

A CROOKED HAND

A MURDER MYSTERY PLAY

by **Jeff Carlson**

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A Crooked Hand was first performed in the Gaslight Theater in Georgetown, Ohio in 2009. The original cast and company is listed below.

Produced by the Gaslight Theater Players

DETECTIVE JOHN SAMUELS	Greg McCann
PHIL	Jeff Roberts
KATE GREGORY	Jessica Moore
BROCK PHILLIPS/STEVE LEWIS	Kyle Overstake
LOUIS “THE CANNON” RICHARDS	Ian Wilson
ALICE	Julia Sayler
OFFICER #1	Casey McKenney
OFFICER #2	Josh Jandes
CRIMINAL	Ian Wilson

Written and Directed by Jeff Carlson

INTRODUCTION

The time is 1938. This hilarious mystery-comedy is set at the Peppermint Pad Casino, in an unnamed city (though the first section takes place around the office of a private detective in the same city).

Historical Milestones from 1938:

Frances Moulton is elected the first female president of a US national bank.

Benny Goodman refuses to play Carnegie Hall after black members of his band are barred from performing.

GM begins mass production of diesel engines.

Du Pont begins the commercial production of nylon toothbrush bristles, and announces that their new synthetic fiber is called "nylon."

German troops enter Austria and annex the country.

Roy J Plunkett invents Teflon.

Seeing eye dogs begin assisting the blind.

Congress approves the Vinson Naval Act, which funds a two-ocean Navy.

Congress creates the House Committee on Un-American Activities.

Superman comics appear.

The first aquarium opens in Florida.

"The Mallard" sets a world speed record for steam locomotives. 126 mph/203 kph

Howard Hughes sets a new "around the world" record, flying 91 hours.

The Queen Mary crosses the Atlantic westbound in record time. 3 days, 21 hours, 48 minutes

John Cobb sets a world auto speed record at 350.2 MPH. The next day, George E. T. Eyston breaks that record at 357.5 MPH.

Winston Churchill warns of the futility of appeasing Adolf Hitler: "The belief that security can be obtained by throwing a small state to the wolves is a fatal delusion."

A time capsule, to be opened in 6939, buried at World's Fair in New York City. The capsule contained a woman's hat, man's pipe, and 1,100' of microfilm.

Xerox makes the first copy.

Orson Welles broadcasts his radio play, H. G. Wells' *War of the Worlds*, causing a nationwide panic. A million US radio listeners believe that Martians are invading.

Nazis terrorize Jews in Germany and Austria, looting and burning Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues. They kill 91 Jews and take 20,000 more to concentration camps. It is called Kristallnacht, or "Night of Broken Glass."

Al Capp creates Sadie Hawkins Day in his "Li'l Abner" cartoon.

New York's W2XBT broadcasts the first unscheduled event (a fire).

Washington D. C. breaks ground on the future site of the Jefferson Memorial.

Dr. R. N. Harger introduces his "drunkometer," the first alcohol breath test, in Indiana.

prices from 1938:

average new house: \$3,900.00

average wages per year: \$1,730.00

average new car: \$763.00

average house rent: \$27.00 per month

a pound of hamburger meat: 13 cents

a gallon of gas: 10 cents

Lipton's noodle soup: 10 cents

a loaf of bread: 9 cents

CHARACTERS

DETECTIVE JOHN SAMUELS, a hardened detective who is tired of the gig. He wishes for an easier life. Should be a larger-than-life character.

PHIL, a good all-around guy who has had a lot of bad luck with money and employment. He is average in every way.

BROCK PHILIPS, owner of the Peppermint Pad Casino. He is a busy man and likes to run a tight ship. He also hates cheating. He cares for his establishment but is not very easy to get along with, and he speaks with a thick Jersey accent.

STEVE LEWIS, owner of the Money Palm Casino who comes to meet with Brock to discuss a merger between the two rival businesses. He also speaks with a thick Jersey accent, but has a mustache and walks with a cane. (Should be played by the same actor as Brock Philips.)

LOUIE RICHARDS, all-star sports hero with a gambling problem. He is tall and fit with dashing good looks, and easy-going. But when the money is gone, he cracks under the pressure.

KATE, the dealer at the 26 table. She is great at selling the game and stringing men along but has a real attitude about her.

ALICE, a polite and somewhat shy new waitress at the casino. She has job troubles just like Phil and hopes to make a good impression.

two POLICE OFFICERS, frustrated that Detective Samuels always beats them to the punch. They have grudgingly

resigned themselves to acting as Detective Samuels' support staff. (Can be played by the same actors playing ALICE and BROCK. OFFICER #2 should be male.)

MCGURK, a safe salesman who has been breaking into his customers' homes and cracking their safes after selling them. (Can be played by the same actor as LOUIE.)

Act 1
Scene 1

A spotlight comes up on the middle of the stage as DETECTIVE JOHN SAMUELS runs into the balcony chasing an unseen CRIMINAL.

JOHN. McGurk! (*JOHN comes into the spotlight so that his silhouette is cast onto the closed stage curtain.*) McGurk! I know that you are up here. You can't hide any more. I blew this case wide open. No matter where you go, you will be arrested.

(MCGURK now appears behind JOHN and tries to strangle him. JOHN breaks loose and suddenly MCGURK points his finger at JOHN like a gun.)

MCGURK. Stop it now. I'm warning you!

JOHN. Hold it now! Listen pal, let's not get drast. . . Hey, wait a minute. There's not even a gun there! That's your finger!

MCGURK. Well, it was dark. I didn't think you would notice. Gotta give me some credit.

JOHN. I'll give you something, alright. What kind of an idiot do you think I am?

MCGURK. (*points past JOHN*) Hey, look! Howard Hughes!

