alternately in confusion.)

Like, what?

CHATTEL

(to GINGER)

You have two more seconds, darling.

GINGER

Oh! I'll go find the butler now.

(GINGER rushes out the entry UC.)

CHATTEL

Tiffani, you really should try to get along with the outside help. They cannot help it if they are inferior.

TIFFANI

But, Miss Chattel, like, he is such a fairy. I wanna gag every time I, like, see him. Ohmygod.

CHATTEL

Nevertheless, Tiffani, we are all on this planet to tolerate one another... Well, I am on the planet to tolerate everybody else.

(CHATTEL looks up to
TIFFANI.)

What was it you wanted, darling?

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod. I so forgot. It was, like, all the fairy gardener's fault. He made me forget. Like, can I at least zap him once with the Taser, or some junk?

CHATTEL

Now, Tiffani, even though he is one of the lower life forms on the estate, he is still a... Come to think of it, he is the lowest life form on the estate. Very well, you may zap him. But only once.

PLANKTON

(PLANKDON enters the room
and approaches the right
rear of the couch.)

Pardon my intrusion, madam. I am afraid that the chef is correct. There is a body of a dead man in the kitchen. It appears as if he had broken into the house, perhaps to burgle it.

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod. You mean that there is, like, a real live dead body in the house?

CHATTEL

(to TIFFANI)

Tiffani, leave this to the grownups. I am sure that you have work to do.

TIFFANI

Like, yes, Miss Chattel. Like, where did I put that Taser?
(TIFFANI exits UC.)

CHATTEL

Pinstripe?

PLANKTON

'Plankton', madam.

CHATTEL

I am far too wealthy to have a dead burglar rotting in my kitchen. Where is he now?

PLANKTON

I have taken the liberty of moving the body into the freezer to keep it fresh, madam.

CHATTEL

Well, don't keep me in suspense. Who was he?

PLANKTON

I do not know, madam.

CHATTEL

Well then, bring around the Rolls. I must get to my psychic advisor right away. She can tell me who it was.

PLANKTON

I am sorry, madam, but you loaned the Rolls out your sister.

CHATTEL

I did? She hasn't returned it yet?

PLANKTON

No, madam.

CHATTEL

How long has she had it? A day? Two days?

PLANKTON

Three years, madam.

CHATTEL

No Rolls.. Well then, bring around the Bentley.

PLANKTON

The Bentley has four flat tires, a blown head gasket, a bad muffler, no spark plugs, the steering wheel is bent, the leather upholstery has cracked, the oil has congealed, the chassis is up on blocks and the gas cap is missing, madam.

CHATTEL

I grow weary of your excuses, Pelter. Just bring the Bentley around.

PLANKTON

Madam, I believe that it is time to give some serious consideration to that lobotomy we have been talking about.

CHATTEL

Not now, Phonebook. I am not in the mood for jokes.

PLANKTON

(to himself)

I was joking?

(to CHATTEL)

Oh, that's right. Madam had her sense of humor surgically removed 25 years ago.

CHATTEL

Don't be absurd. That's ridiculous, Corn-chip. It was 27 years ago and you know it. Now go bring around the Bentley.

PLANKTON

(sighs)

Madam, the Bentley is not running.

CHATTEL

So what are you saying, Upchuck?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON rolls his eyes.)

No Bentley, madam.

CHATTEL

No Bentley, Benson?

PLANKTON

'Plankton', madam. No, no Bentley.

CHATTEL

Very well. I suppose this situation calls for extreme measures. Oh, I do so abhor flying but if this is the way it must be then this is the way it must be. I shall make the supreme sacrifice. You may bring around the helicopter, Rubble.

PLANKTON

Madam is truly a pillar of strength in displaying such bravery.

CHATTEL

This is true.

PLANKTON

Madam is a rock on the shaky ground of life.

CHATTEL

Yes, I know.

PLANKTON

Madam is a tower of inspiration, a shining example to us all of how one can overcome one's fears through sheer determination and perseverance.

CHATTEL

Yes, I am wonderful. You may kiss my feet.

PLANKTON

Madam also has the memory of a gin soaked noodle. We do not have a helicopter.

CHATTEL

What? No helicopter?

PLANKTON

No helicopter, madam.

CHATTEL

Then bring around the Lear jet.

PLANKTON

There is no Lear jet.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL turns to give
PLANKTON a glare.)

I swear, Eyedrop. If you lose one more Lear jet...

PLANKTON

Madam never had a Lear jet.

CHATTEL

That is not true, Freestone, I was flying it just yesterday.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON turns and heads
back behind the bar.)
(to himself)

You were flying, madam, but not in a Lear jet. Madam was merely bombed out of her gourd.

CHATTEL

What will we do, Nosecone? No Rolls. No Bentley. No helicopter. No Lear jet. How will I reach Oh Great Mystical Sylvia if I have no transportation deserving of my stature and wealth?

PLANKTON

(to himself)
Might I saddle up one of the dogs in the kennel for you?

CHATTEL

Did you say something, Prostate?

PLANKTON

Madam, I have already anticipated your desire to meet with your 'psychic advisor'. A call has been placed and the woman of questionable abilities and lesser moral character is on her way over as we speak.

CHATTEL

Very well. You may go now.

PLANKTON

As you wish, madam.
(PLANKTON exits.)

GINGER

(GINGER pokes his head
around the entry doorway and
glances quickly around the
room.)

Miss Chattel?

CHATTEL

Yes? Who's there?

GINGER

It's Ginger, again, Miss Chattel. May I come in?

CHATTEL

What is it, darling? I am a busy woman. These martinis won't drink themselves, you know.

GINGER

Where's Tiffani?

CHATTEL

Tiffani has gone back to work. What is it you want?

GINGER

(GINGER steps into the room
and approaches the back-left
of the couch to the left of
CHATTEL.)

I just saw the body in the kitchen, Miss Chattel. Oh! It was awful. There he was, laying in the freezer so peacefully, looking like a little cherub. Such a magnificent specimen of male virility. Those lines. Those curves. Those lips. Those nose. Oh! Miss Chattel, what happened to him?

CHATTEL

I really do not know and I am quite sure I do not care.

GINGER

(GINGER falls to his knees
behind the couch.)

Miss Chattel, it is such a tragedy. We could have been so happy together. We were meant to be together for a lifetime, and now he's in the freezer.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL ignores him and
nurses her martini.)

GINGER

If only we could have been together in life I would have been the happiest man on earth. Oh! But it's over. In death he is out of my life forever. In death we shall never walk that golden path to

bliss. Think of the stories I could have told my grandchildr... um, no. The stories I could have told my mothe... *oh, hell no*. Well, there's always Alfredo.

(GINGER collapses, draping his arms and head over the back of the couch.)

Oh! Alfredo! I loved him so much and the bitch left me for another man half my age.

(He looks up in thought.)

Half his own age, too, actually.

(He collapses again draped over the couch.)

Oh! Miss Chattel, how long must I suffer? I gave that man the best years of my life and what did I get in return? Heartache and remorse and regret...

(He scratches his left arm.)

...and some kind of rash that I'm still trying to get rid of.

(to CHATTEL)

Who could have killed that man in the freezer? I'll bet you the maid, Tiffany, did it. She has guilt written all over her face. Guilty as the day is long. The bitch.

(GINGER stands.)

(to a distant imaginary figure)

Goodnight sweet Prince. We hardly knew ye but we are better off for having known ye than not knowing ye at all. Fare Thee Well, my brave little soldier boy. Your death is thus for thee and thine and me and thou.

(to CHATTEL)

What will happen to him now, Miss Chattel? Must he stay in the freezer? He'll freeze his little nose off. I know, how about if I take him to my room and...

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON appears in entry. He stands still, blocking it.)

Madam, your psychic advisor has arrived.

CHATTEL

Very well, Prattsdorf. Show her in.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA appears, carrying a toaster in her left hand.)

Outta my way, penguin. Does anybody know that there's a camel tied up outside?

(She tries to push PLANKTON out of the way with her shoulder but he does not budge. This having failed, she attempts to shove him aside with her right hand, leaning over to throw all her weight into it. He does not move. Finally, she drops down to her knees, pushes the toaster through his legs before crawling under him herself, stands again and heads directly over to the round table CR, placing the toaster in the center.)

So where's the fire, Chattel? I was right in the middle of a strip poker ga...

(to GINGER)

Who the hell are you?

GINGER

I'm the gardener.

SYLVIA

Get the hell outta here. Important psychic business going on.

GINGER AND PLANKTON

(GINGER and PLANKTON both exit UC.)

SYLVIA

I'm a busy woman, Chattel. What's this all about?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL stands and approaches the table with her martini. Places the glass on the table.)

Oh Great Mystical Sylvia, thank you so much for coming. You have been my spiritual advisor for so many years. I cannot make a move without you and I am at my wit's end.

SYLVIA

Yeah, yeah, whatever. Let's hurry it up, Chattel. I've got a three-of-a-kind and a nearly naked Senator waiting for me back home. Well, take a load off, lady. Let's get this show on the road.

(SYLVIA sits down in right chair.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL sits down in left chair.)

I just cannot tell you how much I appreciate this, Oh Great Mystical Sylvia.

SYLVIA

I know, I know. I'm wonderful. Now, what's the problem?
(SYLVIA begins passing her hands over the toaster.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL opens her mouth to speak but SYLVIA interrupts her.)

SYLVIA

Hush. Let me look into the Mystical Toaster. I see... yes, I see a dark cloud. It hovers over your aura. The planets of Ford and Mercury are in dangerous alignment with Pluto and Mickey. Chattel, your sacroiliac is about to burst. I suggest you contact your proctologist immediately. Do I bill this to the same credit card as last time?

(SYLVIA stands and plucks up the toaster.)

CHATTEL

My 'sacred' what? Oh, no, dear, that is not the problem at all.

SYLVIA

(Frustrated, SYLVIA sets the toaster back down on the table and reseats herself.)

No? No, of course not. I must have tuned in to your matching luggage by mistake. Now, wait while I consult the Mystical Toaster again.

(She waves hands over toaster.)

Wait, here it comes... here it comes... I see a menacing dark figure in your future, Chattel. An evil figure. It's a hand and it's got the tattoo of a UFO on it. It's reaching into a red leather purse and taking something. It's a black patent leather wallet. I see the initials C.V.C.

CHATTEL

Well, that's certainly strange, darling. I have a red leather purse with a black patent leather wallet in it with the initials C.V.C.; Chattel Von Cash.

SYLVIA

(startled)

What? No, Chattel. Wrong wallet. You're not paying attention. I said that...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL points to SYLVIA's hand.)

(innocently)

And look at that, you have a tattoo with a UFO on it just like the one you said, darling. Isn't that a coincidence?

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA quickly draws her hand away, covering the back of it with the other hand.)

Uh... no, Chattel. Different tattoo entirely. Forget I said that. It wasn't anything important. Chattel, I said nothing about a wallet. Forget it! Chattel, you're fixating on it too much. Let it go, Chattel, let it go! You keep harping on it like this and it will be the death of you! Besides, why would I want to take your wallet?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL looks completely clueless.)

SYLVIA

Why are you looking at me like that, lady? I've never taken anything in my life that didn't belong to me after I got my hands on it. What are you trying to say, Chattel? I know that look! It says prison! What are you talking, prison... I've never been to prison and I wasn't in Cell Block 'B' for 7 years, 3 months and 5 days for bribing that cop either.

(SYLVIA suddenly stands,
reaches across the table,
grabs CHATTEL by her
shoulders and begins shaking
her.)

Seven years, Chattel. Seven long years! Frieda, her name was Frieda. I'll never forget that name... and that voice! "You're all mine now, Sylvia." "You'll do whatever I want you to do, Sylvia." "Tuck me into bed, Sylvia." "Clean my feet with your tongue, Sylvia." "It's time to play with the kitchen utensils, Sylvia!" Oh, why are you doing this to me, Chattel? Why? Why?

CHATTEL

Oh Great Mystical Sylvia, darling. You seem a tad upset. Would you like to come back later?

SYLVIA

What wallet?

(SYLBIA regains her senses
and glances quickly about
the room.)

What? Where am I?

(SYLVIA releases Chattel.)

It's the caffeine. I've got to cut down on the caffeine.

(SYLVIA sits back down.)

Where were we?

CHATTEL

You were looking into your Mystical Toaster, Sylvia, darling.

SYLVIA

(While she is talking,
SYLVIA pulls a black wallet
from her pocket without
CHATTEL seeing this and
nonchalantly drops it on the
floor.)

Well, of course I was. What else would I be doing here? Certainly not anything illegal like taking your wallet or anything. A wallet is a very sacred thing, Chattel. Guard it with your life. Make sure that you never..

(SYLVIA glances down,
discovers the dropped wallet
with some surprise and picks
it up.)

Boy, talk about your basic coincidences. Here.

(SYLVIA hands the wallet to
CHATTEL.)

You need to be more careful with your things in the future.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes the wallet
and slips it into her
pocket.)

Thank you, Oh Great Mystical Sylvia. I am always losing something. It is a good thing that I do not carry my Gold Cards in this wallet.

SYLVIA

Yeah, I noticed.

CHATTEL

What was that?

SYLVIA

I was agreeing with you. Geez, Chattel, you have such a suspicious mind. Let it go, Chattel. Just let it go. All right, now, let's take another crack at this.

(SYLVIA waves her hands over
the toaster a few moments
before looking up at
CHATTEL.)

What was the question again?

CHATTEL

I have not asked a question yet, Oh Great Mys...

SYLVIA

Well, let's get crackin', lady. I have an appointment in an hour with my parole officer... I mean my hair dresser. What is your damned question?

CHATTEL

Darling, I wish to know who...

SYLVIA

Yeah, yeah. You want to know your future. Who doesn't? Okay, Chattel, we'll go with that.

CHATTEL

Well, darling, actually what I wanted to ask was...

SYLVIA

One question at a time, Chattel. What do I look like? A miracle psychic? Now, concentrate on the Mystical Toaster.

(SYLVIA waves her left hand over the toaster.)

CHATTEL

(Stares at SYLVIA in silence.)

SYLVIA

Coooooncentrate on the Mystical Toaster. Coooooncentrate on...

(SYLVIA looks up to find CHATTEL staring at her.)
(angrily)

Hey! Do I look like a toaster to you, lady?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL immediately diverts her eyes to the toaster.)

Oh, no. Sorry, Oh Great...

SYLVIA

Keep your eyes on the Mystical Toaster, damn it!

(SYLVIA waves her left hand over the toaster while discreetly withdrawing a magic 8 ball from under her robe with her right hand and holds it below the table, out of CHATTEL's line of sight.)

Concentrate, Chattel. Think of nothing but the Mystical Toaster.

(She shakes the 8 ball and waits for a message to appear.)

CHATTEL

I think I see something, Oh Great Mystical Sylvia.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA looks at the toaster in surprise.)

Really? Where?

(She looks up to CHATTEL.)

Wait a minute, Chattel. Who's giving this reading? You or me? That's right, I am. So just keep your trap shut. Now, concentrate on the Mystical Toaster.

(She leans over a little to read the 8 ball.)

Wait, here it comes. I see... I see... 'Get a life.'

(She glances out to audience.)

Well, that sucks.

(She shakes the ball.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL looks up from the toaster.)

What was that, darling?

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA looks up to CHATTEL while continuing to shake the 8 ball unobserved.)

Nothing. You obviously weren't concentrating enough, Chattel. Put your mind to it. Concentrate.

(She again waves the left hand over the toaster while steadying the 8-ball and waiting for it to give her an answer.)

(chanting)

Concentrate on the Mystical Toaster... Concentrate Chattel... the Mystical Toaster will tell us everything... the toaster sees all...the toaster tells all..

(She glances suspiciously at
CHATTEL.)

(still chanting
uninterrupted)

...the toaster wants to know where you keep your gold cards...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL looks up from the
toaster.)

Pardon me, darling?

SYLVIA

(surprised)

What? Did I say that out loud? You didn't hear that. Now,
concentrate, Chattel.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL returns her eyes to
the toaster.)

Yes, I will.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA leans a bit to read
the 8 ball.)

I see it. Here it comes. Ah! The answer is 'You are a fraud.'

CHATTEL

What?

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA looks up to Chattel
in surprise.)

What? Oh, um... Nothing. The spirits are playing around. Now, if
you'll excuse me, Chattel...

(She tucks the 8 ball back
into her robe. Stands and
picks up the toaster.)

...I have to go get a bikini wax for my upcoming centerfold shoot
for Psychics Illustrated.

CHATTEL

But, darling, you still have not answered my question.

SYLVIA

Well, let's make it quick. My rickshaw is double-parked in your driveway.

(SYLVIA sets the toaster
back down and sits.)

Well? What is it, Chattel? What's the question?

CHATTEL

I would like to know where he came from.

SYLVIA

He? He who? What the hell are you talking about Chattel?

CHATTEL

The stranger of course, darling.

SYLVIA

Stranger? What stranger?

CHATTEL

The dead one.

SYLVIA

The dead one...

(SYLVIA throws hands up in
the air as if to indicate
that CHATTEL somehow
expected her to know this.)

Sure. Why not? Okay, I'll bite Chattel. What dead stranger are you talking about?

CHATTEL

Darling, surely you saw it in your Mystical Toaster.

SYLVIA

(Glances at toaster
briefly.)

I did?

(to SYLVIA)

I mean, of course I saw it. I was just testing you to see if you were paying attention. Now, this woman was probably a...

CHATTEL

Actually, darling, it was a man.

SYLVIA

Don't correct me, Chattel.

CHATTEL

But my butler was here just a few minutes ago and he said it was definitely a man. Didn't you see that in the toaster? Didn't you know it was a man?

SYLVIA

Of course I knew.

(SYLVIA pauses a beat to think of a way to explain her mistake.)

Uh... but I saw it... before she had the sex change operation.