(JOHN does a takes a quick look as MCGURK tries to hit JOHN. JOHN blocks and punches MCGURK, then begins to guide him quickly from the balcony to the ground level.)

JOHN. Alright, McGurk, let's get you to the office and see what the court thinks of your safe cracking!

(JOHN and MCGURK leave the balcony as the main stage curtain opens. We see a desk with a lamp, typewriter, and paperwork in front of the closed mid-traveler. JOHN enters from the rear of the theater and walks MCGURK through the aisles. As he does, the two POLICE OFFICERS get up out of the theater and begin questioning JOHN, following him onto the stage.)

OFFICER 1. Hey, Detective Samuels, who do you got now? That's gotta be your third perp this week!

JOHN. Fifth! Boys, let me introduce you to the Safe Cracker.

OFFICER 2. You mean that guy who's been breaking into all those safes all over town without leaving a clue?

JOHN. One and the same! He's going away for a long time.

OFFICER 1. Detective Samuels, may we ask "your" prisoner some questions?

OFFICER 2. Detective, how did you know that he was the culprit?

OFFICER 1. Is it true that he worked for the safe company? Are we now safe ourselves?

OFFICER 2. Detective, what is that cologne you're wearing?

(Both OFFICER 1 and JOHN look at OFFICER 2, confused for a second.)

OFFICER 2. What?

JOHN. Hold it, man. Hold it. You guys should have been all over this guy from the first break-in. Now, I'm gonna let you guys take him from here to his cell. You'll probably be mugged by all the reporters asking questions, so just tell them for me, "Here is your story: Hero Detective Keeps Homes Safe From Thieves." Yes, he worked for the

safe company and was installing the very same safes that he was breaking into. With no signs of forced entry on four consecutive safes, it was only a matter of time before I caught up to him. Oh, and that's not cologne you are smelling. That's the smell of justice.

(OFFICER 1 and OFFICER 2 laugh out loud, mockingly.)

OFFICER 2. Smell of justice? *(still chuckling)*

OFFICER 1. Kind of smells old and musty to me. You are making us look bad. I mean, all the city needs to put someone away lately is for you to say they are guilty and they go away for good. *(laughs)* We may as well call you "Judge John Samuels"! *(continues laughing)*

JOHN. Yeah, you go ahead and laugh, but I'm the one catching these people. Why don't you guys take this scum to his cell already. Make yourselves useful for a change.

OFFICER 1. Sure, sure. We know you're sensitive.

(OFFICER 1 grabs MCGURK and leads him offstage, followed by OFFICER 2, who is still chuckling. JOHN finally sits behind his desk.)

JOHN. Finally, I can just relax for a minute or two.

(There is a knock at the door and PHIL walks in. He is awkward and excitable, and very much a chump.)

JOHN. Oh, it's you.

PHIL. John, I heard about your big bust on the Safe Cracker case.

JOHN. How did you hear about that already? It just happened! *(stands to greet PHIL)*

PHIL. Hey buddy, it's not that big of a city. Word travels fast, I guess. Besides, I just bumped into McGurk in the hallway and he told me how you beat the snot out of him.

JOHN. I always knew I could rely on word of mouth. I just didn't realize it would come from the bad guys. And what's it to you if I roughed him up a little bit? You don't seem very concerned about my safety. Did he tell you he pulled a gun on me?

PHIL. He did? (*incredibly interested now, as if he were a child on Christmas*)

JOHN. Well, sort of. I mean, it was his finger. . . . But it was very intimidating.

PHIL. Wow. (*totally let down*)

(*JOHN returns to his desk.*)

PHIL. Let's pray that makes the headlines. "Heroic Detective Almost Gunned Down by Rogue Finger!"

JOHN. Oh, give it a rest. At least I'm out there doing something to better myself. I just wish it wasn't this. Some days it is just so exhausting caring about people's safety. I wish I could just be in charge, you know? Do things for myself for once. But that will never happen.

PHIL. Oh cheer up. At least you're not fired like me. (*plops down on the corner of the desk*)

JOHN. You lost another job? Why? They couldn't take your humor at the ball park any more?

PHIL. This was the zoo. Apparently, it's not a good thing to set up a meeting between monkeys and a panda. I thought they would get along.

JOHN. Zoo? What happened to the ball park?

PHIL. A silly little mix-up. The owner's wife came up asking directions and I accidentally directed her into the men's locker room while the guys were changing.

JOHN. They fired you for that?

PHIL. Not really. She didn't mind to see that, but the excitement gave her a heart attack.

JOHN. She DIED?

PHIL. NO! (*stands, very defensive*) Not at all, but they told me to direct the medics there, so I retrieved them

and by accident led them to the OTHER locker room, where the owner was having relations with his secretary. He didn't like being discovered too well, so he fired me before I could give his wife another heart attack.

JOHN. Well, you certainly don't have a very good sense of direction. . . Or any sense at all. What happened with your job before that?

PHIL. Shoe shiner?

JOHN. You did that? I didn't even remember.

PHIL. Well, it was only one afternoon, but I learned it was not for me.

JOHN. Why is that?

PHIL. I have a fear of feet, I guess. Besides, I guess the people are supposed to stop walking before you start to shine the shoe. I didn't know that and someone kicked me in the face.

JOHN. I guess the last job before the ball park I remember you having was. . . The circus. What happened there?

PHIL. Oh, that's a long story, but I'm sure I can break it down for you. You would quit your job too if a bearded woman wanted to make you HER sideshow.

JOHN. Enough said. So what exactly brings you here today besides to congratulate me on my newest bust?

PHIL. Well, I know I shouldn't be asking for this, but. . . *(turns away from JOHN, ashamed)* . . . with my job gone, and in the situation I'm in, I'm desperate. My rent is due tomorrow and I'm short with no hope of paying it. Is there any way that I might be able to borrow it from you and pay it off weekly?

JOHN. Oh, gee. I don't know.

PHIL. Well, *(turns back, more cheerful)* maybe I could work it off with chores around your place!

JOHN. Look, if you call breaking my dishes and almost burning down the tree in my front yard "helping" me do chores, then I don't think I can afford it.

PHIL. Hey, that was only one day. . .

JOHN. Couldn't you have found a different way of trimming the branches?

PHIL. Do I tell you how to do your job?

JOHN. (*defeated*) How much do you need, anyway?

PHIL. Not much, really. I mean, you probably made twice the amount I needed already today!

JOHN. Phil, come on. This is not the first time I've had to lend you money and you still haven't paid me for those. I don't know if I can do that for you. (*suddenly getting an idea, stands and marches over to PHIL, sizing him up*) Wait a minute. Yeah, yeah, yeah. (*removes coat and hands it to PHIL*) Here, put this on!

PHIL. John, what the hell are you doing?

JOHN. Stop complaining and do it. Or do you not want the money?

(*PHIL's eyes light up and he quickly throws on the coat and stands at the ready.*)

PHIL. Now what?

JOHN. Now what? Now what?? Don't you get it? You just said it yourself. I made twice what you need just today! I mean, I want a break for a minute with the job, and you need to work up some money. . .

PHIL. Whoa! (*begins to remove coat*) John, I don't think we are quite on the same page, here. What are you saying?

JOHN. (*stops PHIL from removing coat*) You, Phil, are going to take my next case.

PHIL. John, are you crazy? I don't know a thing about being a detective! Where is this coming from?

JOHN. I need a break. Just once, to be without the burden, would be great and maybe it'll help you since I'm not going to fire you. . . At least not so far.

PHIL. This is too big, John. (*walks past JOHN a few steps, then turns back to JOHN*) I'm more qualified to trim your branches!

JOHN. Oh come on, Phil. Live a little!

PHIL. I'm trying to! Just not in your clothes!
(*motions to coat*)

JOHN. Come on. It'll be fun. Would it help to know what my next job is before you say anything?

PHIL. Well, I suppose, but. . .

JOHN. Then it's settled. Just stand there for just a second. (*jolts over to the rolodex on his desk and sifts through it, looking desperate*) AH HA! Here it is. A casino. That's fun, right? You like to gamble?

PHIL. With my luck? You must be kidding. Did McGurk give you a knock on the head or something?

JOHN. Ah, there's that sense of humor I've been waiting for! Come on, look. This job is. . . Is a cake walk. In and out and nothing else.

PHIL. I didn't know you had jobs like that. Sounds easy. Maybe a little too easy! What's the catch?

JOHN. No catch! Here's the story: Two casino owners are meeting at the Peppermint Pad Casino to bury the hatchet. All you would have to do is mediate the conversation and, when they both decide it's time to bury the ole hatchet, you make sure that they don't bury said hatchet into each other's heads.

PHIL. Well, I guess that doesn't sound too bad.

JOHN. Of course it doesn't. It's the easiest thing ever. Stay out of the way!

PHIL. But wait. What if something does happen? What if I can't keep it from going south? I couldn't do that.

JOHN. Relax! I'll go along anyway. (*stands and walks a few steps away*) I'll stick in the corner and do a little gambling and I'll keep an eye out for you while you just stand there and make your rent. You'll be working off everything you owe me just by giving me one night of peace at the roulette wheel!

PHIL. You really feel that way?

JOHN. (*turning to PHIL*) You'll be doing me a favor. I'm drowning here! I just want one night off!

PHIL. Don't your clients know what you look like?

JOHN. That's the beauty of it. (*walks over and puts his arm around PHIL*) These are brand new clients and they will only be using my services the one time. Your misfortune, no offense, couldn't have come at a better time.

PHIL. This is crazy, John. Your reputation is on the line!

JOHN. Like I said, I promise I'll be watching you to make sure you are in the clear. Just have some fun with it. If nothing else, we can squeeze a few free drinks out of it. Yeah!

PHIL. (*breaking free of JOHN's arm*) Okay! Alright, I'll do it. I won't let you down. Now we have to do this right. I don't want anyone thinking that renowned Super-Detective John Samuels is some idiot in a trench coat! I need to look more like you.

JOHN. Right. Let's see. Hmm. Try to look more. . . Um. . . Masculine. (*laughs out loud*)

PHIL. Yeah, yeah. Very funny. But seriously, John, how long have we known each other?

JOHN. I don't know. About ten years, I suppose. Ever since I caught the guy who was breaking into your grandma's house to steal her jewelry. Or was that your jewelry (*in pain from laughter*)

PHIL. Yeah, I get it. You are more of a man than me. Thank you, Hercules! Anyway, why did you wait 'til now to come up with this plan? I mean, I've asked you for money for almost five months straight.

JOHN. I guess it just didn't occur to me until just now how much fun this could be. Now you better get a little more ready for an afternoon out, 'cause if we don't take off, the meeting will be over without us.

PHIL. Hmm. That would be a new record. I'd be fired before I even started the job.

(BOTH laugh as the curtain closes.)

Scene 2

(Curtain opens with the desk removed and mid-traveler open revealing a casino setting with two gambling tables, one on each side of the casino's back door. A hallway leaves each side of the stage, to the bathroom and the rest of the casino on SL and to BROCK's office on SR. KATE is busy setting up and cleaning the 26 table SR. BROCK enters from the bathroom and heads toward his office, but stops when he sees a piece of trash on the floor.)

BROCK. Hey, hey, hey. Pick up dat trash over der! You tink we'd be runnin' a hostel da way dis place looks. We are professionals, ya hear? Da rush is gonna be startin' in a couple a' hours and I want dis place lookin' respectable when Mr. Lewis comes for our meetin'. Oh, and a detective is gonna be comin' for dat meetin' also. Make sure he's comfortable. Capish? *(storms off toward his office)* GET TA WORK! *(Exits to his office SR.)*

KATE. *(sarcastically)* Yeah. Gotta get ready for the rush so that people can lose everything. *(goes to pick up the piece of trash)* Nobody has been in here all day except for Louie.