CHATTEL

Sex change operation? Why, of course. That would explain it. I am so sorry I doubted you, Oh Great Mystical Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Yeah, well... don't let it happen again. Now, this body was...?

(SYLVIA pauses for CHATTEL to get the hint and unknowingly offer an answer.)

CHATTEL

(Stares back blankly.)

SYLVIA

...was...?

(SYLVIA motions her hand to drag out more information from CHATTEL.)

...was...?

CHATTEL

(Uncertain of what her response should be, CHATTEL offers her answer hesitantly as if to be afraid that it might be wrong.)

Oooooon... the floor?

SYLVIA

Correct. And it was in...?

CHATTEL

In the kitchen?

SYLVIA

That's right. And it's now...?

CHATTEL

In the freezer?

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA smacks both hands
down on the table in
triumph.)

And there you have it, Chattel. Once again I have mystified your mind, confounded the cosmos and proven that I know all, see all, smell all.

CHATTEL

Why, that is simply amazing, darling. You are seeing it just as if you had put the body there yourself.

SYLVIA

(nervously)

What would make you say that I put the body there myself? I had nothing to do with it, Chattel. And it certainly wasn't me last night beside the graveyard at 11:57 feeding him tainted Brandy Alexander's and laughing maniacally! Oh, sure, he was great looking and all but he had that annoying twitch in his nose.

(SYLVIA makes exaggerated
twitching motions with her
nose.)

Twitch, twitch, TWITCH! Always with the twitching! Twitching here, twitching there... Stop it! Stop that twitching!

(She stands and starts
slapping an imaginary face
before her.)

Maybe this will make you stop twitching! You think you can just come into my life and twitch and twitch and...

(She throws her arms back as
if having suddenly been
pushed.)

What? Psycho-Woman is it? I'll show you Psycho-Woman, Mr. Twitch, twitch, twitch. Psycho-Woman this!

(She begins strangling an imaginary neck.)

Having troubles breathing? Ha ha ha!

(All at once exhausted, she slumps back down in her chair.)

Oh, Chattel, he made me do it. Why are you badgering me like this? What have I ever done to you?

CHATTEL

Please, Oh Great Mystical Sylvia, I need to know more about the stranger. I need to know...

(CHATTEL happens to glance down to her empty martini glass.)

...why my martini glass is empty. PILLSTON!

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC.)

Madam crowed?

CHATTEL

Martini!

PLANKTON

As you wish, madam.

(PLANKTON walks to the table, pulls a flask from his jacket and fills the glass.)

CHATTEL

Oooooolive!

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON pulls an olive on a toothpick from behind his ear and places it in her glass. He then stands still as if anticipating CHATTEL's next command.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL turns back to SYLVIA.)

So, where were we, darling? Oh yes, I remember. Can you please tell me more about the stranger?

SYLVIA

Oh, I suppose so.

(SYLVIA glances at her watch.)

I'll never get out of here. All right, Chattel, but only because you're so rich... uh, so badly in need of guidance.

CHATTEL

Oh Great Mystical Sylvia, you are a saint!

SYLVIA

Yeah, yeah, I'm too good to be true. Now, I must have complete silence while I consult the Mystical Toaster.

(SYLVIA waves both hands over the toaster.)

I see the kitchen.

(She looks up, satisfied.)

There it is, Chattel. He got into your house through the kitchen.

(She grabs the toaster and stands.)

PLANKTON

I beg to differ with you.

SYLVIA

(Annoyed she addresses PLANKTON without looking directly at him.)

Then don't.

PLANKTON

(calmly)

Actually, he broke in through the patio door.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA looks to Plankton with a glare before turning to address CHATTEL.)

Didn't you just tell me that the dead guy got in through the kitchen?

CHATTEL

No, darling. What I said was that...

SYLVIA

(to CHATTEL)

Your butler obviously wants to play games.

(to PLANKTON)

All right, I'll play along. After he got in through the patio door he then went into the kitchen.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes periodic sips off her martini as the conversation between PLANKTON and SYLVIA progresses.)

PLANKTON

No, madam. He went into the bathroom. There is a trail of blood leading from the patio door to the bathroom. He apparently cut himself on the broken glass.

SYLVIA

That's right. But after that he went into the kitchen.

PLANKTON

The trail of blood then led from the bathroom into the bedroom, madam.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA is now thoroughly irritated. She raises up to face PLANKTON.)

And from the bedroom he went to the kitchen.

PLANKTON

No, from there he went into the game room.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA rounds the table
and takes a step closer to
Plankton.)

And from the game room he went to the kitchen.

PLANKTON

No, madam. The trail of blood led from the game room to the
trophy room.

SYLVIA

(annoyed)

Don't you have something to dust? I saw it in the Mystical
Toaster and the damned thing never lies. Okay, fine, have it your
way. But after going into the trophy room he went to the kitchen.

PLANKTON.

TV room.

SYLVIA

Are you through?

PLANKTON

Then the bowling alley.

SYLVIA

(moaning)

...he isn't through.

(SYLVIA takes another step
closer to PLANKTON.)

And then the kitchen.

PLANKTON

Attic.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA now gets right in
PLANKTON's face.)

Then the kitchen.

PLANKTON

Den.

SYLVIA

Kitchen.

Library. **PLANKTON**

Kitchen. **SYLVIA**

Cellar. **PLANKTON**

Kitchen! **SYLVIA**

Guest bedroom. **PLANKTON**

Do you even have a kitchen? **SYLVIA**

Of course we have a kitchen, madam. **PLANKTON**

Where is the body now? **SYLVIA**

In the kitchen. **PLANKTON**

SYLVIA
(SYLVIA throws her hands up
in triumph and takes a few
steps away from PLANKTON.
She then turns to face
CHATTEL.)

There. See? The stiff is in the kitchen, just like I predicted.
So...

(She gives PLANKTON a quick
glare.)

...after he left a 15 mile trail of blood throughout the mansion...

(Looks back to CHATTEL.)

...it's pretty obvious this stranger bled to death.

PLANKTON

Or he could have died from the cell phone.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA looks back to
PLANKTON with a glare.)

Are you still here?

PLANKTON

Yes, madam.

SYLVIA

What's this about a cell phone?

PLANKTON

There was a cell phone involved.

SYLVIA

So tell me, smart ass; how does one die from a cell phone?

PLANKTON

It was sticking out of his mouth.

SYLVIA

He died from a cell phone sticking out of his mouth?

PLANKTON

Either that or the garden sheers.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA takes a step back.)

Well, make up your mind. Cell phone or garden sheers?

PLANKTON

Actually, both, madam.

SYLVIA

Are you trying to tell me that a cell phone and garden sheers
were sticking out of his mouth?

PLANKTON

No, only the cell phone. The garden sheers were in his... well,
his...

(PLANKTON points down to his
crotch without actually
looking down.)

...down there.

SYLVIA

Ew!

PLANKTON

And then there is the kitchen knife.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA looks up to the ceiling.)

Why is there always a kitchen knife?

PLANKTON

And the swizzle stick.

SYLVIA

(to CHATTEL)

Swizzle stick?

PLANKTON

And the feather duster.

SYLVIA

(to PLANKTON)

Are you through?

CHATTEL

(to SYLVIA)

I don't know about you, darling, but I suspect suicide.

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA glares at CHATTEL in disbelief.)

Your train left the track a long time ago, didn't it? Are you nuts, lady? This man didn't commit suicide. Either he repeatedly tripped and fell in your house and bludgeoned himself to death, or he was flat out murdered.

CHATTEL

That would have been my second guess, yes. So what should I do, Oh Great Mystical Sylvia? Have Flagpole call the police?

PLANKTON

'Plankton' madam.

SYLVIA

(A look of panic comes over SYLVIA's face.)

The police? Why on earth would you want to call those dirty screws? Always lying to you right to your face. "Sure, we'll move you to another cell, Sylvia." "You won't have to stay here with Frieda any longer, Sylvia." "Get you outta there tomorrow, Sylvia." "The Warden says you can rot in hell with Frieda, Sylvia." "Frieda wants to play with you, Sylvia, forever and ever and ever." "Ha ha ha, Sylvia!"

(She suddenly screams and lunges for CHATTEL's throat again.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON quickly pulls SYLVIA off of CHATTEL.)

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA is startled and confused.)

Huh? What? Where am I?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON turns and exits UC.).

CHATTEL

Am I to understand that you do not wish me to call the police, darling?

SYLVIA

Of course not. You want a scandal on your hands?

CHATTEL

Oh no. I am much too rich to have a scandal. But if the burglar committed suicide then wouldn't it...

SYLVIA

Would you get off the suicide thing, lady? He's got multiple instruments of destruction hanging out of him like a pincushion. This isn't a suicide. It's murder, Chattel. Murder! Plain old-fashioned, cold-blooded...

(SYLVIA raises an arm and begins to make stabbing motions.)

...mamma's-coming-to-get'cha-Frieda-how's-that-feel-in-your-back-Frieda-I-think-I'll-do-it-again-Frieda-and-twist-the-knife-like-this-Frieda-and-does-that-hurt-Frieda-let's-do-it-one-more-time-Frieda...

(She abruptly stops, pants heavily and takes a beat to calm down. She glances about the room to get her bearings.)

...uh... murder.

CHATTEL

Murder? Oh dear. Yes, darling, I see your point. Very well, what should I do?

SYLVIA

Just cool your jets while I make a call to a detective friend of mine. He owes me a favor after the whipped cream incident. He'll help you out.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL stands.)

Oh Great Mystical Sylvia, what would I ever do without you?

(She reaches out to hug SYLVIA.)

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA turns away to avoid the hug. She grabs the toaster off the table and tucks it under her arm. She then turns back to CHATTEL.)

Let this be a lesson, Chattel. Learn from your mistakes. Never make a move without consulting me first. Will that be billed to the same credit card?

CHATTEL

Of course, darling. But I still do not know who the murder victim was.

SYLVIA

You've exhausted the Mystical Toaster. It can't help you any more right now. It needs to rest. Now, if you'll excuse me I have to get back to the nude Jell-O wrestling match with that Chinese pepperoni maker.

(SYLVIA heads for the exit
UC.)

CHATTEL

But, couldn't the Mystical Toaster just give me one more answer, darling?

SYLVIA

(SYLVIA answers with a side
glance, not directly
addressing CHATTEL.)

Don't bother me now, Chattel. I'm very busy. Things to do, people to see, cops to bribe. Don't think it hasn't been a little slice of heaven, because it hasn't. I'll let myself out.

(She exits UC.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes her martini
over to the couch and sits
down. She takes a sip.)
(talks to herself)

Oh dear... "Don't call the police... I'll call a detective friend of mine... avoid a scandal..."

(She then retrieves the
magazine off the coffee
table, places it in her lap
and begins skimming through
it.)

PTOMAININE

(PTOMAOME enters UC and
stops just inside the entry,
gazing quietly about the
room. He then moves to the
bar, looking around and
behind it. From there he
moves to the round table,

RC, looking under it and the two chairs.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL notices PTOMAINE.)
What are you doing, darling?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE looks to CHATTEL and smiles.)
Nothing. Just... looking.
(He then crosses in front of the couch, looking beneath the coffee table before moving to the left side of the couch. There, he gets down on all fours and looks under the couch. He then stands and again glances about the room, obviously frustrated.)

CHATTEL

Is this a usual behavior for you? And if so, will I need to be spending money on a psychiatrist? And more importantly, will this delay my dinner?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE faces CHATTEL.)
You... um... haven't seen anything strange, have you Miss Chattel?

CHATTEL

Nothing stranger than usual. Why?

PTOMAINE

Nothing. I was just wondering.
(PTOMAINE glances behind the couch.)

CHATTEL

What are you looking for, darling?

PTOMAINE

Oh, I seem to have misplaced something, that's all.

CHATTEL

What did you misplace? And why are you looking in here? And if it got away under its own power, is it dangerous?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE continues glancing about the immediate vicinity.)

You wouldn't think that it could get away under its own power, Miss Chattel, but you never know. Stranger things have happened.

CHATTEL

But is it dangerous, darling? Am I going to have to bring in one of the staff to stand on a chair, jump up and down in fright and scream for me? I am far too important to do that myself, you know.

PTOMAINE

I wouldn't think that that would be necessary.

CHATTEL

Exactly what is it that you've lost?

PTOMAINE

Well, I'm not so sure that it got lost so much as it might have somehow crawled away on its own.

CHATTEL

'Crawled'? Did you say 'crawled', darling?

PTOMAINE

That is the only way it could have gotten away, Miss Chattel.

CHATTEL

Well, I will not have you chasing after a crawly thing in my house.

(calls out)

Crawdad!

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC.)

You bellowed, madam?

CHATTEL

Do help the chef find whatever it is that got away from him. I suspect it was tonight's meal. Find it quickly. I will not have dinner crawling around in my house.

PLANKTON

Very well, madam.

(PTOMAININE begins searching the room in the exact same pattern as PTOMAININE did only moments before: first on, around and behind the bar, then the round table and chairs, and finally beneath the coffee table.)

PTOMAININE

(While PLANKTON searches, PTOMAININE continues his own search, inspecting the floor as he walks before the couch downstage.)

PLANKTON

(After having peered beneath the coffee table, PLANKTON moves to the left side of the couch and faces CHATTEL.)

What exactly is it that we are looking for, madam?

Damned if I know, darling. Nobody tells me anything in this house.

PLANKTON

(to himself)

...and for good reason, you drunken cow.

(PLANKTON turns to PTOMAININE.)

Might I inquire as to what we are hoping to find?

PTOMAININE AND PLANKTON

(PTOMAININE motions for PLANKTON to follow him and together they walk around to

the rear of the couch, out of CHATTEL's sight. PTOMAINÉ whispers something in PLANKTON's ear. PLANKTON then nods and motions for PTOMAINÉ to leave. PTOMAINÉ exits UC. PLANKTON approaches the left side of the couch and faces CHATTEL.)

CHATTEL

Well, Crankcase? Did you find it?

PLANKTON

I am afraid not, madam. It seems that the chef has misplaced the dead body. Apparently, he went into the freezer to "cut off a slice or two" and found that the victim was missing.

CHATTEL

Well, do get on with it, Frenchfry. Find it. I will not have a dead body wandering around my mansion unsupervised.

PLANKTON

In spite of the fact that madam has been doing just that for years, I shall endeavor to locate the corpse.
(PLANKTON turns to leave.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pokes his head around the corner of the entry UC and looks into the room, cautiously.)

Helloooo? Anybody home?

CHATTEL

(Totally unaware of Schenectady's arrival, CHATTEL nurses her martini while continuing to flip through her magazine, occasionally sipping her martini.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON approaches SCHENECTADY, stopping and standing just downstage the entry, blocking SCHENECTADY's ability to get into the room.)

May I help you?

SCHENECTADY

Well, yes, I think you can. At least I... I hope you can. Actually, I believe that I might be here to help you.

(to himself)

Is that right?

(to PLANKTON)

Why, I do believe I got it correct, this time. See, I knocked on the door but nobody answered, and it was open so I came right in. Did you know that there's a camel parked outside?

PLANKTON

And you are...?"

SCHENECTADY

I'm the private detective you called for. Well, actually, my friend Sylvia called me... but on your behalf... I think. I was in the neighborhood so I got here as quickly as I could. I should be expected.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON turns to announce SCHENECTADY, stepping in front of him and completely blocking his ability to enter.)

Madam, the...

CHATTEL

Oh, before you leave, Flatulent, I wanted to tell you that we shall be receiving company soon. Oh Great Mystical Sylvia has phoned a private detective to come help us with our little problem... wherever the hell it happens to be at the moment. I want you and the rest of the staff to be on your best behavior when her friend arrives.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pokes his head around PLANKTON.)

Yes, madam. But...

CHATTEL

Very well. Now, keep a close eye on this man, Mineshaft. If he's anything like the dregs of society on TV he'll have greasy hands, probably just finished some slime-burger or something and I do not want him touching any of my valuables and leaving dripping greasy fingerprints behind.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY squeezes past PLANKTON to stand a little ahead and to the right of PLANKTON so that he can be plainly seen. He glances at his hands, inspecting them.)

PLANKTON

(to CHATTEL)

Yes, madam, but the detective has already...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL opens her purse and begins shuffling through it.)

Follow him closely with a rag to wipe off anything he touches. Do you understand me? I will have no greasy fingerprints on my priceless valuables.

PLANKTON

Yes, madam, but...

CHATTEL

Fine. And another thing, Snigley, make sure he wipes his feet properly before he comes into the mansion.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks down to his feet, lifting each one in order to check the bottoms of his shoes.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON closes his eyes
and shakes his head.)

Of course, madam.

CHATTEL

He has, no doubt, been rummaging through the garbage in the streets looking for his next meal and who knows what he's been stepping in. Whatever it is I will not have it all over my carpets.

PLANKTON

As you wish, madam, but...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL withdraws a compact
and sits back.)

Now then, see if you can slip him a breath mint of some kind.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY puts his hand
to his mouth, breathes out
and smells his own breath.
He nods that it is okay.)

CHATTEL

His breath probably smells like something of a rhinoceros and it will simply take the curl out of my hair. Not to mention what it will do to my expensive wallpaper.

PLANKTON

Madam, if you would...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL opens the compact
and rubs the pad around in
it.)

And, Jarvis, for heaven's sake, if he has anything hanging from his nose make sure that he gets rid of it before entering.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY runs his finger
beneath his nose and then
inspects the finger.)

CHATTEL

There is absolutely nothing more disgusting than some two-inch green object dangling from some low-life's honker.

(CHATTEL lifts the compact to check her face in the mirror.)

Oh, one final thing... be a dear and make sure that he has bathed recently, won't you? I am certain that he lives and sleeps with the dogs and you know how they smell, darling.

(She turns the mirror, catching SCHENECTADY looking back at her. She freezes.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY smiles and waves.)

CHATTEL

Orphington, this wouldn't be...

PLANKTON

This is the detective, madam.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL calmly closes her compact and places it back in her purse. She then rises, her back kept to PLANKTON and SCHENECTADY.)

Could I see you over here for a moment?

(She moves toward the far wall UL. She folds her arms across her chest.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY walks over to stand beside CHATTEL.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL stares straight ahead with an angry look on her face. She believes that it is PLANKTON to whom she is talking.)

(speaks softly)

How long has he been standing there? Why didn't you tell me he was there? Now he thinks I think he smells, and how grimy he is. Probably just came from a case down in the sewer. How could you let me go on, knowing he was listening to every word I said? Now he'll think I am a raving lunatic! I swear, sometimes I do not know why I keep you around, Mooseberry!

(She turns to shoot a glare to the man beside her. Finding SCHENECTADY standing there instead, she smiles and chuckles nervously.)

Um... wrong person. Excuse me, darling.

CHATTEL & PLANKTON

(CHATTEL walks back to the entrance, grabs PLANKTON's coat sleeve and drags him over to the other wall RC. CHATTEL stands to PLANKTON's right.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY follows behind CHATTEL, situating himself behind PLANKTON and CHATTEL but in the center once they have stopped.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL does not look at PLANKTON as she is talking, and therefore, does not see SCHENECTADY.)

Now you've done it, Peckinpaw! You've made me look like a goose and I demand you do something. My god, the man has mange written all over his face. I would not be surprised to find that he is wearing a flea collar under that..

(CHATTEL turns to give PLANKTON a glare, then discovers SCHENECTADY. She again smiles and laughs nervously. She grabs PLANKTON's sleeve again and begins to drag him to the

opposite side of the room,
CL.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY again begins
following the two.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL glances back
halfway across the floor and
spots SCHENECTARY
following.)

Would you kindly wait here, darling?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stops before
the coffee table.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL pulls PLANKTON the
rest of the way to the wall
LC.)

Now you've done it, Peckinpaw! You've made me look like a goose
and I demand you do something. My god, the man has mange written
all over his face. I would not be surprised to find that he is
wearing a flea collar under that jacket.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY walks around to
stand behind the coffee
table. Eyeing the candy
dish, he picks it up and
plucks a piece out, placing
it in his mouth. The
expression on his face
changes to one of disgust
and he spits the candy back
into the dish. The dish is
returned to the table.)

CHATTEL

Do you suppose he heard everything I said about him?

PLANKTON

Most likely.

CHATTEL

Do you think he's upset?

PLANKTON

Most definitely.

CHATTEL

How do you suggest I get out of this, Clifton?

PLANKTON

Groveling comes to mind, madam.

SCHENECTADY

(While this exchange is going on, SCHENECTADY glances about the room. Spotting the bar he heads for it. He picks up the open vodka bottle and gives it a sniff. His eyes roll back in his head and a giant smile crosses his lips.)

CHATTEL

Do you think he's the violent type?

PLANKTON

I would exercise extreme caution, madam.

CHATTEL

But what if I find him stealing from me? If he is as violent as you say he is then I could get hurt, and I am much too rich to get hurt.

PLANKTON

I never claimed that the man was violent, madam.

CHATTEL

You won't leave me, will you, Bombardier?

PLANKTON

Never, madam.

(PLANKTON then turns and walks away, exiting UC.)

CHATTEL

(Unaware that PLANKTON has departed.)

Good, because I refuse to be left alone. It has been my experience that when a wealthy widow is left alone with the likes of that type then it is only a matter of time before they overstep their boundaries and take advantage of sweet, innocent women. I have seen it all too often, Bumbershoot. A helpless woman of wealth and a low-down low-life like that are a dangerous mix. Don't you agree with me?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY lifts the vodka bottle to take a drink.)

CHATTEL

(Having received no answer from PLANKTON CHATTEL turns.)

I said, don't you agree with me, Gridley?
(Finding him to be missing, she then spots SCHENECTADY about to take a slug off the bottle.)

Excuse me, darling?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY immediately puts the bottle down and turns toward CHATTEL with an embarrassed smile.)

CHATTEL

I do not recall catching your name.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY heads over to CHATTEL.)

Well, that's probably because I didn't throw it.
(He chuckles at his joke.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL does not find SCENECTADY's quip humorous and casts him a glare.)

SCENECTADY

(SCENECTADY sobers up and clears his throat.)

Yes, well... It used to be funny back in the day...

(He studies CHATTEL's somber face briefly.)

...but not today, apparently. Yeah, I'll admit that it is an outdated joke. Really killed them at the home.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL crosses over to the couch and sits on the right side.)

SCENECTADY

(SCENECTADY follows and begins to sit on the left side, but is stopped by CHATTEL halfway down.)

CHATTEL

Darling, please do not sit down. This couch is an original Louis DeSnootwell and I will not have it destroyed by...

(CHATTEL gazes at his pants.)

...I would prefer that you remain standing.

SCENECTADY

Oh, you don't have to worry about me, Mrs...

(SCENECTADY pauses for an answer. None comes. He straightens up.)

Well, as I was saying, you don't have to worry about me because these pants are fresh from the... the...

(He holds his hand up to his chin in thought.)

You know, the thing that...

(He raises his hand to simulate a washing machine agitator.)

CHATTEL

A washing machine, darling?

SCHENECTADY

That's it. Yes. They're as clean as a... as a... a bug's ear! Nothing to worry about.

CHATTEL

Very well. You may sit. But do sit lightly, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY lowers himself down to the couch gingerly.)

Most generous of you, Mrs...

(He waits a beat for an answer before turning forward and exhaling.)

CHATTEL

And just what was it you called yourself?

SCHENECTADY

I'm glad you asked that. My name is... um...

(Again SCHENECTADY holds hand up to his chin in thought.)

Isn't that funny? I knew it just this morning.

(He leans back and digs out a wallet from his back pocket.)

Yes, I was just saying to myself this morning how much I enjoyed my name. Kinda have to wouldn't I...

(He leans into her abruptly.)

...seeing as how I'm stuck with it.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL pulls back quickly from SCHENECTADY. She grabs her martini and stands in order to get away from SCHENECTADY. She strolls back to the bar, stopping behind it.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pulls back,
opens his wallet and looks
inside without noticing that
CHATTEL has departed.)

I mean, I can find my way home every night so how could I forget something as simple as my... Ah, there it is. Yes, of course. How could I forget?

(He folds the wallet up and
returns it to his pocket.
Looking up he sees CHATTEL
missing. Scanning the room
quickly he finds her
standing at the bar, so he
walks over to her while
speaking.)

So, my friend Sylvia tells me that you have a dead burglar on your hands. Mighty awful thing being robbed. Even worse when the robber turns up a little... you know... um...

(He shoots his head with his
hand.)

...dead! That's it. So tell me, where is this body? I would sure like to get a look at it. That might, you know, help in the... um... oh, the... the finding out of what happened. Investigation! I knew that it would come to me in time.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL inspects the bar as
if trying to find
something.)

I will ask you again, darling. What is your name?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stops to the
left of the bar.)

What? Oh, didn't I tell you? I could have sworn that I... Wait, I know what happened. I guess that when I looked in my wallet and saw it I subconsciously told you what it was. Obviously I didn't, but thinking that I already told you I pushed it out of my mind. Isn't it amazing how we do that? Just push things the heck out of our... um... our... um...

(He points to his head.)

...you know.

CHATTEL

You do have a name, don't you, darling?

SCHENECTADY

Well, of course I do. Parents would have been negligent not to give me one, don't you think? Yep, they'd be pretty darn...

(He again suddenly leans
into CHATTEL.)

Be kinda difficult to call me for dinner if they didn't, huh?"

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL pulls back abruptly
with a sour look on her
face.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY straightens up.
He thinks for a beat.)

Oh, of course; it's 'Detective Schenectady'. See, there I went and almost forgot again. I swear, sometimes my mind is running in so many different directions at once that it's difficult to capture a single thought.

(He reaches out to grab
something in thin air.)

Oops, there goes one right now.

(He laughs at his joke.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL is not amused and
gives SCHENECTADY a brief
but sour look.)

SCHENECTADY

(Seeing that CHATTEL is not
laughing, SCHENECTADY
quickly stops laughing.)

CHATTEL

You may call me Mrs. Von Cash.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY withdraws a
writing pad and pencil from
his jacket and jots this
down.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes a sip of her martini.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY's eyes follow the glass closely, moving his whole head along with the movement of the glass.)

Well, anyway, I suppose we should get down to business. I understand that there's been a burglar related death in this house and I'm here... I'm here to... Say, is that a martini? Boy, I'll bet it's good. I haven't had a martini in... well, it's been so long that I can't remember when it was I last had a martini. I'll bet it really hits the ol' spot, eh?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL sets the drink on the bar, then turns her head to SCHENECTADY.)

Darling, about the body?

SCHENECTADY

The martini? Well, it's best served chilled with just a dash of... What? Oh, the body. Of course. Silly me. Kinda had my mind stuck on your... Yes, well, I think the first thing to do would be to get a good look at the victim and see what we can see.

CHATTEL

We cannot do that right now, darling. The body seems to have gotten up and walked away.

SCHENECTADY

Um... just exactly how many of those martinis have you had today? In all the years that I've been... um... well, that I've been... well, detecting, it's been my experience that dead bodies don't generally get up and walk away. Are you sure you even had a dead burglar? I mean, maybe he was just momentarily stunned and he came out of it and went back home.

CHATTEL

Quite sure, darling. You told me that his camel was still parked outside.

SCHENECTADY

You mean that's his camel? I was wondering why you had that out there. Interesting that a burglar would come to do their thing on a camel. Hard to carry a television set on a... Well then, is anybody... you know... looking for the... the... thief-guy?

CHATTEL

Of course we are, darling. At least I think we are. Maybe not. I do not know. I am far too rich to care about looking for dead burglars, darling. That is your job. Get busy.

SCHENECTADY

I guess you're right. Now, you're sure there was a body?

CHATTEL

Yes.

SCHENECTADY

And that he was dead?

CHATTEL

As a doornail, darling.

SCHENECTADY

You know, that is an expression that I've never understood. First off, what's the story behind the doornail? Was it murdered? Did it commit suicide? Fall off a cliff? And how can a doornail be dead? I mean, it was never a living being to begin with. Why not 'dead as a porcupine', or 'dead as an acrobat', or 'dead as a cement truck motor'?

CHATTEL

Darling, you are boring me. Do get to your point.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, the point... yes. Well, I guess we should first establish where it was that the dead burglar was last seen?

CHATTEL

He was in the freezer, darling.

SCHENECTADY

The freezer, you say?...

(SCHENECTADY jots this down
on the pad.)

Well now, that's... that's a new one.

CHATTEL

My butler thought it would stay fresher that way.

SCHENECTADY

Well, yes, that's good thinking. Probably shouldn't have moved it from the crime scene, but what's done is... um... what's done is... probably overcooked.

(to himself)

Is that right? Hmm.

(to CHATTEL)

Does anybody have any idea how the man died?

CHATTEL

According to my butler, he died from either a cell phone or a feather duster or a pair of garden sheers or a swizzle stick or a kitchen knife.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY writes this down.)

Oh, I see. Any one of those.

CHATTEL

No, all of those.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks up, flabbergasted.)

Um... he died from... you mean all the... every one of those was... he died from all the things you mentioned?

(He makes quick notes on the pad.)

CHATTEL

I assume so, darling. Apparently they were all sticking out of him. Probably not a pretty sight, but who cares? As long as it wasn't me.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY thinks about this for a few moments.)

Well now, that's quite the... quite the... thing, there.

(to himself)

All of the above. That's rich.

(to CHATTEL)

But then again, so are you.

(He emphasized this with a glance about the room.)

I think I will need to speak with a few people to... to get some information. Um, who was the first one to see the dead... dead... thingy? I mean, who found it in the first place?

CHATTEL

That would be my chef.

SCHENECTADY

Then I should... I'd like to... is there a way that I could talk to your chef?

CHATTEL

Fishbait!

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY abruptly Jumps back, startled. He then places his hand over his heart.)

Holy mackerel! You really should warn somebody when you're about to... Wow. That could give somebody a... Have you ever considered being a yodeler?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC and comes to a halt at the bar behind SCHENECTADY).

Madam roared?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY jumps at the unexpected voice. He quickly turns to face PLANKTON.)

Whoa! Geez... Where the heck did you come from?

CHATTEL

The Inspector wishes to question the chef.

PLANKTON

I anticipated the request, madam, and have alerted Chef Ptomaine. He should be here directly.

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

You really should put a bell around his neck.

(He places the notebook and pencil on the end of the bar, then gives PLANKTON a quick glance before turning back to CHATTEL.)

Wait a moment... 'Ptomaine'? Your chef's name is 'Ptomaine'?

CHATTEL

(to PLANKTON)

Have you found the body yet, Paperclip?

PLANKTON

The search continues, madam.

CHATTEL

Do get on with it.

PLANKTON

Yes, madam.

(PLANKTON turns and heads to the exit.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL looks down to her empty glass. She then silently thrusts it toward PLANKTON. She remains in this position until it is eventually filled by PLANKTON.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON Stops in his tracks without having seen CHATTEL's gesture. He turns and walks behind the bar.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL moves to the right end of the bar to make way for PLANKTON.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON begins mixing a martini in the shaker. When done he pours it into CHATTEL's extended glass.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY gives PLANKTON periodic glances as the butler is mixing the martini.)

Well now, I see that we are probably on the right... um... the right... the thing that a train rides on... Track! That's it, we are on the right track. Once your chef comes in here, I can ask him a couple questions and..

(He glances at his watch, then the entry briefly.)
(to CHATTEL)

Kinda slow in getting here, wouldn't you say? You know, time is very important in trying to solve a case like this. Interestingly enough, I have found through the years that gathering all the facts is generally quite useful. Well, sometimes it's rather difficult getting all the facts, of course... unless the victim gets up and tells me everything.

(He thinks about this a moment.)

Never really had that happen, though. Wonder why that is? Well, I suppose their being... um... you know...

(He shoots his heart with his finger.)

...has a lot to do with that.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON pours CHATTEL's martini.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY's eyes follow, very closely, the pouring of the martini.)

Never had the occasion to question a... a martini that was... I mean, a body! Never had the occasion to question a dead... Gosh, that looks refreshing.

PLANKTON

It is delicious.

SCHENECTADY

Well, of course it is. A martini is always... um... it's like they say; a martini is the breakfast of champions...

(SCHENECTADY briefly glances up in thought.)

...or would that be a Bloody Mary? Well, anyway, everybody knows that the three most important things to a healthy life are food, sunshine and martinis.

(to PLANKTON)

I notice how quickly you made that. I imagine it would take you no time at all to whip up another one if, say, somebody else wanted one.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON places the bottles and shaker beneath the counter.)

Yes, madam.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY's eyes follow the items as they disappear, showing great disappointment.)

Yes... no time at all, I... I imagine. And it's delicious, you say?

(He looks longingly at Chattel's drink.)

I certainly couldn't argue with you on that point. I mean, I haven't tasted one but it sure does appear to be... Um... You certainly make a handsome martini, there.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON glances to CHATTEL.)

I have had plenty of practice, madam.

SCHENECTADY

Well, I must say, you should certainly be given a... um... one of those things... where your employer gives you more money... oh... On the other hand, a gold star wouldn't be out of the question. I'm really impressed...

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE enters UC and comes to a halt behind Schenectady.)

SCHENECTADY

Yes, indeed. All I can say is that if I had somebody around my house like you, I'd certainly never be without...

(focuses on PLANKTON)

Did you just call me 'madam'?

PTOMAINE

Did you send for me, Miss Chattel?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY throws his arms in the air and jumps, turning to face PTOMAINE.)

Son of a...! What is it with you people and sneaking up on a guy like that? I feel like a cat in a room full of... of those... you know, the tilting chairs...

(He makes hand gestures to indicate a rocking chair.)

CHATTEL

(to PTOMAINE)

The constable wishes to ask you some questions.

SCHENECTADY

(to PTOMAINE)

Actually, it's 'detective'. Won't you come over to the couch and have a... a... well, have a couch.

(SCHENECTADY chuckles at his joke, turning to glance at CHATTEL who is not laughing.)

No, I guess that one was marginal. Funny, these things usually kill them at the hospital.

(He heads to the couch and seats himself on the left.)

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE seats himself in the middle of the couch.)

CHATTEL

(to SCHENECTADY)

Sergeant, darling, you will have to excuse us. Pillbox has to go hunt down the body and I must tend to some livestock in the north wing.

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

Sergeant? It's 'Detective', actually.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL heads for the entry UC.)

(to PLANKTON)

Are the branding irons hot?

PLANKTON

As always, madam.

CHATTEL AND PLANKTON

(CHATTEL and PLANKTON exit UL.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY turns to PTOMAINE.)

Livestock? She keeps livestock in the north wing? What is it, a stable?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE shakes his head.)

Oh no. Miss Chattel has to brand some of the new help.

SCHENECTADY

(surprised)

You mean she brands people?

PTOMAINE

Oh yes.

(PTOMAINE rubs his left
hip.)

Hurts like hell.

SCHENECTADY

I can imagine. Wow. She's quite the... Why would she do a thing like that?

PTOMAINE

How else can she protect her property?

SCHENECTADY

She considers her staff property?

PTOMAINE

What was it that you wanted to ask me?

SCHENECTADY

Ask you? Was I going to ask you something?

(SCHENECTADY thinks for a
beat.)

Does she know that's illegal? Shouldn't she be reported?

PTOMAINE

Miss Chattel is very possessive of her things.

SCHENECTADY

Wow... I guess so.

(SCHENECTADY looks ahead and
pauses to think, then looks
to PTOMAINE.)

Who are you again?

PTOMAINE

I am Miss Chattel's chef.

SCHENECTADY

Ah, yes, that's right. And what is your full name?

PTOMAINE

I am Count Pedigree Romaine Sauerbraten Goulash Ptomaine... the third.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks at him in surprise.)