(PHIL and JOHN enter, with PHIL wearing as much "typical" detective clothing as he can manage, and JOHN is mocking it.)

JOHN. No, no, buddy, I mean it. You look great! Really intimidating.

PHIL. Shut up! I'm being genuine, right?

KATE. Good afternoon and welcome to the Peppermint Pad Casino. I'm Kate, the dealer at the 26 table. Is this your first time? You look very new to this.

PHIL. Oh no, ma'am. We are definitely new to this. I mean. . . *(realizing he is posing as JOHN)* I mean, I've been a detective for years!

KATE. Well, I was just meaning to the club, but. . . Nevermind. So. . . You are the detective?

(JOHN is no longer paying attention. He is looking around the room.)

PHIL. That's what the badge says, ma'am.

KATE. Oh, but you're not wearing a badge.

PHIL. I'm not? I mean, I'm not. I thought I would be leisurely here. No need to be so formal, right Phil? *(looks at JOHN, who is not getting the hint)* Right Phil? Phil!

JOHN. OH! That's me. I'm Phil. That's right as always, uh, John.

PHIL. Do you even know what you're answering?

JOHN. Of course I'm answering. . . Um. . . What. . . What was the question again?

PHIL. I said that I didn't wear my BADGE 'cause I don't have to be formal.

JOHN. Badge? The only people that wear badges are those detectives from the radio when they say, you know, those cheesy lines like. . . I don't know. . . Like "That's what the badge says, ma'am." *(very mocking and laughing at his own joke, not realizing what he has done until he looks at PHIL)* What?

PHIL. *(turning to KATE)* Will you excuse us for just a second?

(PHIL walks JOHN downstage left while KATE goes back to her table. PHIL huddles with JOHN.)

PHIL. Listen John, I know, when you said that you would come along, you told me that you would just hang out in the corner or whatever, but you are going to have to keep an ear out or something because you almost blew it just now by making me look like an idiot.

JOHN. Now how did I ever make you look like an idiot?

PHIL. How? Were you not just in that conversation?

JOHN. Come on! That is a cheesy line from those cop dramas. You sound like Dick Tracey!

PHIL. I can't help it. I guess I'm getting into character or something. Must be the coat. Oh, and also, you've got to remember. . . (*JOHN is still glancing around the place in wonderment.*) Hey. . . Are you listening to me?

JOHN. Sorry, Phil. I can't help it. You see. . . I've got a little bit of a gambling thing. I don't really have a problem gambling. It's just that the environment gets me excited.

PHIL. This environment? This place is totally dead. How do they keep it going?

JOHN. That's what this meeting is all about. You have to know there are only two casinos in town, right? You got your Peppermint Pad Casino, which we are in, that is owned by Brock Phillips, and a rival casino across town called The Money Palm Casino, owned by Steven Lewis. Both these clubs have been struggling with staying open due to the harsh competition with the other and they are going to cut a deal tonight to merge.

PHIL. So to keep from going under, they are forced to join forces, huh? Sounds about right.

JOHN. Yeah, and things should go smoothly, but if they don't, that's why you're here. Phil, it's very important just to keep things calm.

PHIL. That reminds me—the other thing I was going to say. You have to remember that I'm posing as you, so naturally you are posing as me! If I say “Hey, Phil, come

here,” or “Phil, is that a new sweater?” you have to answer so you don’t leave me up a creek.

JOHN. Oh relax. I’m not going to forget, okay? You’re going to do just fine.

PHIL. I hope so. I really need to earn that money. Thanks again for this. I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t helped me out.

JOHN. No problem, buddy. You never know, though. Maybe you can repay me the favor sometime, but for right now, I gotta use the little boys’ room. (*looks back to KATE*) Hey, toots! Where do you guys keep the men’s room in this place?

KATE. It’s through that hallway (*points SL*) past all the slot machines, through the black jack tables, and past the roulette wheels. Can’t miss it.

JOHN. Oh boy! I love this place! (*Exits through SL hallway.*)

PHIL. Great. He may never be back! (*defeated, he crosses to the SR table where KATE is working*) So, what’s this game again. . . 32 or something?

KATE. The game is called 26. Do you want to play?

PHIL. Sure, but I’ll warn you, I’m not much of a risk-taker.

KATE. Well, you certainly are in the wrong place, then. Casinos are where fortunes are won and lost on risks. When was the last time you took a real risk?

PHIL. This morning, when I drank outdated milk, but I don’t think that’s what you had in mind.

KATE. (*giggling at him*) You know, you are one weird, smooth talker, fella. Too bad, you’re the wrong type.

PHIL. Why do you say that?

KATE. (*stringing him along*) I could never date a cop. They’re too. . . I don’t know. Predictable?

(*ALICE enters from the SL hallway.*)

KATE. Oh, hey Alice, come over here!

ALICE. Yeah, Kate? What can I do for you?

KATE. Detective, this is Alice the waitress. Alice, aren't you going to offer Mr. High Roller here a drink?

(PHIL is obviously smitten at once.)

ALICE. Oh, of course. I'm sorry. *(to PHIL)* I'm new!

KATE. Obviously. We don't have all day, Alice.

PHIL. A water will be fine, and don't worry, Alice. I've been new at a lot of jobs. I'm sure you'll do fine.

KATE. I thought you said you've been a detective for years.

PHIL. Um. . . I meant. . . Before that, of course.

ALICE. I'll be right back. Thanks for the kind words.

(Exits SL.)

KATE. So, are we ready to play?

PHIL. Sure, why not? So, how do you work this thing, anyway?

KATE. Game is simple. Pick a number between one and six!

PHIL. Okay. How about five?

KATE. You lose! *(laughs)* I'm just kidding. Okay, place how much you want to bet on number five on the table.

(PHIL places a coin on the table.)

KATE. Um, sir? That's a penny.

PHIL. I told you I'm not much of a risk-taker. *(KATE glares at him.)* Oh fine. *(slaps a bill down on the table)*

KATE. Now what I have here are ten dice. You are going to roll them thirteen times. . .

PHIL. You're kidding me!

KATE. No. Completely serious. Thirteen times. If you roll your number five, thirteen times or less, you win

double your bet. If you roll it 26, 27, or 28 times, you win triple! Isn't that easy?

PHIL. Well, I guess so. Here, give me the dice. (*He rolls.*) Okay. I got five fives. . . Not looking too good for getting under 13. It could be worse.

(*BROCK enters from his office SR, and, upon seeing a man in a trench coat at the table, makes his way over as PHIL rolls again.*)

PHIL. Huh. Five fives again. That's a coincidence.

BROCK. Well, sir, that's 'cause ev'ybody knows that you is supposed to pick aces at dat game. If you pick aces, it makes you look like an ace too, eh! I'm Brock Philips, da owner of dis establishment. And you is?

PHIL. Oh, I'm ph. . . I mean, John. . . John Samuels, the detective.

BROCK. Well, John Samuels da detective, we appreciate ya business and hope, after dis meetin', you'll retain^{1*} to. . . Wait a second. (*glaring down*) Dese ain't house dice. Dis broad is scammin' ya.

KATE. Who the hell you calling a broad?

PHIL. She's scamming me?

BROCK. Yeah, and I don't stand for no cheatin' in my club, no way! Pack yo things, lady. You're outta here!

KATE. I was tired of this damn game anyway.

(*KATE throws the bill back at PHIL and marches out, exiting SL. At the same time, ALICE enters carrying a glass of water.*)

ALICE. Here is your water, Mr. . . I mean, Detective. . . I'm sorry. I didn't catch your name.

BROCK. His name is John Samuels and he ain't here for pleasantries! Alice, you just got promoted to da 26

1* return

table! Don't you let me down or you'll be out lookin' for another job! Let me know when Steve Lewis gets here so we can get dis meetin' over with! (*Exits SR to his office, taking the "loaded" dice with him.*)

PHIL. Well. . . Congratulations?

ALICE. Hey, I can't complain. (*walks behind the 26 table and begins to acclimate herself, pulling a fresh batch of dice from under the table*) I've never been promoted anywhere else!

(*JOHN enters from SL.*)

JOHN. Hey, Ph. . . I mean John. It's amazing back there. You gotta see it! Did I miss anything while I was gone?

PHIL. Well, a little bit. Kate got fired, I learned how to play 26, I had an introduction with our host Brock Philips, who doesn't seem like a very pleasant man, and. . . Oh yeah! Alice here got promoted to dealer at the 26 table. (*to ALICE*) Did I miss anything?

ALICE. Oh, I brought you a water, too.

PHIL. Yeah, she brought me a water. Good thinking, Alice.

ALICE. My pleasure!

JOHN. (*slumped*) Ah, man. Kate got fired? She sure was a looker, huh?

(*JOHN sees ALICE making a face, but ALICE stops when she realizes she has been caught.*)

JOHN. Well, no offense to you, of course. You are a very attractive woman, as well.

ALICE. None taken, but you do seem pretty cocky for a regular civilian. I would have pegged you for the detective type instead of John.

(*JOHN and PHIL look at each other, thinking they've been caught.*)

ALICE. What do I know, anyway? Guess I listen to too many radio shows, huh? Do you guys like Dick Tracy?

JOHN. Uh, anyway John, any sign of Steve Lewis yet?

PHIL. Not yet, Phil, but I'm keeping my eye out for anything strange to happen.

JOHN. Good for you. Ya know, this detective stuff might just be up your alley after all.

ALICE. Well, it should be. He's been doing it for years!

JOHN. Of course he has. I'm just such an admirer. (*very sarcastic*) I'm President of the John Samuels Fan Club!

ALICE. (*very serious*) Do you have meetings and everything?

JOHN. Yeah, but our member list is too full. Sorry!

(*ALICE slumps on the table, noticeably upset*)

PHIL. Hey Phil, let's go sit down over here for a second. You know, don't want to crowd the table. (*crosses toward SR chairs*)

JOHN. Yeah, it's really in danger of being overrun! (*follows PHIL and sits*)

PHIL. What are you doing over there? You know, I think I like that girl. I was thinking of asking her out after her shift.

JOHN. Are you insane? She thinks that you are me! You'll blow it if you do that!

PHIL. You're right. I better wait until some other day. Hopefully she will forgive me, but right now I have to concentrate on the task at hand and complete my objective! What time is this stupid meeting anyway?

JOHN. Supposed to be at 2pm.

PHIL. What time is it?

JOHN. 2:30, but you know that, if this place is dead, that other club is very busy. Mr. Lewis probably is just held up by business.

PHIL. Yeah, you're probably right.

(Enter LOUIE RICHARDS from the SL hallway. He is looking for ALICE, but she is busy cleaning the table and he doesn't see her.)

PHIL. Oh my gosh! John, you are not going to believe who just walked in! Louie "The Cannon" Richards!

JOHN. No way. The Cannon is here? He's one of the best baseball pitchers I've ever seen! Did you hear about all his strike-outs against the Yankees the other day? It was unreal!

PHIL. I know. I . . . I gotta go say something.

(PHIL crosses to LOUIE very enthusiastically. JOHN follows closely.)

PHIL. Oh wow. Louie Richards. I am a huge fan.