All that for one... You're a Count?

PTOMAINE

Of course I'm a Count. I come from a long line of Counts. My father was a Count. My uncle was a Count. My mother was a Count.

SCHENECTADY

Your mother? You mean that she was a 'Countess'.

PTOMAINE

Countess? Ah, no. That would be my brother, Reginald.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, I see. He was one of... um... he kind of had a... Yes, I understand.

PTOMAINE

I come from an old country. We were peasant farmers, tilling the soil, day after day, year after year, planting peasants for the spring harvest.

SCHENECTADY

Excuse me? You planted peasants? Isn't that kind of... well... disgusting?

PTOMAINE

Not if they're planted early. With the right amount of water and fertilizer they can be very juicy and tender.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY's mouth is hanging open and he stares at PTOMAINE in silent shock.)

PTOMAINE

What? The village was too poor to afford food so we used the next best thing. Nobody liked the peasants anyway, especially the Meisterschmidts. Besides, nothing went to waste. You should have tasted the soup from the leftovers. Melted in your mouth.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY's continues to stare in wide-eyed disbelief.)

PTOMAININE

(PTOMAININE takes SCHENECTADY's arm and raises it, looking it over.)

Come to think of it, you sort of resemble a Meisterschmidt I once had for dinner. You wouldn't be related, would you?

SCHENECTADY

Um... What are you doing?

(SCHENECTADY pulls his arm away abruptly.)

Um... I really don't think I taste all that good. You wouldn't like... I've been told I'm... um... bitter. I'm awfully bitter. Always have been. Matter of fact, that was my nickname in College. Yep, everybody would say; "There goes good ol' bitter...", um... Well, what do you know? I forgot my name again.

PTOMAININE

(PTOMAININE pokes SCHENECTADY's shoulder gently.)

Mighty tender, those April Meisterschmidts. Are you sure you're not related? You look like you would really be juicy and delicious.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stands abruptly and moves to far left end of the couch.)

My whole family's been... you know... tough. Yep, a tough bunch of people in my... you know... my brood.

PTOMAININE

(PTOMAININE slowly stands.)

A little salt and a good tenderizer would do the trick.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY is beginning to panic.)

No, I've always been resistant to... Salt makes me sneeze and nobody likes their main course sneezing. Ruins the best of dinner parties, don't you think?

(He glances back to the entry UC.)

(calls out in a purposely controlled yet desperate voice.)

Mrs., uh...

(He casts a quick look to PTOMAINÉ, then again looks back to the entry UC.)

Mrs... Ohhhh...

(to himself desperately)

What was her name?

PTOMAINÉ

(PTOMAINÉ takes a step closer.)

How about if I use a little lemon butter and serve you on a soft bed of brown rice?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY is now more panicky than before.)

Brown? Did you say brown rice? Oh, I think I'm allergic to brown... to brown... um... what you just said. That brown stuff.

(He now trots nervously over to the entry UC and peeks around both corners.)

(calling out)

Mrs... um... Yoo hoo! Hello? Anybody home?

(He glances quickly to PTOMAINÉ and holds up a finger.)

I'll be right with, um... with, um...

(He turns back to the entry.)

(calling out)

Mrs...

(He lowers his head in thought and begins snapping his fingers in an attempt to recall her name.)

Doggone it! What the heck is her name?

(He thrusts a finger in the air triumphantly.)

Von! That's it!

(Again SCHENECTADY peers around the corners of the entry.)
(calling out)

Mrs. Von... Von...

(Again he lowers his head in thought.)
(to himself)

Von what? Von Trapp? No, it doesn't sound quite right. Von... Von... Von pickle?

(He chuckles briefly but stops abruptly.)

No, that can't be it.

(He turns back to PTOMAINÉ briefly.)
(to PTOMAINÉ)

Don't, um... don't go... um... You might want to sit down, this could take a little... um... some time.

(He again looks around the entry corner.)
(calling out)

Mrs. Von... I've got a bit of a... You out there anywhere? Anybody? There might be a...

(Suddenly he remembers that he had previously written the name down in his notepad. Again he thrusts a triumphant finger in the air.)

The book!

(SCHENECTADY eyes the book sitting on the end of the bar.)

PTOMAINÉ

(PTOMAINÉ rounds the couch, effectively cutting off PTOMAINÉ's clear path to the notepad.)

No, I think you're right. You look more like a cream cheese and diced vegetable entrée.

(He begins to approach
SCHENECTADY.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY now panics
completely. He turns to the
entry briefly.)

Mrs... Help! Anybody?

(Glancing back at the
approaching PTOMAINÉ.)

Ohhhh dear!

(He scurries over to the
opposite end of the couch
and then turns to face
PTOMAINÉ.)

You know the old saying; 'Friends don't let friends eat friends',
right? Sound advice. I've always lived by it. You should... uh...
too.

PTOMAINÉ

(PTOMAINÉ stops and
considers this for a few
beats. He then nods a silent
agreement and begins walking
around SCHENECTADY's end of
the couch. He passes rather
closely to SCHENECTADY.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY, who is facing
the couch, gets as close to
the couch as he can in order
to let PTOMAINÉ pass him
without touching.)

PTOMAINÉ

(PTOMAINÉ stops behind
SCHENECTADY and pauses a few
beats while looking him up
and down. He then leans in
to SCHENECTADY's left ear.)
(softly)

Boo.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY cries out in horrified surprise, whips around and falls back on the couch.)

Whoah!

(He quickly rights himself and rapidly scoots over to the far right hand side of the couch.)

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE seats himself on the couch, in the center.)

SCHENECTADY

Boo... that was... that was quite... um... your humor is...

(As PTOMAINE sits down, SCHENECTADY gets as close to the edge of the couch as he can.)

Well now, you just stay there and I'll stay here and we can get on with the grilling... I didn't mean that in a cooking sense. I mean that I just have a couple more... um... a couple... You know, those things that... Questions! I have a couple more questions to ask you. First, I understand that it was you that found the... the dead... oh, you know...

PTOMAINE

The body?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY snaps his fingers and points to PTOMAINE as if to be giving him a silent "That's it".)

PTOMAINE

I had just come in from checking the traps, and when I rounded the refrigerator...

SCHENECTADY

Hold on, there. You were 'checking the traps' for dinner? You have to trap the food? Isn't the... um... the cold thing in the

kitchen... you know, it keeps... the freezer! Isn't the freezer stocked?

PTOMAINE

Of course it is, but I prefer the neighbors to be fresh.

SCHENECTADY

Oh. Yes, I can see how you would want... did you say the... the 'neighbors'?

PTOMAINE

Relax, detective. It's only the ones that sneak onto the property illegally. But most of the time we just trap them and then set them free. Anyway, I rounded the refrigerator and found the body there on the floor beside the guillotine.

SCHENECTADY

Can... can we get back to this 'trapping the neighbors' thing? Something just doesn't quite... you know... sound right, here. What do you mean that you set them free 'most of the time'?

PTOMAINE

Well, after all, we can't eat them all at once you know.

SCHENECTADY

Yes... yes, I can see that. Of course. Everybody has to... um... has to... moderation...

(SCHENECTADY gives PTOMAINE a peculiar look, then shakes his head.)

Please, go on. You were talking about finding the... dead... thing.

PTOMAINE

So after that I looked for Miss Chattel to tell...

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY holds his hand up to halt PTOMAINE.)

Wait! Wait! Did you say 'guillotine'? You have a guillotine in your kitchen?

PTOMAINE

Yes, right next to the meat grinder.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, I see. Sure, where else would one put a guillotine... thingy? Uh huh. Have... have you given much thought to a food processor?

PTOMAINE

Oh no. There's too much screaming when you put them in the food processor.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY gives PATOMAINE a brief, silent look of disbelief.)

Well... yes, I could see how that might be a problem... the... the... the screaming and all.

PTOMAINE

So I found Miss Chattel and told her about the body and she sent the butler in and he put the body in the freezer.

SCHENECTADY

Freezer? Oh yes, that's right. The... the freezer.

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE scoots a little closer to SCHENECTADY.)

SCHENECTADY

(Schenectady quickly weasels out of his seat.)

I... need to get my notepad. It's right back there at the... over here.

(He goes to the bar and picks up the notepad and pencil, then begins writing.)

Let's see, that was 'neighbors' and 'traps' and... um... oh, let's not forget the 'guillotine'.

(He then takes a seat on the arm of the chair, facing downstage.)

So, were you in the kitchen earlier today?

PTOMAINE

Of course. I was preparing somebody for breakfast.

SCHENECTADY

Okay. And while you were doing that did you happen to hear... Wait, you didn't say that...

(to himself)

No, I'd better not ask. You probably *did*.

(to PTOMAINÉ)

Never mind. Um, anyway, while you were doing that did you happen to hear anything suspicious? Perhaps a scream or somebody yelling out in pain?

PTOMAINÉ

Of course not. If I had heard the painful, agonizingly blood curdling scream of somebody in trouble I would have been right there with a frying pan. The key to delicious meals is freshness, you know.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL enters UC and slowly walks to the back of the couch, stopping behind SCHENECTADY. She is holding her usual filled martini glass.)

SCHENECTADY

With a frying pan, you say? Yes, I understand. But maybe...

(PTOMAINÉ pauses and looks off to the side.)

(to himself)

Freshness?

(He considers this a few beats, then shakes his head.)

I don't get it.

(Looks back to PTOMAINÉ and opens his mouth as if about to speak.)

CHATTEL

Beandip!

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY yelps in fright and drops to the floor. He then rapidly crawls in front

of the coffee table before
the couch. He then looks up
over the top, spies Chattel,
and slowly, weakly, stands.)

My word!

(to PTOMAINÉ)

You could use that woman as a national air raid siren...

(He walks back to stand
beside CHATTEL with his back
to the entry.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC,
stopping in the entry.)

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

I do wish that you would warn a person when you're about to do
something like that. Good grief. I just saw my life pass in front
of my... my...

(SCHENECTADY points to his
eyes.)

...my see-thingys.

PLANKTON

Yes, madam?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY Jerks suddenly,
throws his hand over his
heart and glances briefly
back at PLANKTON.)

(to CHATTEL)

Where did he come from? How does he get here so fast?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL does not look
around to PLANKTON behind
her.)

Spiffington, I have found the body. It is up in my bedroom. Do
put it back in the freezer.

PLANKTON

I live to serve, madam. May I also open the fourth floor window
so that I might push you out later?

CHATTEL

That will be all, Chinchilla.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON turns and exits
UC.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL saunters
nonchalantly around the
right end of the couch,
sitting down beside Ptomaine
to his right.)

SCHENECTADY

(Schenectady is still trying
to recover from his two
scares.)

You... you found the body? In your bedroom? That's... well, that's...
And he's still dead?

CHATTEL

That is correct, darling. Still dead. Dead, dead, dead. Are you
through with the chef?

SCHENECTADY

Hmm?

(to PTOMAINE)

Oh, yes, you can go. Thank you for your... your...

(to CHATTEL)

What was the body doing in your bedroom?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE stands and exits
UC, walking closely by
Schenectady as he goes.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY quickly slides
across to the left end of
the couch to avoid
PTOMAINE.)

CHATTEL

I'm sure I do not know.

SCHENECTADY

But how did he get there if he was... you know, still dead?

CHATTEL

Don't know, don't care, darling.

SCHENECTADY

Well, I had better get upstairs and see the body.

CHATTEL

Not yet, Sergeant. Wait until Pewter puts the man back into the freezer. He is not a pretty sight right now, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY casts periodic glances back to the entry, wondering if he should stay or go inspect the body. He finally acquiesces to CHATTEL's demand and slowly takes a seat at the opposite (left) end of the couch.)

Well, I suppose a few extra minutes won't matter that much. So, tell me about what you found upstairs?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL suddenly breaks down, emotionally, sinking down farther into the couch. Her hand on her forehead.)

So many questions! And under these hot lights. I do not know how much longer I can hold out. The way you keep grilling me and grilling me it's a wonder I haven't fainted from sheer exhaustion.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY is totally taken aback and terribly confused by this outburst. He studies her with great interest.)

Um... well... that wasn't quite the answer that I was looking for, but I guess it's better than nothing. Let's try a different approach. Can you tell me, Mrs. Von... um... Von...

(He quickly thumbs through his notebook.)

Von Cash.

(to himself)

Why couldn't I remember that before?

(to CHATTEL)

Can you tell me about what time you first heard about the... Wait a minute... Von Cash... Von Cash. Say, aren't you related to the guy who made a fortune selling gourmet food to fancy restaurants?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL is now once again composed. She takes a sip of her martini.)

This is correct. Reginald was my late husband, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(Again SCENECTADY's eyes follow the martinis travel.)
(sadly)

Your late martini... I mean, late husband. That's... that's a shame.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL stands and walks to the left end of the couch.)

Yes, the man was always late for everything. Dinner, meetings, luncheons, cocktail hour, pin-the-tail-on-the-homeless-person...

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY moves over to the right end of the couch and sits on the arm. He begins writing on the pad as she talks.)

CHATTEL

Couldn't show up on time to save his life. So, he lost it.

SCHENECTADY

Ah. If memory serves me, I seem to recall reading about the guy disappearing mysteriously.

CHATTEL

Oh no. Guy did not disappear mysteriously. He drowned in a vat of horse entrails.

SCHENECTADY

Well now, I guess that would be rather... Excuse me? What was a gourmet food maker doing around a vat of horse entrails? You're not suggesting that Reginald's gourmet food was made of...

CHATTEL

Oh, don't be ridiculous. Reginald was not around a vat of horse entrails. Guy was. You asked about Guy, did you not?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY is now very confused but not really wanting to admit it.)

Um... I did? Well, I guess maybe I did, yes.
(He begins writing again.)

CHATTEL

Guy was my first late husband. He used to process horse entrails for some jam and jelly conglomerate up north. Accidentally fell into one of the vats and drowned.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY shakes his head sympathetically.)

Wow. Drowned in a vat of horse entrails. Must have been an awful way to go.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL walks slowly in front of the couch to the round table CR, causing SCHENECTADY to have to put his feet up on the couch in order to allow her to pass unobstructed.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL does not look back at him.)

No feet on the couch, darling. I doubt if you could afford the cleaning bill, being destitute and all.

(Reaching the round table,
she runs her finger over the
back of one of the chairs
and then inspects the finger
for dust.)

What were you saying, darling?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY abruptly takes
his feet off the couch.)

I was saying that it must have been an awful way to die... drowning
in a vat of... you know... entrails and all.

CHATTEL

Well, yes it might have been. I don't know. I was not there.
Doesn't matter, anyway, since it didn't happen to me. Guy
eventually ended up in a jar of grape preserves in Florida. It
was tragic.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY slowly slides
down the arm to sit on the
cushion. He writes on the
pad.)

Grape preserves. I see.

CHATTEL

No, darling. I.C. was filleted to death by a gang of rogue banana
threshers.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY nods knowingly
as he writes.)

Ah.

(He then stops writing,
cocks his head to the side
and thinks it over a moment
before looking up to
CHATTEL.)

What?"

CHATTEL

I.C. Stuffington, my third late husband. Invented the banana
thresher.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY nods slowly,
then begins writing again.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL moves around behind
the couch.)

One day I.C. was in the warehouse getting the machines ready to ship out the following morning when something went horribly wrong and the threshers turned on him, surrounded him and... well... threshed him to death. Horrible way to die, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks up from
his pad, searching the room
before him for Chattel.
Finally, craning his neck,
he spots her behind him.)

Oh, there you are. Doesn't that thresher death sound rather suspicious to you? It sure sounds suspicious to me.

(He does not write anything
down during the next story
as he is so confused and
fascinated by it.)

CHATTEL

Oh no, darling. Toomy had nothing to do with that.

SCHENECTADY

Well, that's certainly a good..

(Pauses a beat.)

Huh?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL slowly walks to the
left end of the couch. She
speaks facing downstage.)

Toomy, my 7th late husband, passed away from malnutrition. I always told him he was working too hard, that it would eventually kill him. Well, I was right. Always in his laboratory into the early hours with his beakers and Bunsen burners and test tubes and chemicals and rats and things. I always said, "Toomy, darling, at least come out for something to eat. You need your nourishment." But he would not listen to me. He said he was on

the verge of something great... some sort of formula for a non-volatile breakfast cereal.

SCHENECTADY

You don't say?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL turns to face
SCHENECTADY.)

No, no, no. Doan Sey choked to death, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY glances out to
the audience in confusion
for a few beats, before
turning back to CHATTEL.)

Come again?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL sits down on the
left end of the couch.)

Doan Sey Wang, my 12th late husband. He was a Regurgitated Rice Broker. Come to think about it he looked a lot like you. Got a piece of his rice and bird-dung omelet caught in his throat and choked.

SCHENECTADY

Mrs. Von Cash, exactly how many times have you been married?

CHATTEL

Counting the seven hour marriage to Hansel?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY shrugs.)

Sure. Why not?

CHATTEL

I have been married twenty-seven times, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(amazed)

You've been married twenty-seven times?

CHATTEL

Twenty-eight if you count the man I...

SCHENECTADY

Twenty-eight... Wow. It's a wonder that your ring... um...

(SCHENECTADY runs the fingers of his right hand over his left hand ring finger a couple times, then points to it.)

...you know, the ring... thingy... hasn't been worn down to a nub. Well, anyway, seeing as how we've been brought together for another purpose, maybe we should try to get back on track for... um...

(He looks up in confusion before turning to CHATTEL.)

Why were we brought together?

CHATTEL

Because of the burglar, darling.

(CHATTEL takes another sip off the martini.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY watches every movement of the glass before speaking.)

I have to ask; is that your first martini today? You know, I've always found that the second martini of the day tastes even better than the first. I would be more than happy to test that theory for you right now. If you could show me where the glasses are... I've already found the vodka over there on the...