LOUIE. I know, right?

JOHN. I can't believe I'm standing next to The Cannon. . . Can I . . . touch your arm?

(JOHN reaches for LOUIE's arm, but PHIL slaps JOHN's hand away.)

PHIL. Stop it. You're making us look silly!

LOUIE. Oh, no, it's fine. I get that all the time!

PHIL. You ask to touch people's arms all the time?

LOUIE. No! What? I mean people ask to touch mine all the time. They act like my arm is something almost magical, but really it's from practicing almost constantly.

JOHN. *(very serious)* I'm sorry--I missed that. Did you say your arm was magic?

LOUIE. No! I said people think it is, but it's just from hard work and dedication.

PHIL. Well, let me introduce myself. I'm Ph. . . John Samuels. I'm a detective.

LOUIE. Your name is Fjon? That's an interesting name. Italian?

PHIL. No. Get the "F" out!

JOHN. Well, that was rude!

LOUIE. Yeah, I thought you were a nice guy.

PHIL. No, I mean the letter. My name is John, not Fjon.

LOUIE. OH! I'm sorry. I meet a lot of people with interesting names, so I never think twice about them. Say, you look familiar. Don't you work at the ball park?

PHIL. (*trying to cover*) Um. . . No! In fact, I hate baseball!

LOUIE. But I thought you were a huge fan. . .

PHIL. I over exaggerate things. . . A lot.

LOUIE. Oh, okay. (*to JOHN*) And what's your name?

JOHN. I'm Jo. . . Phil.

LOUIE. Jafil?

PHIL. Oh no. We're not starting that again. His name is Phil. Just Phil. Anyway, what's a guy like you doing here in the middle of the day?

LOUIE. What else would I be doing at a casino? I'm blowing my ridiculously large paycheck!

JOHN. No luck at the tables, huh?

LOUIE. Of course I got luck, but the problem is that it's all bad luck. This place is going to own my whole house by the time I'm done with it.

PHIL. So why don't you cut your losses and call it a day? I mean, you don't want to lose everything, do you?

LOUIE. Of course I don't want to lose, but I just can't say "no" to some things. It's almost like a question of my manhood whether I stay and see it through or leave before I lose it all. I can almost see the dealer look at me and say "Is that all you got, lady?" It drives me insane. So I

thought I would chase away those thoughts with a drink and I ordered one from the waitress. But she never came back with it. Have you seen her? Little shy waitress—I think her name is Alice.

PHIL. Sorry about your luck, big guy, but one of the dealers got the chop and Alice got promoted to that 26 table over there. She won't be bringing that drink any time soon.

LOUIE. Well, I guess that's just more rotten luck for me to have to deal with anyway. Forget it. I guess it's back to the table for me to lose the rest of my fortune. See you fellas later.

(LOUIE moves toward the SL hallway, but stops when he hears PHIL call his name.)

PHIL. Wait Louie! Is there any way you can sign something for us? I mean, it's not like we meet celebrities every day. I'm sure you would understand the need for a memento.

LOUIE. *(instantly brighter, to PHIL)* Of course! You guys are swell. What would you like me to sign? You have paper?

PHIL. *(without even checking)* Well, I don't have anything. Do you?

JOHN. *(patting his pockets thoroughly)* Not on me. How silly is that? Of all the luck!

LOUIE. Well, why don't you guys just catch up with me later at the blackjack table? I really gotta get back to my spot.

PHIL. Well, wait. . . Um. . . Sign. . . My hat! Yeah, that's it. My hat!

JOHN. Hey, that's a great idea. You can sign his. . . Hey! That's my hat!

PHIL. So? How many people have a hat signed by a celebrity? What's so good about signing a piece of paper?

JOHN. Oh hell with it. Go ahead and ruin my perfectly good hat!

LOUIE. *(takes hat from PHIL and signs the inside of it)* There you go, pal! Now don't you wash that! See you around!

(LOUIE exits through the SL hallway.)

PHIL. What a nice guy! Too bad about that gambling problem of his. Sorry about your hat, sucker. *(puts his hands in the pockets of his trench coat)* What's this? *(pulls a mini steno pad from his pocket)* Well, what do you know? I had paper all along!

JOHN. Oh, that's just great! We could have had normal signatures by The Cannon all along and now I'm just going to look like I stole his hat from now on!

PHIL. Well, here. *(tears a page from the notebook and hands it to JOHN)* Take this paper and see if you can catch up with him at the blackjack table. I'm going to see if I can work some more charm on Alice!

JOHN. Okay, but I'm telling you, you better be careful not to blow your cover! Your money and my job would be on the line! *(looks toward the SL hallway and starts after LOUIE)*. Hey, Louie, wait for me! I like blackjack, too!

(PHIL moves over to the 26 table, but ALICE is under the table cleaning. She is completely out of sight.)

PHIL. Where did she go? Alice!

(We hear a loud thump from under the table as ALICE bumps her head.)

ALICE. Ow! Ooooooh! That smarts. *(stands, holding her head)* Oh, hi! Were you back to play some more 37?

PHIL. Don't you mean 26?

ALICE. Oh, right. Sorry. I'm not even really sure how to play this game, myself. I figured Brock would come out and teach me at some point.

PHIL. I just learned tonight, but I'm pretty shaky on the rules. I guess you have to roll all ten dice thirteen times.

ALICE. Thirteen? That would take forever. You know, I don't think this game is going to catch on.

PHIL. So how did you get dragged into this line of work anyway? You seem like a nice girl. Too nice for a casino, anyway.

ALICE. I was desperate. I just can never seem to keep a job, but I always squeeze by on my rent with just enough from job to job.

PHIL. How many jobs have you had?

ALICE. Four or five.

PHIL. That isn't that bad. I mean, I've had my share of jobs.

ALICE. That was just this month! Candy striper, maid, mail service. . . You name it, I have done it!

PHIL. What about plane designer?

ALICE. What? No.

PHIL. Too bad. You could have been the next Howard Hughes!

ALICE. Huh? You have something for Howard Hughes or something?

PHIL. Just trying to lighten the situation. Speaking of, I used to work for the Electric Company!

ALICE. Well, what happened to that job? Sounds pretty cushy.

PHIL. I was fired for my music or something. The reason was very vague.

ALICE. What did they say?

PHIL. Well, they said I was doing some bad conducting, but. . . Oooh. . . I just got that! Never mind.

ALICE. Okay. Have you always been interested in criminology?

PHIL. (*laughing out loud*) Oh, come on! (*begins walking downstage with a swagger*) What a woman does with her makeup is her own business!

ALICE. Detective. . . I said criminology, not cosmetology! How long have you been interested in solving cases?

PHIL. (*a little nervous*) Well, to be honest, it feels like I just started today!

ALICE. But it must be dangerous to always put yourself in harm's way. To jump at the chance to stop crime. (*very excited*) To serve justice. Cold, hard justice! And get to say things like "Book him," or "You're going to the slammer." Is the good cop/bad cop routine ever confusing?

PHIL. (*interrupting her*) Whoa! Hold it, now! (*walks back to the 26 table*) Wow. I had no idea that you were so interested in the pursuit of justice and the protecting of the innocent and all the great one-liners like "Murder is just not in the cards."

ALICE. Yeah, I would love to hear your stories. I mean, maybe later when I get off work. . .

PHIL. Well, yeah, I'd love. . . (*suddenly remembers that she thinks he is JOHN SAMUELS, and that if he blew cover, it would be over*) What I mean is, maybe tonight isn't such a good night for this after all. You're a great gal, but I've got to remember that I'm here on business and then I'll be on my way.

ALICE. I. . . I understand. Maybe I'll see you again sometime, huh?

PHIL. Oh, you can definitely count on that.

(*JOHN enters holding a couple of signed pieces of paper and heads over to PHIL.*)

JOHN. Hey there, detective. Here is one for your books! Scrapbook, that is. I just always wanted to say that. (*hands one of the papers to PHIL*)

PHIL. What happened to Louie?

JOHN. Boy, is he desperate. I just saw him lay the rest of his whole paycheck down on one blackjack hand. Honestly, I don't think it's going to go over well.

PHIL. Well how come?

JOHN. He just hit on 23. He's not really good at this gambling thing. Not too good with the math, but who knows? Maybe he'll beat the odds.

LOUIE. *(from offstage left)* DAMN!

JOHN. Or maybe he won't!

(LOUIE enters, on-edge.)

LOUIE. Well, that was it. Ha ha. *(nervous)* The whole thing! Not coming back now. *(almost in tears)* Just all went right out the window! *(back to laughing)* I . . . I . . .

(LOUIE grabs hold of PHIL's coat nervously, trying to convince himself as he continues.)

LOUIE. I can turn it around. Maybe. . . Maybe, if you just lent me a few bucks. I mean, I gave you a signature. The least you can do is a few bucks, huh? *(very crazy now)* Ya know, for your old pal Louie!

PHIL. Louie, I . . . I don't know. I mean I told you it was about time to cut your losses. . .

JOHN. Hey, buddy. *(puts his arm around LOUIE)* Let's just call it a day and we'll have a few drinks or something.

LOUIE. *(laughing hysterically)* CREDIT!

(LOUIE breaks free from JOHN's arm, but continues to cling to PHIL's coat.)

LOUIE. I can get credit! Where is that son of a gun, Brock, anyway? I'm famous. He'll know I'm good for some credit! *(looks around)* BROCK!

ALICE. Hey, looney! He's in his office through that hallway. (*pointing stage right*) There is a waiting room out front.

LOUIE. (*finally letting go of PHIL's coat*) Great! He'll owe me something with all the money I pump into this place. (*laughs nervously and moves toward the SR hallway*) I feel lucky!

JOHN. Hey, Louie!

(*LOUIE stops just before entering the hallway. He turns to face JOHN.*)

JOHN. Just calm down a little before you go in there. I'm sure that if he knows you are calm and about how you are such a celebrity that he'll give you anything you want, huh?

LOUIE. YEAH!

(*LOUIE turns and storms down the SR hallway.*)

LOUIE. CREDIT!

JOHN. Hey, can't blame a guy for trying, huh?

PHIL. What was up with him? He was so calm and casual a second ago. Now he looks ready for the looney bin for sure. I'd hate to see what happens if Brock doesn't give him the credit he is hoping for.

ALICE. I guess you might be here for good reason, huh? What a nut!

(*At this moment, KATE storms back in from SL carrying a small box of things and sees ALICE at the 26 table.*)

KATE. Oh my! That was an awful fast promotion for you. You gonna jump in my grave that fast, too?

ALICE. Hey, it's nothing personal. I don't even know what I'm doing!

KATE. (*extremely angry*) Well, I just cleaned out my locker, if you feel the need to jump in my place there, too. But right now, I'm going to go give Brock a piece of my mind!

PHIL. You may have to wait for that. He'll be talking to Louie Richards right now about some credit.

KATE. Fine. I'll just wait in the ...waiting room!

(*KATE exits to the SR hallway, still carrying her box. JOHN follows her with interest but does not exit.*)

ALICE. That IS what waiting rooms are for. . .

JOHN. (*to KATE*) Good luck! (*to PHIL*) Man! What a firecracker!

PHIL. Yeah, well, you can have her, buddy!

JOHN. Well I wasn't planning on sharing!

PHIL. I guess that makes sense, but you know what I mean!

(*STEVE LEWIS enters from the casino's back door, upstage left.*)

STEVE. Hey you! (*motions toward the group*) Why don't you make yourself useful and tell me where I can find da owner of dis establishment?