(He points over his shoulder to the bar.)

Of course, this is not to discount the cool, frosty goodness of the first drink that...

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL takes another sip.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY again follows the glass as CHATTEL sips before continuing.)

...the first drink that really quenches the thirst.

CHATTEL

About the burglar, darling.

(CHATTEL sets the glass down
on the coffee table.)

SCHENECTADY

(Again SCHENECTADY's eyes
follow the glass.)

You don't suppose I could maybe... you know...

(He points to the glass.)

...smell it?

CHATTEL

Darling, the burglar?

SCHENECTADY

Hmm? Oh, yes. Of course. The... the thing about the corpse. Yes.
All right, let us jump back into the facts with earnest.

CHATTEL

Fifteen.

SCHENECTADY

I would say that... Hmm? What was that? Fifteen? Fifteen what?

CHATTEL

Earnest. He was my 15th late husband.

SCHENECTADY

Now, you stop that. We have got to concentrate on this. Where
were you when the body was discovered?

CHATTEL

I was in my bedroom, darling, showing Tiffani the proper way to
slice soap.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY quickly writes
this down.)

Slice soap?

CHATTEL

That is correct. If we do not divide each bar of soap into $\frac{1}{4}$ inch
cubes the staff only ends up wasting it. I am not made of money,
you know. I have got scads of it but I am not made of it.

SCHENECTADY

You only give your staff $\frac{1}{4}$ inch cubes of soap each day?

CHATTEL

Each day? Oh, do not be ridiculous, darling.

SCHENECTADY

Well, I should say not. That would be awful.

CHATTEL

Of course it would. They get a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch cube of soap each month.

SCHENECTADY

Each month?

CHATTEL

Waste not, want not.

SCHENECTADY

But how does one person stay clean on one small cube of soap a month?

CHATTEL

One person? You are not paying attention, darling. Each monthly cube is for the entire staff. I just toss it in and let them fight it out.

(CHATTEL lays her eyes on the candy dish, then hands it to Schenectady.)

Oh, pardon my manners. Candy?

SCHENECTADY

Oh hell no! I mean... no, thank you.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL returns the dish to the table.)

SCHENECTADY

Can you tell me who else was in the house just before the body was discovered?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters the room and walks to the back of the couch.)

CHATTEL

Just the usual staff; my butler, maid, chef.

SCHENECTADY

Ah, you might say...

(SCHENECTADY leans in closely, quickly.)

...that the whole gang was here. Huh?

(He chuckles at his joke.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL bobs away from him, then stands to avoid any further instances.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stands.)

Yes, well...

PLANKTON

Madam.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY yelps, his hands fly out and the notepad and pencil go flying out in front of him. He clutches his chest with both hands and closes his eyes.)

It's still beating... Yes, it's... it's... it's still beating.

CHATTEL

What is it, Inkstain?

PLANKTON

The body has been successfully returned to the freezer, madam.

CHATTEL

Very well.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY retrieves the notepad and pencil.)
(to himself)

One more time. One more time should do it. A heart can only take so much. I had such a healthy heart when I first came in here. I'm beginning to think that the victim wasn't murdered, it was frightened to death.

(After picking up the notepad and pencil, he goes to the back of the couch to talk with PLANKTON.)

So, you found the body in Mrs. Von Cash's bedroom?

PLANKTON

That is correct, madam.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL reseats herself on the left end of the couch.)

SCHENECTADY

There we go with the 'madam' again.

(SCHENECTADY checks his wrist for a pulse.)
(to himself)

Yup, still... still... still beating.

(to PLANKTON)

So tell me, how did you find the body?

(He raises the notepad to write.)

PLANKTON

I looked down.

SCHENECTADY

No... that's not... not quite what I meant. I mean, how was the body when you found it?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON looks at SCHENECTADY for a couple

beats as if the man were
insane.)
It was quite dead, madam.

SCHENECTADY

Um... see, we... we have a case of miscommunication here. I mean, I know we're both speaking English, and yet we're talking a different language. How do I put this so that it...? I know; in what position was the body?

PLANKTON

The body was lying down.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY writes this
down.)

All right, now we're getting somewhere. The body was...
(looks up)

Well, see, I kind of assumed that the body would be lying down. After all, it takes a special kind of dead body to be standing up or playing polo.

(glances off in thought)

Do they even know how to play polo?

(to PLANKTON)

What I'm trying to find out is where the body was.

PLANKTON

I believe I have already answered that. The body was in Madam's bedroom.

SCHENECTADY

Yes... yes, you did answer that. I clearly remember hearing that. But was the body on the floor? On the bed? On the dresser? The... the...

(SCHENECTADY makes an
overhead gesture to indicate
a ceiling fan.)

...thingy twirling on the upper part of the... the room?

PLANKTON

The body was draped over the bed.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY writes this
down.)

...over the bed. That's better.

(to CHATTEL)

So, when you found the body draped over the bed, you...

CHATTEL

No, darling. The body was sitting on the Ambrosia Bench at the foot of my bed.

SCHENECTADY

Ah, I see.

(SCHENECTADY begins to write this down, but suddenly stops.)

(to CHATTEL)

No, I... I don't see. You found the body sitting on the bench?

(to PLANKTON)

And you found it afterward lying on the bed?

(He considers this a moment while absent mindedly sucking on the end of the pencil. Suddenly realizing that this thing is in his mouth, he removes it while flicking his tongue to indicate a bad taste.)

(to CHATTEL)

Oh, I see. You moved it from the bench to the bed before you came down here.

CHATTEL

Don't be silly, Colonel. I would never touch a dead body. That is what the help is for.

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

Um... 'detective', actually.

(to PLANKTON)

Then you must have moved the body. Yes?

PLANKTON

That is incorrect. I found the body draped over madam's bed. I did not move it until carrying it back to the freezer.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY rounds the couch on the right, scratching his head with the pencil.)

But if neither one of you moved it from the floor to the bed, then how did it get there?

(to PLANKTON)

You're absolutely certain that the victim was... was... you know, no blood moving around or thinking or moving or...dead! That's it. You're absolutely certain that the victim was dead?

PLANKTON

Yes, madam.

SCHENECTADY

(mumbling)

...'madam' again.

(SCHENECTADY slowly lowers himself down to the couch on the right side.)

(to CHATTEL)

And you know for certain that the body was dead, too?

CHATTEL

Of course it was dead, darling. Don't you know what a dead body looks like?

PTOMAIN

(PTOMAIN enters the room and begins searching around as before - first the bar, then the round table and chairs. He is unobserved.)

SCHENECTADY

Oh yes, I've seen a dead body or two in my line of... in my line of... of... you know, doing what I do. I'm just trying to figure out how your dead body keeps moving around. Yep, that's a head-scratcher. Well, anyway, now that we know where the body is, this will give me a chance to inspect it.

(to PLANKTON)

If you could show me to the freezer, I would be more than happy to give it my expert...

(SCHENECTADY suddenly notices PTOMAININE and stops talking.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL notices PTOMAININE.)
What are you doing, darling?

PTOMAININE

(PTOMAININE looks up.)
Nobody panic. It's nothing serious.

SCHENECTADY AND CHATTEL

(SCHENECTADY and CHATTEL exchange a glance between one another before both turning back to watch PTOMAININE.)

PTOMAININE

(PTOMAININE crosses in front of the coffee table, bending over to look beneath it.)
Nothing to worry about. It happens all the time.
(He then looks beneath the left end of the couch, then stands and faces the two seated - SCHENECTADY and CHATTEL.)
Really. There is absolutely no need to panic.

CHATTEL

(to PTOMAININE)
Darling, what are you talking about? And why are you in my living room without an invitation? You know the rules. Do we need to have take you down to the basement again?

PTOMAININE

I was just leaving, Miss Chattel. I had to check this room before I checked the rest of the mansion.

SCHENECTADY

(to PTOMAININE)
Did... did you lose something?

PTOMAINE

Just a body. Nothing important.

CHATTEL

Do not tell me that you lost it again, darling.

PTOMAINE

I don't know how it keeps getting away from me, Miss Chattel. One minute it's there, the next I'm going into the freezer to grab a hunk for tonight's rump roast and it's gone.

SCHENECTADY

(to PTOMAINE)

Wait... you were going to grab a hunk of... you mean off the...

(Looks away.)

Nah. I must have heard it wrong.

CHATTEL

Go find it again, darling. I want no dead men traipsing around on my highly-polished, imported, expensive hardwood floors.

PTOMAINE

Yes, Miss Chattel. Right away.

(PTOMAINE turns to exit but is stopped by Schenectady.)

SCHENECTADY

Now, hold on a minute.

(SCHENECTADY stands and crosses over to stand to PTOMAINE's left on the left end of the couch.)

PTOMAINE

Is there a problem?

SCHENECTADY

No, not... well, yes. Yes, there is a problem. Quite a number of problems, actually. Let us briefly get back to what you were saying about cutting off a piece of... of the... you know; the rump... rump roast.

PTOMAINE

Oh, it's delicious.

SCHENECTADY

Yes... yes, I'm sure it is. But what I... I mean, when you... You are aware that eating people is kind of a no-no in this country, right?

PTOMAINE

Of course I am.

(PTOMAINE begins closely examining Schenectady's head, visually.)

SCHENECTADY

Oh, well now, that's a good thing because the way you were...

(SCHENECTADY notices the inspection with some concern.)

...um... the way you were... you know, talking... I was beginning to think that... that... Why are you looking at me like that?

PTOMAINE

My, what a big head you have. I'll bet you have a really big brain.

SCHENECTADY

Well, I don't know about...

PTOMAINE

Have you ever had fried brains?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY hesitates a moment.)

Now, we've gone through this before, and I...

PTOMAINE

You really should stick around. We would love to have you for... *dinner*.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY takes a step back.)

Well, that's... that's nice of you to... to... to invite... Um...

PTOMAINE

...a little wine vinegar. Some parsley. Lemon, flour...

SCHENECTADY

(flustered)

Where was I?

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE begins feeling
Schenectady's arm.)

Would you prefer scrambled brains?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pulls his arm
away and takes another step
back.)

Um... so what you're saying is that somehow the dead body got away
from you... again. Isn't that... um... impossible?

PTOMAINE

Oh, you win some, you lose some. The good thing is that there's
always more where that came from.

(PTOMAINE once more kneads
SCHENECTADY's arm.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY again pulls his
arm out of PTOMAINE's grasp
and steps back.)

(to CHATTEL)

Mrs... um... Mrs...

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE steps up and feels
the arm again.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pulls his arm
away.)

(to CHATTEL)

II could use a little help, here.

CHATTEL

(to PTOMAINE)

Go find the body, darling.

PTOMAINE

(to CHATTEL)

Yes, Miss Chattel.

(to SCHENECTADY)

Don't go away. I'll be right back.

(PTOMAINE gives one final
glance to SCHENECTADY's
butt, rubbing his chin.)

Hmmm... should be tender enough.

(He exits UC.)

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

Now, I know he wasn't really serious about...? I mean, certainly he
didn't mean that he would cook my...

(to himself)

No, that's ridiculous. I must have misunderstood.

(to CHATTEL)

Would he really take my... and with vinegar... um...

CHATTEL

You're boring me, darling. Now, where were we?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY gives the entry
UC a final glance, shakes
his head and retakes his
seat on the right-end of the
couch.)

(to himself)

Damned if I know. This place is like a... like a... well, I'm not
sure what it's like, but it sure is! What with the people
suddenly appearing and dead bodies disappearing and the cook
wanting to...

GINGER

(GINGER pokes his head
around the entry UC.)

Miss Chattel?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL does not look
around.)

Who's there?

GINGER

It's Ginger, Miss Chattel.

CHATTEL

What is it, darling? I'm very busy.

GINGER

(GINGER slowly inches into
the room, peering around.)

Is Tiffani in here?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON crosses over to
stand to the left of the
bar.)

CHATTEL

Tiffani is working. Shouldn't you be outside planting or digging
or growing whatever it is you grow, darling? I do not pay you to
loungue around inside the house all day.

GINGER

But Miss Chattel, I wasn't lounging around inside the house. I
came to tell you something important.

CHATTEL

Very well. What is it? You have 20 seconds.

GINGER

(GINGER steps to the left
end of the couch, facing
CHATTEL.)

Miss Chattel, I just saw the dead burglar's body.

CHATTEL

Of course you did, darling. We've all seen it.

GINGER

In the tool shed?

SCHENECTADY

(to GINGER)

The... the tool shed?

GINGER

(to SCHENECTADY)

That's right. I just went into the tool shed to get my spade and the body was in there.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stands and moves across to stand to GINGER's left.)

When did you see this?

GINGER

Just now. Why?

SCHENECTADY

You're sure it was the same body?

GINGER

Pretty sure... unless there's another body around here with a cell phone, kitchen knife, swizzle stick, garden sheers and a feather duster sticking out of it.

SCHENECTADY

No, no, that would probably be the same... um... same body. My goodness, that thing travels around more than I do.

CHATTEL

Grandfunk, you know what to do.

PLANKTON

Yes, madam.

(PLANKTON exits UC.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks anxiously at the entry. UC.)

Um, I really should go with Plankton so that I could have a look at the body, myself.

(to GINGER)

I think that you should stay here until I get back. I have some more... um... oh, you know... more goodies to ask.

GINGER

But I only have 20 seconds before Miss Chattel calls Tiffani in to zap me with the electric cattle prod.

CHATTEL

(calmly)
Ten seconds, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)
Now, now, let's not have any of that. One... one death is enough,
thank you.

CHATTEL

Rules are rules, Sergeant.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY glances
frantically between the
entry, CHATTEL and GINGER,
wanting to go but afraid to
leave GINGER alone.)
(to CHATTEL)
It's 'detective', but...
(He gives the entry one
final, frantic glance before
turning back to GINGER.)
Well, I suppose I'd better stay here and keep an eye on you.
(He leans in to GINGER.)
She really has the maid zap you with an electric... um... one of
those... heifer zapper thingy's?

GINGER

Yes, detective. And it hurts.

SCHENECTADY

I imagine it would.
(to CHATTEL)
You... you do know that electrocuting your employees is illegal,
don't you?

CHATTEL

Discipline is essential, Private. One must run a tight ship or
the help will walk all over you. There is a reason that the
inside help is called 'inside help' and the outside help is
called 'outside help'. And if one crosses over to the other then
they are to be punished.
(CHATTEL sips her martini.)

SCHENECTADY

Now, see, you really can't do that, Mrs. Von... um...
(SCHENECTADY turns to GINGER
for help.)

GINGER

'Cash'.

SCHENECTADY

Thank you; Mrs. Von Cash.
(to himself)
I don't know why that name eludes me all the time.
(to GINGER)
Why don't you have a seat on the...
(SCHENECTADY points to the
couch.)
...on the... long chair gizmo there. I need to ask you a few more
questions.

GINGER

(GINGER sits on the couch on
the right-end, opposite
CHATTEL.)

CHATTEL

Five more seconds, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY waves a
cautionary finger at
CHATTEL.)
Ah ah ah... There will be no more counting. No zapping, no
counting, nothing like that. I'm conducting an investigation
here, Mrs... um...
(SCHENECTADY Looks to GINGER
for help.)

GINGER

(GINGER silently mouths 'Von
Cash'.)

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

...Mrs. Von Cash, and I need everybody's full cooperation - including your own. So, let us have an end to all this silly nonsense of counting and hurting and all that.

(SCHENECTADY crosses over and takes a backwards seat in the chair nearest the couch by the round table stage right, facing GINGER.)
(to GINGER)

So, you say you found the body in the tool shed?

GINGER

(GINGER gazes longingly at SCHENECTADY.)

Did you know that, up close, you look just like Rock Hudson, detective?

SCHENECTADY

Married! Um... to a woman, I mean. Well, that is to say, I'm not actually married right now but if I were married it would be to a... you know... a... one of...

(SCHENECTADY uses his hands to indicate the curves of a woman.)

...those.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL finishes her martini, stands and heads around the couch and over behind the bar to make a new one.)

GINGER

Oh! You're single. Why don't you have a seat next to me, handsome.

(GINGER pats the cushion beside him. He then leans over the couch arm toward SCHENECTADY.)

It'll be coooooozier.

(He again pats the seat beside him.)

SCHENECTADY

Um... no... no thank you. I'm safer over... I mean, I'm quite comfortable where I am. Now, where were we?

(SCHENECTADY looks at his notepad.)

Oh yes, the... the body... thingy. You said you found him in the tool shed. Where was he?

GINGER

He was laying on the floor with the lawnmower on top of him.

SCHENECTADY

The lawn mower?

GINGER

That's right, detective.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY writes this down.)

Do you have any idea how it got there?

GINGER

Well, maybe somebody was going to mow him.

SCHENECTADY

What? No, I mean do you have any idea how the body got into the tool shed?

GINGER

No, detective.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY makes a note on his pad.)

Well, while I've got you here, I might just as well ask you a couple other questions.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL lifts a closed vodka bottle and is inspecting the bottom of it, searching for a way to get it out.)

GINGER

(GINGER runs a finger over Schenectady's leg.)

Do you work out?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY nervously stands and walks to the opposite side of the couch (left) as he talks.)

Now, where... where were you when the body was discovered? That is... earlier today.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL is now attempting to shake the vodka out of the bottle with the capon. She does so quite violently before giving up and setting the bottle down. She then inspects it carefully, trying to find a hole in it through which to get it out.)

GINGER

I was out pruning the roses. Oh! The news broke my fragile little heart.

SCHENECTADY

And how did you first hear about... you know... about the death?

GINGER

I heard about it from Hydrangea.

SCHENECTADY

I see.

(SCHENECTADY begins to write this down, then looks up abruptly.)

Wait... You heard about the death from a plant?

GINGER

Oh, no, silly. Hydrangea is Miss Chattel's downstairs maid in the west wing of the mansion.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, I see.

(SCHENECTADY makes a note on
the pad.)

And how did she hear about the death?

GINGER

He.

SCHENECTADY

Pardon?

GINGER

Hydrangea is a he, not a she.

SCHENECTADY

But you just said that it was the downstairs maid.

GINGER

That's right.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY considers this
a moment before a look of
enlightenment comes over
him.)

Oh... I see. He's one of... he's like...

(He points to Ginger briefly
before quickly withdrawing
his hand.)

...Um... I get it now. Yes. Well, now, how do you suppose he heard
about the death?

GINGER

Oh, please, detective. When something this big happens on the
estate it's impossible to keep it quiet. Everybody knows almost
instantly.

SCHENECTADY

Oh... grapevine... Yeah, I get it.

GINGER

I remember thinking that the wrong person had died.

SCHENECTADY

Now, that's good. It's good to get your thoughts out when something like... What? The wrong person?

GINGER

That's right, detective. I was thinking that it should have been Alfredo lying there on the floor bleeding to death... a slow, painful death. That bitch!

SCHENECTADY

Alfredo? Should I know that name?

(SCHENECTADY slowly lowers himself onto the couch, left end.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL begins inspecting the drink shaker.)

GINGER

Oh! Don't even speak his name! We lived together for seventeen years. Seventeen years of cooking and cleaning and caring for him... nursing him back to health when he was sick, reading to him, feeding him by hand, putting away the chains... Oh! This is just too much. I can't possibly go on!

(GINGER flings himself over the arm of the couch, moaning. All at once he straightens up and turns to SCHENECTADY.)

And then I caught him with that little slut! Oh, who could blame my little Alfredo... the way that slut swung those hips of his, and the way he did that little cheer with those pom-poms made of bacon, and... Oh! It's all too painful to talk about!

(Again he throws himself over the arm of the couch.)

SCHENECTADY

Well... yes... that would be... pom-poms made of bacon, you say? Well now, that's all very interesting but I think that we should get back to the body of...

GINGER

(GINGER straightens up and again turns to SCHENECTADY.)

Oh! Alfredo had a body! Those cute little... Roarrrrrrr.

(He gestures as if to be squeezing Alfredo's buns, then turns back to SCHENECTADY, grabbing the front of his jacket.)

I loved him, don't you understand? I'd do anything for him. My poor little fettuccini Alfredo... the bitch!

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pries himself loose from GINGER's grasp.)

Yeeees... I can see how you've been through the...

GINGER

Carl! The slut's name was Carl!

(GINGER points to an imaginary spot in the room.)

I caught them together that night when I got home.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks to the corner for a moment before turning back to GINGER.)

GINGER

There they were in front of the video camera, all alone, painting each other red. Oh! Why do torture myself like this? I just wish that I could find that little slut, Carl. I'd scratch his slutty eyes out.

(GINGER makes scratching motions.)

No, no... I could never harm another human being.

(He reaches for a piece of candy on the coffee table.)

I need a piece of candy to calm my nerves.

(He pops the candy in his mouth.)

They left me that night. Packed up Alfredo's bags, called a taxi and left...

(He makes a distasteful face. Takes the candy out and places it back in the dish.)

SCHENECTADY

They left?

GINGER

Oh! Yes, they took everything. The Waterford crystal, the Ming vase, the leather gag...

(GINGER leans against the couch arm pitifully.)

...the pom-poms... Everything. If it hadn't been for Scallops I never would have survived.

(He places his head in his hand, the palm and fingers covering his eyes.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL places her glass upside down on the top of the upright vodka bottle with the cap still on. She then turns the whole thing upside down and begins trying to shake the vodka out.)

SCHENECTADY

Scallops? Who is Scallops?

GINGER

(GINGER opens his fingers to peer out to SCHENECTADY with one eye.)

My Siamese Pomeranian French.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, I see. That was your... your... you know; four legs, long pink tongue... dog! That's it, your dog.

GINGER

Dog? Oh, heavens no.

(GINGER inches himself to the center of the couch.)

Scallops was our houseboy.

SCHENECTADY

You had a houseboy with four legs and a long pink tongue?

GINGER

(GINGER scoots a little closer to SCHENECTADY.)

Oh, don't be silly. Scallops didn't have four legs.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL places the upright glass on the bar and begins wringing the bottle in an attempt to squeeze the vodka out of the bottle.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY scoots away from GINGER a little.)

This is all very... um... but mostly, it's...

(He grimaces with a shudder.)

...but we've gotten off the track. I still need to know what...

(He suddenly turns back to GINGER.)

Scallops? Who would name their kid...

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC.)

Madam.

SCHENECTADY

(Yelps and jumps up, swiveling around to face PLANKTON.)

I swear! Could you two at least tie bells around your necks to warn somebody when you're coming?

PLANKTON

The body is back in the freezer as requested.

(Plankton glances to CHATTEL.)

Martini time again, madam?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL looks exasperated. Moving over to the right end of the bar she extends her

glass and waits for it to be filled. She stares out beyond the audience.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON steps behind the bar and makes her a martini.)

SCHENECTADY

Martini time, you say? Well, now...

(SCHENECTADY takes a step toward the back of the couch on his way over to the bar.)

GINGER

(GINGER rapidly scoots the rest of the way to the left of the couch and grabs SCHENECTADY's pants leg, stopping him beside the couch.)

Here's an idea, detective. Why don't you and me melt on over to my room and you could strip-search me. I know I'm guilty of something.

(He then runs a finger up the outside of SCHENECTADY's leg.)

I have a dunnnnn-geonnnnn.

SCHENECTADY

Um... I'll just... over there.

(SCHENECTADY nervously points to the bar. With a panicked look on his face he hurries over to the bar, standing opposite Chattel at the left end. He watches with great interest as PLANKTON makes the drink.)

GINGER

(GINGER faces forward, looking defeated.)

SCHENECTADY

Did you know that the martini was said to have been invented in 1863? Well, that's one theory. Another involves a miner during the gold rush in 1849 in Martinez... No vermouth? No, I guess not. Well, who drinks a martini with vermouth, anyway? It's... it's... it's a dry martini or nothing, I always say. I've always found martinis to be very refreshing... kind of the breath of life, you know what I mean?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON pours the drink into CHATTEL's glass.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stops speaking and watches intently as the drink is being poured.)

Yep... the breath of life. Say, I don't suppose that you made enough for... you know... for two... um...

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON places the bottle and shaker beneath the bar.)

SCHENECTADY

...no, I... I guess you didn't.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL walks to the right chair at the round table and sits.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON exits the room.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY checks beneath the bar briefly before heading back over to GINGER's side of the couch, left, stopping just outside of GINGER's reach. He studies his notes.)

Okay. As I understand it, Miss Ginger, you were out in the yard working...

(He suddenly realizes what he had said and looks up abruptly.)

Did I just say 'Miss Ginger'? Well, how about that. I certainly didn't mean to infer... it was merely a slip of... you don't think that I would intentionally...

(He quickly saunters across to CHATTEL and leans down to her.)

It really was an honest mistake. He's not the violent type, is he?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL shrugs, then takes a sip of her martini.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY turns back to GINGER, an embarrassed look on his face.)

You know that some of my best friends are...

(He stops and thinks about this a beat.)

Well, that's not entirely true. Actually, I don't have any best friends.

GINGER

(GINGER begins to stand slowly.)

Would you like a new best friend?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY points to the couch.)

Sit! ...I mean, please remain on the... on the... thing, there. I have some more questions to ask you.

GINGER

(GINGER slowly sits back down.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY begins pacing before the couch as he speaks.)

Now, Ginger, there are still three points that I am not entirely certain.. um... about... or with... or... for... or... Well, we'll just let that be before I hurt myself. One; how did the body happen to end up in your tool shed. Two; how did the lawnmower get on top of the body. And, three...

(He stops to the right of
GINGER and faces him.)

...did your parents really name you 'Ginger'? Isn't that kind of... well, you know.

GINGER

They named me Ginger because my father was in love with Ginger Rogers and my mother was expecting a girl.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY holds a finger
up in the air as if
understanding. After a
moment's hesitation he
shakes his head and
continues pacing.)

Do you keep the tool shed locked?

GINGER

Yes, I do, but if you want a personal tour I'll gladly unlock it and show you my tools.

SCHENECTADY

No... no, that won't be necessary. I've seen tools, and... um... well, not your tools, of course but I've got tools of my own and I've... seen... I know what tools look like. Thank you, anyway. So, about this lawnmower; I take it that the mower had been driven on top of the body?

GINGER

Driven? Oh, no, detective. It isn't one of the riding mowers. Miss Chattel will only let me have one of the push mowers. It was probably just lifted onto the body.

SCHENECTADY

(surprised)
(to GINGER)

You mean...

(to CHATTEL)

When I was coming up the drive I saw...

(SCHENECTADY points to one wall.)

(to GINGER)

There must be 20 acres of lawn out there. Do you mean to tell me that you have to mow the... the... mow all that with a push mower?

GINGER

Once a week.

SCHENECTADY

(to CHATTEL)

You won't let him have a riding mower?

CHATTEL

Riding mowers are too expensive, darling.

SCHENECTADY

But... but as I understand it you have money to burn, so why would you be concerned about one lousy riding mower?

CHATTEL

I did not get rich by spending it all on every extravagance on the market, inspector.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY seats himself down on the right end of the couch.)

(to GINGER)

You mean to tell me that you really mow that enormous lawn by hand once a week? How do you do it?

GINGER

It isn't easy, detective. Sometimes I get a little help from Fred..

(whispers)

Don't tell Miss Chattel.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, no, I won't. Well, I'm glad to hear that. So, this 'Fred' comes occasionally to help you?

GINGER

Sometimes, when I can get him away from Sigmund. They're very close.

SCHENECTADY

Sigmund? You mean that Sigmund and Fred are... Oh, I get it. They're like...

(SCHENECTADY points to GINGER.)

GINGER

(GINGER runs a finger over SCHENECTADY's outstretched finger.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY withdraws his finger abruptly.)

...that is to say that... Yes, yes, I understand. So Sigmund allows Fred to come out once in a... um... once in a... occasionally to help you mow the lawn.

GINGER

That's right, but usually only when Sigmund is with Danny.

SCHENECTADY

Yes, well, that makes... um... Danny?

GINGER

Oh yes. Sigmund and Danny spend a lot of time together

SCHENECTADY

And Fred doesn't mind?

GINGER

No, I don't think so. They're all very close.

SCHENECTADY

Apparently. But if that's the case, then that would mean...

(SCHENECTADY considers this a beat.)

Ooooooh. It's one of those... um... What do they call it? A *ménage*... um... *ménage*... one of those three-some type things? But doesn't anybody get jealous?

GINGER

I think Steve gets a little jealous.

SCHENECTADY

Steve... Okay, I'll bite. Who is Steve?

GINGER

He sleeps with Bernard.

SCHENECTADY

Bernard?

GINGER

That's right. And before that, Bernard slept with Harold.

SCHENECTADY

Herald?

GINGER

Uh huh. And I think that Harold used to sleep with Fred and Sigmund, but that was a long time ago.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks ahead in silence. He finally tilts his head and nods. He then turns back to GINGER.)

Well, that was quite a... um... group of... Wasn't there some confusion as to who lived in whose house?

GINGER

Oh, no, they all live together.

SCHENECTADY

Together? All... all of them?

GINGER

Of course. Them and Andy and Jeffrey and DeMond and Timothy and Gerald and Samantha.

SCHENECTADY

Good grief! Now, I've... I've... I've always considered myself to be an open-minded type of... of... guy, but that certainly stretches the...

(Pauses a beat.)

Samantha?

GINGER

That's right, but she's getting to be an old nag.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY glances at CHATTEL for a beat before turning back to stare at GINGER for a beat. He then stares straight ahead in complete befuddlement.)

GINGER

Detective? What's wrong?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY continues to stare ahead in silence as if having blown a mental microchip.)

GINGER

Yoo hoo? Anybody in there?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY turns to GINGER.)

I'm... I'm... You know, at first I thought I was starting to understand this whole thing, and how everybody was... you know... with everybody else and living together under one roof and all. And I'm not judging anybody. Far be it for me to judge somebody's life or living arrangement... no matter how strange... but for the life of me I can't figure out where Samantha fits in there.

GINGER

Oh, she just sleeps with all the others.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY suddenly looks straight ahead, grabs Ginger's leg with his left hand and the couch arm with his right. His eyes widen and he stares out ahead for a few beats before whipping his eyes left to GINGER.)

Are you trying to tell me that Fred and Sigmund and Samantha and all the others are all... um... sleeping together?

GINGER

Of course they are. Why?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stands up and crosses behind the couch to the left end while talking.)

Why? 'Why' he asks. In all my born days I have never heard of such a... Granted, I did some crazy things in my college days, like setting a bag of dog doo on fire on somebody's front porch, and eating goldfish and things like that, but I have never been involved in anything like...

(He turns to GINGER.)

All I can say is that you're very lucky that Mrs. Von... um... Von...

GINGER

Von Cash.

SCHENECTADY

Yeah, her... that she doesn't know that this sort of thing is going on.

GINGER

Of course she knows. It's her estate, after all.

SCHENECTADY

And she doesn't have a problem with it?

GINGER

No. Why should she? Sometimes she goes over to watch.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY reaches down and grabs the arm of the couch for support. He stares at GINGER in utter disbelief.)

GINGER

Sometimes we all go watch. What's wrong with that?

SCHENECTADY

Well... um... for starters... I... they... you... um... This is so wrong on so many levels that I don't know where to start.

GINGER

Miss Chattel's favorite is Kentucky Joe. Sometimes she'll ride him.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY collapses to the floor beside the couch.)

GINGER

(GINGER hurries to his knees on the couch, leaning over the arm and looking down on SCHENECTADY.)

What's wrong, Detective? Are you all right?

CHATTEL

(to GINGER)

What is going on over there, darling? Where did the Sergeant go?

GINGER

(to CHATTEL)

He's down here, Miss Chattel.

(GINGER points down.)

CHATTEL

Well, do tell him to get up. I am too rich to have people sitting on my floor. If the neighbors looked in right now they would think that I didn't allow guests to sit on my fabulous furniture. I do... occasionally.

GINGER

(GINGER hops up, scurries around and lifts SCHENECTADY onto the couch, far left. He then sits to SCHENECTADY's right, directly next to him, stroking SCHENECTADY's shoulder.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY appears to be
in a daze.)

GINGER

It's all right, detective. Ginger will take care of you.

(GINGER leans his head on
SCHENECTADY's shoulder.)

I'll make you all better.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY slowly turns to
look at GINGER.)

Mrs. Von... and... and Kentucky Joe?

GINGER

Mostly, but sometimes she does Bernard, just for a different
experience.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY's head flips
back on the back of the
couch, his eyes closing.)

GINGER

Oh!

(GINGER jumps up and rushes
over to CHATTEL.)

Can I borrow this for a moment, Miss Chattel? I'll bring it right
back.

(Taking CHATTEL's martini
glass, he returns to
SCHENECTADY and runs the rim
beneath his nose.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY begins to stir,
his eyes opening and his
head eventually coming back
up.)

What? What happened? Where am I?

GINGER

(GINGER returns the glass to
CHATTEL, then returns to
SCHENECTADY's side.)

Feeling any better, detective?

SCHENECTADY

I just had the strangest dream. It was kind of silly, now that I think about it, but I dreamed that there were a bunch of... and one... and Mrs. Von... was... Am I losing my mind?

GINGER

Oh, don't be silly, detective. It wasn't a dream. We were just talking about the horses in the stable, that's all.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks up
abruptly.)
(to GINGER)

Horses? You mean Danny and Demond and Samantha... they're all horses?

GINGER

Of course they are. Why? What did you think they were? Humans?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY feigns a weak
laugh.)

No, of course not. I... I... knew that they were horses all along.

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC.)

Madam.

SCHENECTADY

(Surprised, SCHENECTADY
jumps - still seated, his
hands jutting out before
him. He brings them up and
rests them on top of his
head.)
(to himself)

This is all a bad dream. It's just a very bad dream. I'll wake up in the morning and it will all be gone.

CHATTEL

What is it now, Pondscum?

PLANKTON

It is about the body, madam.

CHATTEL

What about the body?

PLANKTON

I have just returned it to the freezer.

CHATTEL

Yes, I am aware of that.

PLANKTON

No, madam. I mean, that I have had to return the body to the freezer yet again.

CHATTEL

I heard you the first time, Oilcan. There is no need to repeat yourself.

PLANKTON

Apparently there is. Clean the cocktail olives out of your ears and listen carefully, madam. I have just had to return the body to the freezer - again.

SCHENECTADY

Wait a minute, hold on.

(SCHENECTADY stands and
walks unsteadily back to
PLANKTON.)

I think I understand. Are you saying that you had to return the body to the freezer from the tool shed and then you had to return it again after that?

PLANKTON

That is correct, madam. I just found the body lying on top of the dining room table.

CHATTEL

Do make sure you wash the table top thoroughly before serving dinner tonight, Groundhog.

PLANKTON

Of course, madam... all but your side.

SCHENECTADY

The body was on the dining room table? How did it get there?

PLANKTON

I do not know.

SCHENECTADY

Well, now this is getting... um... well, in a word; ridiculous. Just how many times can a body disappear and then reappear somewhere else?

PLANKTON

I give up, madam. How many?

SCHENECTADY

Um... no. See, that was one of those rhetorical... um... things that... don't really mean... Tell you what, why don't you come in here so I can get a little more information. I haven't had the opportunity to question you yet.

(SCHENECTADY begins crossing to the right side of the couch.)

PLANKTON

Of course, madam.

(PLANKTON remains perfectly still.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY thinks he is leading the way for PLANKTON to the couch, but halfway there he turns to find PLANKTON standing where he had been left.)

Or, you could just stay there.

(He returns to PLANKTON's right side.)

Yes, that's probably better. Maybe more comfortable for you, too. Huh?

(He leans in to PLANKTON.)
(quietly)

Are you even allowed to sit down?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON stares straight ahead without comment.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY brings up the notepad and pencil.)

Um... yes. Well. Okay. So, 'Plankton' is it?

PLANKTON

Yes, madam.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY walks over to the bar, turns and places his right arm on it, looking casual.)

Funny thing... some guys would get upset being called 'madam' continually, but I... I think it's... well... sort of... I mean, I'm sure I'll go home tonight and lauuuuugh... Um, anyway, I need to know where you were when the body was... well, when the death took place?

PLANKTON

As I recall, I was in the upstairs study polishing the goldfish.

SCHENECTADY

That's fine. And who was it that told you that... Did you just say you were polishing the goldfish?

PLANKTON

That is correct.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY thinks about this a beat.)

Oh, I see.

(He leans toward PLANKTON quickly.)

You had me there for a moment.

(He leans back.)

They were made of wood or bronze or something and you were... um... polishing them.

PLANKTON

No, madam. They were very much alive. Madam likes her goldfish clean and shiny.

SCHENECTADY

You have to polish Mrs. Von Cash's goldfish?

PLANKTON

That is correct.

SCHENECTADY

Wow. Well, all I can say is that it's a good thing that they're not... not silverfish or you'd have to probably use a tarnish remover. Huh?

(SCHENECTADY laughs at his little joke. Realizing that he is the only one laughing, he settles right down.)

Now, see, that... that killed them at Fogey Village. Well, I don't mean that anybody actually died, of course, but they sure had a good sense of humor. Something that seems to be... missing... um...

(He turns his head so as not to be heard by anybody.)
(to himself)

...missing here.

(He walks around PLANKTON to stand on his left.)

So, you were upstairs polishing... um... polishing the goldfish... in the den, was it?

PLANKTON

I was in the study.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY snaps his fingers.)

Oh, that's right. You were in the... in the study. You did say that, didn't you? Yes. Well, so you were in the... up there. How did you hear about the burglar and his... you know... his subsequent... um... well, his... croaking.

PLANKTON

I was here with madam when the chef informed us of the man's demise.

SCHENECTADY

That's fine. Just... no, that's not really fine at all. Didn't you just tell me that you were in the den?

PLANKTON

Study.

SCHENECTADY

Yes, yes, the study.

PLANKTON

That is correct.

SCHENECTADY

But how could you have been in the den...

PLANKTON

Study.

SCHENECTADY

...study and down here in the living room at the same time?

PLANKTON

I was not in both rooms at the same time.

SCHENECTADY

But you just said...

PLANKTON

Madam asked me where I was when the burglar was first discovered. I was in the study. When I was informed of the body having been found I was in this room with Madam.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY holds up a finger as if to prove a point, his mouth opening up to speak. He holds this position for a beat in thought, then closes his mouth, lowers his finger, clasps his hands behind his back and walks around to the

front/right of the couch,
crossing before GINGER.)
Yes... yes, you did tell me that. I stand corrected. So you were in
the study..

PLANKTON

Study.

SCHENECTADY

...that's right. You were there when the burglar was...

(Turns to Plankton.)

Isn't that what I just... Didn't I just say 'study'? No... I guess
not. I could have sworn that I said 'study'...

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE enters the room
angrily with a meat cleaver
in his raised right hand. He
looks furious.)

SCHENECTADY

At any rate, it appears that everybody was accounted for when...

(SCHENECTADY spots
PTOMAINE.)

...when... Um... that's not a happy face.

PTOMAINE

All right, where is he?

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON cautiously walks
to the left end of the
couch.)

SCHENECTADY

Where is he? He who?

PTOMAINE

You know who it is.

(PTOMAINE proceeds to go
through his usual ritual of
trying to find something
behind the bar, under the
round table, the coffee

table and beneath the couch
as he speaks.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL rises quickly and
heads to the left end of the
couch.)

PTOMAINE

I am getting so tired of this. I slave my fingers to the bone
three times a day for this household. It isn't bad enough that I
have to empty traps and stalk the neighbors, now I have to
continually track down the food inside the mansion. I'm about to
lose my mind. I slave over a hot stove day in and day out with no
help whatsoever.

PLANKTON - CHATTEL - GINGER - PTOMAINE

(Once PTOMAINE reaches the
round table, PLANKTON,
CHATTEL, GINGER and
SCHENECTADY make their way
cautiously yet rapidly to
the opposite side of the
room, stage left. Once there
they huddle together while
frantically jockeying around
each other to insure that
they are less vulnerable
should the chef start
swinging the knife. They
continue pushing one-another
in front of themselves.)

PTOMAINE

It would be different if we were in the city and there were
things walking around outside left and right. I could capture
anybody at a moment's notice and serve up a delicious meal. But
out here on the estate it's an entirely different story. I just
do not have time to keep chasing the same meal around the house.

(After looking under the
couch PTOMAINE stands and
turns to the group, the
knife still held
threateningly in his hand.)

PLANKTON - CHATTEL - GINGER - PTOMAINÉ

(PLANKTON, CHATTEL, GINGER
and PTOMAINÉ all come to a
halt with CHATTEL now in
front. All are huddled
together closely.)

PTOMAINÉ

So where is it? Who took dinner this time?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY raises his head
above whoever he happens to
have ended up behind.)

Um... Dinner? Do you mean that the body disappeared again?

PTOMAINÉ

(PTOMAINÉ takes a step
forward.)

Of course that's what I mean.

PLANKTON - CHATTEL - GINGER - PTOMAINÉ

(As a GROUP, they all take a
synchronized step backward.)

SCHENECTADY

Now... now... surely you were joking when you inferred that the body
was dinner... Weren't you? I mean, you wouldn't actually...

PTOMAINÉ

(demanding)

Where is it?!

PLANKTON - CHATTEL - GINGER - PTOMAINÉ

(ALL scream.)

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI enters UC. She sees
the group and stops just
inside the entry.)

Like, ohmygod!

PLANKTON - CHATTEL - GINGER - PTOMAIN

(ALL scream a second time,
all turning their heads
toward TIFFANI.)

PTOMAIN

(PTOMAIN keeps watch over
the group without moving.)

TIFFANI

Like, is this a party? Like, how come nobody told me that we were
having a party?

CHATTEL

Tiffani, darling, stay right where you are.

TIFFANI

Like, fun! Is this, like, Hide-and-Seek, and some junk?

GINGER

This isn't a game, you human wind shear.

TIFFANI

Miss Chattel! He's, like, inside the house again. I'm going to
get, like, the cattle prod.

CHATTEL

There is no time for that now, Tiffani.

TIFFANI

Ohmygod, I know. There's, like, some icky body thing upstairs in
my linen closet. Like, it needs to totally go away.

PTOMAIN

(PTOMAIN turns to TIFFANI.)

Did you say the body was in your linen closet?

TIFFANI

Like, yeah, and it's totally wrinkling my sheets.

PTOMAIN

(PTOMAIN quickly exits the
room UC.)

PLANKTON - CHATTEL - GINGER - PTOMAIN

(They ALL slowly break up,
all greatly relieved to have
PTOMAIN gone.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL heads for the bar,
picking her abandoned
martini glass up off the
round table as she passes.)

PLANKTON

Madam, I shall assist the chef.
(PLANKTON exits.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY walks slowly
toward the couch.)
(to CHATTEL)

Is it safe for him to be alone with the chef, right now?

CHATTEL

He will be fine, darling.
(CHATTEL walks behind the
bar and leans on it for
support.)

GINGER

(GINGER follows closely
behind SCHENECTADY.)

Oh! My little life flashed right before my eyes. I just knew that
it was the end. Thank goodness I had a big strong detective to
protect me.

(He tickles the back of
SCHENECTADY's neck.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY turns abruptly
and steps back.)

Now... let's not... let's just... you keep your... I'm not much
protection. I'm more like a... you know... running-away kind of guy.
You need to be with somebody strong like... like...

(He looks around the room
desperately, suddenly
spotting TIFFANI.)

(to TIFFANI)

Hey, why don't you come over here and sit down so I can have a little... um... a little chat with you.

(to GINGER)

I'm sure you won't mind if I...

(He points to TIFFANI.)

...you know, have a little... um... questions and that sort of thing. You and I can... um... we'll...

(He uses his hands to simulate a conversation.)

...talk! That's it. We'll talk later.

GINGER

I'm looking forward to it, you great big handsome detective you. Did I mention that my house has a fireplace and a sauna?

(GINGER runs a finger down SCHENECTADY's arm.)

...and a trap-ease?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY pulls his arm back slowly, a pained expression mixing with his smile.)

GINGER

(GINGER seats himself on the left end of the couch.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY motions to TIFFANI.)

Please, come have a seat.

TIFFANI

Like, okay.

(TIFFANI walks around the left end of the couch.)

GINGER

(GINGER looks up to her as she passes in front of him, great dislike on his face.)

Bitch.

TIFFANI

Like, tuh-winkie.

(TIFFANI sits down in the center of the couch, near GINGER.)

GINGER

(GINGER scoots as far left as he can to get away from TIFFANI.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY takes a seat on the right arm of the couch and faces TIFFANI.)

My name is Detective Schenectady. I have a few questions to ask you about the... um... the...

GINGER

The crime?

SCHENECTADY

That's it.

(to TIFFANI)

Where you were when the body was...

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI spies the candy dish.)

Oh look. Like, candy.

(She pops a candy in her mouth.)

Mmm. Like, yummy.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY gives TIFFANI a look of disbelief over her finding the awful candy to be good.)

Yes, well now, could you please tell me where you were earlier today when the burglar was found in the...

(He brings the notepad up and quickly thumbs through it.)

...in the kitchen?

TIFFANI

Ohmygod. Am I, like, in the kitchen?

(TIFFANI glances around the room.)

Like, don't tell Miss Chattel. Mostly, I'm not supposed to be in the kitchen.

SCHENECTADY

Um... no. You're not in the kitchen.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI glances about again.)

Like, did I leave the kitchen? This room looks so like the kitchen. How do you, like, tell them apart?

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stares at TIFFANI, not entirely sure what to think or say.)

GINGER

(GINGER watches SCHENECTADY for a few beats.)

I know that look, detective. Don't worry, it's not you. That's about as intelligent a conversation as you're going to get out of her.

TIFFANI

(to GINGER)

Oh, like, shut up.

(TIFFANI glares at GINGER briefly then turns her eyes straight ahead and looks out blankly with a satisfied smile on her lips.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON enters UC.)

Madam.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY screams and jumps to his feet. He turns to PLANKTON.)

You know, I'm beginning to think that you enjoy doing that.

PLANKTON

Doing what, madam?

SCHENECTADY

Scaring the living daylights out of me.

(to GINGER)

Does he do that to anybody else or is it just me?

GINGER

He is kind of creepy.

PLANKTON

(to CHATTEL)

The body is once more in the freezer, madam. The chef is watching over it so that it will not get away again.

CHATTEL

Very well, Potpie.

(to SCHENECTADY)

If you need me, I will be upstairs powdering something, darling.

(CHATTEL exits UC.)

PLANKTON

(PLANKTON exits UC.)

SCHENECTADY

Well, that is certainly a relief. I mean, we can't keep chasing a dead body around the mansion all night.

(SCHENECTADY sits back down on the arm of the couch.)

(to TIFFANI)

Makes you wonder if the body gets tired from all that running around?

(to himself)

Does it run? Maybe it just rolls?

TIFFANI

(to SCHENECTADY)

Oh, mostly, I don't like rolls.

SCHENECTADY

(to TIFFANI)

Yes, that's fine. Now, I was... What?

TIFFANI

I don't like rolls because they have, like, those little seed thingies that get caught between my teeth.

SCHENECTADY

Um... oookay.

GINGER

Detective, she still thinks that she's in the kitchen and you mentioned the word 'rolls' so she thought you were offering her a roll. Don't try to figure it out, just go with it. It's less painful that way.

TIFFANI

(to GINGER)

Like, ew!

SCHENECTADY

Yes... well... Moving along. Miss Tiffani, can you tell me...

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI turns to
SCHENECTADY abruptly.)

Like, no! You said my name wrong, totally! Hel-lo! It's, like, spelled with a 'I' not a 'y'.

SCHENECTADY

Excuse me?

TIFFANI

I mean, like, really. You said it wrong.

SCHENECTADY

I did? Well, isn't that just like me to go and mangle a... What did I say wrong?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI says her name
exactly the same way.)

Like, you totally said, like, "Tiffani" instead of "Tiffani". I mean, anybody with a brain can tell the difference.

GINGER

That pretty much leaves you out.

TIFFANI

(to GINGER)

Oh, like, you be quiet.

(to SCHENECTADY)

So, okay, just listen again..

(TIFFANI lifts her left hand, palm up.)

..Tiffani..

(She lifts her right hand, palm up, repeating the name exactly as it was last spoken so that there is no difference between the two.)

..Tiffani. I mean, like, there is a world of difference. Like, duh!

SCHENECTADY

Oh... um... yeah, I think I see now.

TIFFANI

So, like, try it again. Only this time try to say it 'Tiffani', you know, like with a 'I'.

SCHENECTADY

Um... okay, let's see if I can do this. 'Tiffani'.

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod! You, like, did it again.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, I think I hear it now. How's this? "Tiffani".

TIFFANI

Like, no. Say it again.

SCHENECTADY

"Tiffani."

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod, no!

GINGER

It's no use, Detective. You can knock all you want but there's nobody home.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI again glares at GINGER.)

Ohmygod! Like, shut up.

(She pulls a cell phone out of her apron and starts dialing.)

Like, okay, I'll call my friend, Buffy, fer sher, and you can hear how she says 'Tiffani' with a 'I'.

GINGER

Oh, Mary, puh-leez!

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI turns abruptly to GINGER.)

Hel-lo? I believe I was talking to the detective, or some junk. I mean, like, get a cuh-lue!

(She holds the phone up to her ear.)

SCHENECTADY

No, no. no. This is going to take too long.

(SCHENECTADY lowers her arm down to her side.)

Miss Ti... um... Miss, I need to know where you were when the body was found.

TIFFANI

Like, I've got it, fer sher. You can just call me 'Tiff'. Like, wow. All my friends call me 'Tiff'. Like, just the other day at the mall, like, I was saying to Buffy, like, "that Brian is way total hotness", and she looked me totally in the eyes and was, like, "Ohmygod, Tiff, fer sher".

SCHENECTADY

Oh. Okay, that's... that's a good idea. A lot of people have a nickname. Even my friends have a nickname for me. Whenever we're together they call me...

(grimaces)

Well, they're more passing acquaintances than actual friends. So, what I...

GINGER

Hold on, detective. Painful as it is, she's not through yet.

TIFFANI

And then I said, "Buffy, have you seen that, like, jacket that Amanda was wearing?" And she said, "Oh, fer sher, Tiff. Ohmygod! Like, it was so totally, like, yesterday," and I said, "Fer sher, Buffy. I mean, like, I wouldn't be caught dead wearing something like that. Ohmygod!"

SCHENECTADY

(to GINGER)

How long can she do this?

GINGER

(GINGER rolls his eyes.)

For-ever.

TIFFANI

And then Buffy said, "Tiff, I wouldn't be seen with Amanda, like, dressed like that. So totally grody. I mean, hel-lo?" And I said, "Fer sher, Buffy" and she said, like, "Fer sher, Tiff."

SCHENECTADY

Miss... um... I appreciate your...

TIFFANI

And, like, Buffy then said, "Tiff, have you texted, like, Deanna? Ohmygod! It, like, takes her forever to, like, text back" and I said, "Fer sher, Buffy. I texted her just this morning and it took her, like, two whole minutes to text me back" and Buffy said, "Like, ohmygod!" and I said "Ohmygod," and then I said, "I think I heard Miss Chattel calling me. I have to go."

GINGER

(to SCHENECTADY)

I think she's finally coming in for a landing, detective.

TIFFANI

And Buffy's, like, "O-kay, Tiff" and I was, like, "Like, text me" and Buffy's, like, "Bye, Tiff" and I was, like, "Bye Buffy.."

(TIFFANI pretends like she's hanging up the phone.)

(to SCHENECTADY)

...and, like, that's how to say 'Tiff'.

SCHENECTADY

Well, that was quite a... um... quite a lesson. So, Miss Tiff, can you tell me where you were this morning when the body was found?

TIFFANI

Body? Oh, gag me with a spoon! A dead body is, like, totally grody to the max!

SCHENECTADY

Grody?

(to GINGER)

Grody?

GINGER

Grody.

TIFFANI

I mean, like, ohmygod. A dead body! Hel-lo.

SCHENECTADY.

Yes, I think I understand, Miss Tiff. Perhaps you could tell me where you were this morning.

GINGER

This morning? Oh, please, detective. Let's be fair. She doesn't know where she is now.

TIFFANI

That is, like, so untrue. I know exactly where I am right now.

GINGER

(to TIFFANI)

All right. Where are you?

TIFFANI

I already told you. I'm, like, in the kitchen.

GINGER

No, you're not.

TIFFANI

Like, Okay. I'm sitting on this chair-thingy.

GINGER

What room are you in, Einstein?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI glances about the
room.)

I'm in the, like, the bedroom.

GINGER

Wrong.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI glances about a
second time.)

Then, like, I'm in the bathroom.

GINGER

Want to go three for three?

TIFFANI

The garage?

(TIFFANI gives the room one
final glance before turning
to GINGER.)

I, like, so totally don't like you! I have half a mind to come
over there and..

GINGER

If you had half a mind then you'd be able to come over here. It's
a miracle in itself how you continue breathing. If it wasn't
automatic you'd forget how to do it.

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod. That is so not true.

No it isn't.

GINGER

Yes it is.

TIFFANI

Is not.

GINGER

Is too.

TIFFANI

Not!

GINGER

Too!

TIFFANI

Then, go ahead. Show us how to breathe.

GINGER

Oh, like, I am so sure. You just want me to be the only one, like, in the room breathing. Maybe I, like, don't want to.

TIFFANI

Don't want to? Or don't know how to?

GINGER

I do so know how to breathe.

TIFFANI

Then tell us how.

GINGER

Don't have to.

TIFFANI

Have to.

GINGER

GINGER - TIFFANI
(Both TIFFANI and GINGER
slowly raise to their feet
and they continue the 'Don't
have to' 'Have to')

challenge, each time getting nastier and closer to one another until they are standing face to face.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY jumps to his feet and separates the two.)

Whoa, whoa! Now, just hold on, you two. I have every faith that Miss Tiff knows how to breathe...

(to TIFFANI)

You do know how to breathe, right?

TIFFANY

(TIFFANI sticks her tongue out at GINGER, turns abruptly and plops back down on the couch in a huff, her arms folded across her chest.)

SCHENECTADY

(to GINGER)

And Miss Ginger, you really shouldn't taunt Miss Tiff like that. Wait, I did it again, didn't I? I just called you...

(Chuckles nervously.)

Well, how about that. I guess I made that mistake again because you're such a... um...

GINGER

(GINGER places his hands on his hips.)

Yes?

SCHENECTADY

Well, because you're such a... handsome guy, and when you two were...

(SCHENECTADY makes a couple boxing gestures.)

...um... well, you know. Now, how about... Arguing! That's it, you two were arguing and I got caught up in the moment and got confused. Now, how about if you both go to neutral corners. Here, let's just put you two on opposite ends of the couch so that this won't... so that... I think it'll be safer this way.

(He directs TIFFANI to sit on the right side of the couch, GINGER on the left. He then takes a seat between them.)

(to TIFFANI)

There now, isn't that better?

GINGER

(GINGER takes this opportunity to move in extremely close to SCHENECTADY, placing his face about an inch away from SCHENECTADY's head.)

SCHENECTADY

I've always said that it takes two to fight, but it only takes one to... um... well, not fight.

(SCHENECTADY turns to GINGER.)

In the long run...

(SCHENECTADY finds their faces almost together and jerks back.)

Whoa! Well, there you are, big fella. Right up close and personal-like. Imagine my surprise when I turned around and... well, I guess you already saw that. Why don't you go over.. over there somewhere.

(He points to the wall CL.)

GINGER

(GINGER stands and walks to stand before the wall.)

SCHENECTADY

(to TIFFANI)

All right. Now, where were we?

GINGER

(Speaks under his breath.)

Bitch!

TIFFANI

Like, Quh-ween!

SCHENECTADY

Now, now. Let's... let's all act like grownups here. Besides, what would you do if the other was gone some day?

TIFFANI

Well, I for one would, like, breathe easier.

GINGER

(condescendingly)

Yeah, if you could, like, remember how.

TIFFANI

I am so not giving you a Christmas present this year.

SCHENECTADY

Now, now. Everybody calm now. Let's all take a deep breath.

GINGER

(GINGER turns and opens his mouth to say something.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY sees this and points a finger to GINGER.)

Ah ah! Let's behave.

(to TIFFANI)

Now, Miss Tiff, I would really like to know where you were when the body was found.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL enters UC.)

She was with me, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY jumps, resting his forehead against his palm.)

(to himself)

Now, I know... I know they're all are doing this to me on purpose. I wonder if my hair has turned gray since I've been here. I hope I remembered to take my blood pressure medicine this morning.

CHATTEL

We were in the pool room. Right, Tiffani?
(CHATTEL saunters over to
the left chair at the round
table and sits.)

TIFFANI

That is so, like, totally yes. Like, ohmygod, I remember now.

GINGER

Watch out, she's up to half a watt. Don't get hit by the sparks.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI glares at GINGER.)

SCHENECTADY

Miss Tiff, just ignore her...
(SCHENECTADY quickly glances
up to GINGER.)
Him! Sorry... honest mistake.

GINGER

I know a way that you can make it up to me.

SCHENECTADY

(to TIFFANI)

Now, think, Miss Tiff. What were you doing when the body was
found?

TIFFANI

I was, like, on my hands and knees, like, cleaning the bottom of
the pool.

SCHENECTADY

Ah. So, you were inside cleaning an empty pool.

TIFFANI

Like, you are so not listening. Ohmygod. The water was totally
there.

SCHENECTADY

Oh, I see. Yes, that makes sense.
(SCHENECTADY begins to write
this down on his pad, but
then looks up.)

Um... no, not really. How was it that you were able to clean the bottom of the pool if it had water in it?

TIFFANI

Hel-lo? I can hold my breath, like, a really long time.

GINGER

That's right, detective. She has a built-in unlimited supply of air in her head.

(GINGER fans his ears.)

TIFFANI

That is, like, so totally untrue, you... you...

GINGER

Careful, you'll hurt yourself.

SCHENECTADY

Miss Tiffani, perhaps you...

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI turns abruptly and opens her mouth to speak.)

SCHENECTADY

Sorry, sorry. I forgot: *Miss Tiff*. Perhaps you could tell me how long you've... um... how long you've...

(Makes circular motions as if cleaning a window.)

...worked, that's it. Heh heh,

(Leans in to TIFFANY quickly.)

Got it.

TIFFANI

(startled, she screams)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stands quickly and glances about the room.)

What happened? Who did it? Don't worry, I'll get to the bottom of this!

GINGER

No, detective. You just scared the airhead, that's all.

SCHENECTADY

The airhead?

GINGER

(Points to TIFFANI.)

SCHENECTADY

Oh, you mean Miss...

(Glances to TIFFANI.)

I see.

(Looks alternately to
TIFFANI and GINGER.)

Well now, that's a horse of a different... of a different... of a...
um... Okay, everybody, false alarm. Everybody be calm. Nobody was
hurt.

(He sits again.)

So tell me, Miss Tiff; how long have you worked for Mrs... um...
Mrs...

(Scans his notes quickly.)

Von Cash. That's right. I don't know why I keep forgetting that.
So how long have you worked for Mrs. Von Cash?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI looks panicky.)

Is that, like, a trick question?

(to CHATTEL)

Like, ohmygod! Miss Chattel, you didn't tell me there would be
totally hard questions.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL shrugs and sips her
drink.)

SCHENECTADY

Now, now, let's not panic here. It doesn't have to be an exact
number.

TIFFANI

(to SCHENECTADY)

You mean there's, like, math, too?

(to CHATTEL)

Miss Chattel, you didn't tell me there would, like, be questions
and math, too. Like, ohmygod! This is so hard. I didn't even get
a chance to study.

SCHENECTADY

No, Miss Tiff. Just give me a general idea of how long you think you've worked here.

GINGER

Get ready to count the number of times she stomps it out with her hoof.

CHATTEL

Tiffani came to work for me three years ago, darling. The Agency sent her to work for me after I lost my previous maid in the forest fire.

(CHATTEL glances back down to her glass briefly before looking back up to SCHENECTADY.)

Don't ask.

(She looks up in thought.)

What was that girl's name, anyway? Primrose? Pumpernickel? Plunger?

(She shrugs.)

Oh, who cares. Anyway, Tiffani has been with me ever since.

GINGER

Unfortunately, when the Agency sent her over they forgot to include her brain.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI looks to GINGER sharply.)

Like, what's that supposed to mean?

(to SCHENECTADY)

I don't, like, get it.

GINGER

The prosecution rests its case.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks at GINGER and TIFFANI alternately.)

Boy, one would think that you're both related. You two argue as much as I did with my brother.

GINGER

You have a brother? Ew, could you introduce us sometime?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI abruptly stands.)

Ohmygod! That is, like, so sick, and some junk.

(She marches over to him.)

I am, like, so leaving.

(She turns to leave.)

GINGER

(GINGER walks around in front of her to prevent her from leaving.)

It is not sick, feather-duster-for-brains. How else can somebody meet men around here? I can't just pick them up off the street willy-nilly...

(Pauses a beat to think.)

Well there was Alan.

TIFFANI

Like, stay away from me, you fruit.

(TIFFANI pushes GINGER's shoulder.)

GINGER

(GINGER pushes TIFFANI's shoulder right back.)

And Peter.

TIFFANI

Like, icky.

(TIFFANI pushes GINGER's shoulder.)

GINGER

And George.

(GINGER pushes TIFFANI's shoulder.)

TIFFANI

Ohmygod!

(TIFFANI pushes GINGER's shoulder.)

GINGER

(GINGER pushes TIFFANI's shoulder four times; once with every syllable.)

And Le-o-nar-do.

TIFFANY

(TIFFANI moves around GINGER to stand directly in front of him, facing SCHENECTADY.)

Detective, like, tell him that he is so gross.

GINGER

(GINGER scurries around TIFFANI and places himself directly in front of her.)

And you tell her that what's gross is walking around without a brain.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI scurries around GINGER to stand in front of him.)

And tell him that, like, he makes me want to totally vomit.

GINGER

(GINGER scurries around TIFFANI to stand in front of her.)

And tell her that she is too stupid to know how to vomit.

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod!

(TIFFANI scurries around GINGER to stand in front of him.)

GINGER

(GINGER scurries around TIFFANI to stand in front of her.)

Helium-head.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI scurries around GINGER to stand in front of him.)

Like, fruitcake.

GINGER & TIFFANI

(The Two now silently keep this up, one insinuation themselves in front of the other until being stopped by SCHENECTADY.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY steps out before the two, raising a hand to stop them. He then glances back to speak to CHATTEL.)

Mrs. Von Cash... Help.

CHATTEL

Tiffani, Ginger; back to work.

TIFFANI - GINGER

Yes, Miss Chattel.

(BOTH head to the back of the room simultaneously, each reaching the entry UC at the same time. They then engage in a little shoving match, pushing the other aside in an attempt to exit first. Finally, they both squeeze through together and disappear.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY stuffs the notepad and pencil inside his jacket and then walks over to CHATTEL at the round table, standing behind Chair 2.)

Are they always like this?

CHATTEL

It's an 'inside help' 'outside help' rivalry.

SCHENECTADY

I see. Yes, well, I guess that about does it for now. We know where everybody was at the time of the victim's death, so now we need to know how he died.

CHATTEL

How will you know that, Sergeant?

SCHENECTADY

'Detective'. I will examine the body, of course. If necessary, I will have to perform an... um... it's where you cut up the... autopsy! I'll perform an autopsy on the body. Oh, did I tell you that I used to be licensed mortician? We'll need to get the body downtown and...

CHATTEL

Darling, you can perform your autopsy in the hospital wing of the mansion.

SCHENECTADY

You have a hospital wing? Holy mackerel. I knew the place was big, but I never dreamed that you'd have a hospital.

CHATTEL

Yes, darling. It is near the museum.

SCHENECTADY

Museum? You have your own museum?

CHATTEL

Right next to the casino.

SCHENECTADY

Casino? You mean with slot machines and poker and all those games? You mean that kind of a casino?

CHATTEL

Of course, darling.

PLANKTON

I guess you knew that it was kind of illegal to... Well, anyway, I would like everybody to be present during the autopsy. Could you have your butler bring the body to the hospital room and then assemble the employees?

CHATTEL

Of course, darling.

(CHATTEL stands and heads for the entry UC, holding the martini glass high enough so that SCHENECTADY can easily lean forward and smell it as she walks by.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY smells the glass as it goes by.)

Boy, oh boy, that sure smells good.

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL stops and turns to him.)

Oh, did you want a martini, darling?

SCHENECTADY

Well, now that you ask, I would very much enjoy a...

CHATTEL

I am sorry, Colonel, but if you're going to perform your autopsy we will have no time to make a martini. Come along.

(CHATTEL exits UC.)

SCHENECTADY

No time... um... Damn. I was this close.

(SCHENEDTADY holds his fingers up to indicate a short distance. Now alone, he saunters over to the bar, glances around the empty room and then reaches for the bottle beneath the counter.)

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL calls from off
stage.)

Come alone, darling.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY jerks himself
away in surprise and quickly
exits UC.)

(CURTAIN)

(END OF ACT ONE)

ACT TWO

SETTING: Operating Room. A table sits in the middle of the room horizontally with a body upon it, face up, the head on the right end. The body is covered with a sheet which is raised by the underlying murder weapons as follows:

- Cell phone in his mouth
- Knife in his chest
- Swizzle stick in his stomach
- Feather duster in his ear
- Garden sheers in his crotch

To left-center of the room is a table with a pile of white towels on it.

AT OPEN: Plankton is standing at the right end of the table, Ptomaine at the left end. Standing behind the table are (from right to left) Chattel, Schenectady, Ginger and Tiffany. All members of the cast are wearing surgical masks over their mouths, with the exception of Tiffani who has hers covering her eyes. She is facing away from the audience. Schenectady is wearing latex gloves.

SCHENECTADY

All right, I think I'm ready to perform the autopsy. Now, is everybody present?

(SCHENECTADY glances about those gathered around the table.)

Very well. Let us begin.

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI turns around,
slowly, as if trying to
locate everybody.)

Like, ohmygod. I can't see what's totally happening.

GINGER

(GINGER pulls Tiffani's mask
down to her mouth, shaking
his head the whole time.)

TIFFANI

Oh, like, wow. So, like, what happened while I was out?

SCHENECTADY

Now, first I want you all to notice that the victim appears to be
40, 42 years of age with...

GINGER

(GINGER leans in for a
closer look at the victim's
face.)

Ew, look at that dreamy body. So fit, so slender; he's 32, tops.

TIFFANI

Nuh uh. He's, like, 37.

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY lifts the sheet
just enough to expose the
face to the cast but not the
audience.)

But look at the mouth and forehead.

TIFFANI - GINGER - PLANKTON - PTOMAIN - CHATTEL

(ALL lean in, in order to
take a peek at the face.)

SCHENECTADY

Classic wrinkles of an older man. The victim has to be in his... in
his... Um, what were we talking about?

PLANKTON

I believe that you were speaking of the victim's age, madam.

SCHENECTADY

I was? How about that. I could have sworn we were talking about... well, I forget what we were talking about.

(SCHENECTADY leans quickly to CHATTEL.)

That's why I asked. Right?

CHATTEL

(CHATTEL jerks away quickly, surprised.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY looks back at the body's face once more before lowering the sheet.)

His age, you say? Well, I'd say that he was in his mid-40's.

GINGER

I should have looked that good in my 40's. I say he's 32.

TIFFANI

Ohmygod. He's, like, 37.

SCHENECTADY

No, there's a scar right here under the jaw that looks at least three decades old.

GINGER

Couldn't be that old. Just look at those eyes. Ew, he sends shivers up and down my little spine. He's 32.

SCHENECTADY

No, I think I'll have to disagree. It's a medical fact that when a body has this...

TIFFANI

Like, hel-lo? Is anybody listening? He's, like, totally 37.

SCHENECTADY

What makes you so sure, Miss Tiff?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI holds up a driver's license.)

Like, duh! It's right here on his license.

SCHENECTADY

License? The victim's license? Now, where did you get that?

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI holds up a wallet.)

It was, like, in this wallet.

SCHENECTADY

Where did you get his wallet?

TIFFANI

Like, it was sitting on the floor.

(TIFFANI points to the floor
behind her.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY walks around
the table to inspect the
spot that TIFFANI pointed
out.)

I wonder what the wallet was doing there on the... on the... the
ground, there. It should have been in his pocket.

GINGER

That would probably be my fault, detective. It might have fallen
out of his pocket when I... uh... well, I was...

TIFFANI

Like, ohmygod! He was so doing things...

(TIFFANI points to the lower
half of the victim.)

...down there. Gag me with a turkey.

GINGER

(GINGER casts TIFFANI a
quick glare.)

You got one handy?

(to Chattel)

I swear, Miss Chattel. I was not doing things. My hand just ever-
so-lightly grazed his...

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY returns to his place at the table between GINGER and CHATTEL.)

TIFFANI

Like, mondo liar! You had your hands, like, all over his pants.

GINGER

(GINGER looks at TIFFANI with a burning glare.)

CHATTEL

Ginger, why did you have your hands all over the dead man's pants?

GINGER

(to CHATTEL)

Miss Chattel. I didn't. I swear I didn't. Tiffani's lying.

CHATTEL

That was very bad, Ginger.

GINGER

But Miss Chattel... it was an accident. I swear I didn't touch...

CHATTEL

We will have no more of that. Do go on, Inspector.

TIFFANI

(singing)

Like, you got in trou-ble.

GINGER

Bitch.

SCHENECTADY

Would you please let me see the license, Miss Tiff?

(SCHENECTADY stretches his left hand out in front of GINGER and takes the license from TIFFANI. He reads it.)

Well now, isn't this interesting. Mandrice J. O'Pettifogger. He has a Florida address.

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE takes the wallet from TIFFANI and opens it up.)

SCHENECTADY

(SCHENECTADY catches PTOMAINE's movements.)

What are you doing?

PTOMAINE

I was just looking for the organ donor card. I make this spectacular kidney and liver pie that must melts in your...

PTOMAINE - GINGER - CHATTEL - PLANKTON

(ALL stare at him in horrified disgust, mouths wide open.)

TIFFANI

(TIFFANI stares straight ahead, unaffected.)

PTOMAINE

(PTOMAINE glances about at all the faces.)

Really. It's delicious.

SCHENECTADY

Please give me the... um... the... what you have in your hand, there.

(SCHENECTADY reaches out, retrieving the wallet. This he lays on the table before him, along with the license.)

Now that we know who the victim is, let's get this operation under way, shall we? We need to try to find out what killed Mr. O'Pettifogger. As you can all see, the victim has a feather duster shoved in his left ear, a cell phone lodged in his mouth, a knife stuck in his... um... chest tingle, a swizzle stick poking up out of his stomach and garden sheers sticking out of his... well, right there.

(He points to the body's crotch.)

But in order to know which object actually caused the death, we must remove all the items, one by one. After that, we will go inside.