PHIL. Wha. . . Huh? (*does a double-take*) You are the owner! Didn't we just see you go that way? (*points toward Brock's office, SR*)

STEVE. What da hell are you talkin' about? Listen here. I'm Steve Lewis and. . .

PHIL. Wait, wait. You're Steve? (*rubs his eyes*) Steve Lewis? Are you and Brock Philips related?

STEVE. Not dat I know of. I don't know if I've seen him before in my entire life!

PHIL. Really, there is such a . . . strong resemblance! Are you sure you are Steve Lewis?

STEVE. Yeah, dat's me. I'm supposed to have a merger meetin' with ole Brocky and I'm runnin' a bit late.

PHIL. I completely understand. My name is Ph. . . John. And. . .

STEVE. Your name is Fjon?

PHIL. NO!

(STEVE jumps back, startled.)

PHIL. That is the second time that's happened. I have to speak more clearly or something.

STEVE. I don't care WHO you are. I really must speak with Brock himself.

PHIL. Yes, I know. I'm just trying to tell you.

STEVE. Listen, time is money. *(pointing menacingly at PHIL)* Will you point me toward Brock now, or do I have to find someone else with a brick for a brain to help me?

PHIL. He's that way *(points toward the SR hallway)*, but you may have a wait. He is speaking with a couple people right now.

STEVE. None of DEM is more important dan me right now. Now, if you'll excuse me. . .

ALICE. But wait! He's supposed to go with you. *(motioning to PHIL)*

STEVE. I don't care. I can handle a little meetin' myself.

(STEVE exits SR.)

JOHN. Not exactly a pleasant man, huh?

ALICE. I've seen pleasanter.

JOHN. Is that even a word, toots?

ALICE. *(a little upset)* And you think "toots" is?

PHIL. Now both of you cut it out. It's time for business.

(PHIL starts toward BROCK's office, but JOHN rushes in front of PHIL and cuts him off.)

JOHN. Wait a second, buddy. Maybe you should wait for a minute to let Mr. Lewis calm down some, huh? Don't want to start a riot.

(As soon as this line is finished, we hear LOUIE and STEVE yelling offstage.)

STEVE. *(offstage)* YOU'RE IN HERE TRYING TO GET CREDIT WHEN YOU OWE MY CLUB THOUSANDS?

LOUIE. *(offstage)* YOUR CLUB IS FULL OF A BUNCH OF CHEATS AND YOU KNOW IT!

JOHN. Spoke too soon, huh?

(LOUIE backs onto the stage. STEVE is backing him away from BROCK's office, swinging his cane.)

STEVE. OH, SO EASY OF YOU TO BLAME IT ON CHEATERS WHEN DA ONLY REASON IS DAT YOU'RE A HORRIBLE GAMBLER!

LOUIE. I AM NOT! *(very matter-of-fact)* I play just fine when I'm at home!

JOHN. It's true! I heard about his last home game!

(LOUIE is backed all the way to the empty 26 table upstage left. He stops backing away from STEVE.)

LOUIE. I meant gambling!

JOHN. Ph. . . John! It's time for you to intervene!

PHIL. Inter-what? Oh! Um. . .

(PHIL gets between LOUIE and STEVE to break up the fight.)

PHIL. Okay, okay. Break it up! Come on. Nothing to see here. Move along.

(KATE comes back into the room, but no one notices.)

PHIL. Don't make me have to read your, uh. . . 16th. . . uh, amendment rights and procure a sentence for all of you.

(Everyone looks at PHIL, confused. JOHN steps up to PHIL and walks him downstage left.)

JOHN. Hey, buddy. The 16th amendment is about federal taxing.

PHIL. Right.

STEVE. Hell with it. I don't have time for dis. I'm going to my meetin' and if you guys care anythin' about this casino, you will boot dat man (*pointing to LOUIE*) out of here so fast dat it makes his head spin!

(STEVE marches offstage toward BROCK's office again. KATE is leaning against the wall, just inside the room.)

KATE. What got him so riled up?

JOHN. Apparently, the all-American hero over here owes his club thousands and hasn't paid up and is trying to do the same here.

LOUIE. (*pleading*) Really, guys, it's not as bad as all that. Really. I'm just down on my luck!

PHIL. Yeah, I totally understand "down on your luck," but. . .

LOUIE. How could you understand? You're a successful detective who doesn't have a gambling problem. I bet you could buy this place if you saved up.

PHIL. Well, I don't know about all that, but. . .

(STEVE screams from offstage. He enters with blood on his hands.)

PHIL. Oh my gosh! Steven, are you okay?

STEVE. Yes. Yes, I'm fine, but Brock is dead!

ALL. What?!

(Curtain closes.)

Act II Scene 1

(Curtain opens with everyone in the same positions as the end of Act I. STEVE is just inside the SR hallway, still with blood on his hands. KATE is slightly farther into the room than STEVE, trying not to be noticed. ALICE is at the SR 26 table. JOHN and PHIL are center stage. LOUIE is standing in front of the empty SL 26 table.)

JOHN. What do you mean dead?

STEVE. Well dis ain't exactly ketchup on my hands, and I didn't have a shavin' problem, either.

ALICE. Oh no! *(buries her face in her hands)*

PHIL. Uh, um. . . There must be some mistake. I mean, he can't really be dead. Can he?

STEVE. I tink he can and is. He is in da office pushing up daisies! Go check for yourself!

PHIL. What? Me? *(very nervous, almost to the point of getting sick)* NO! I can't. I've never seen a dead body before.

(EVERYONE is confused. JOHN quickly runs to PHIL.)

JOHN. Of course you have JOHN.

(JOHN walks PHIL downstage right. As they go, ALICE, KATE, and LOUIE begin talking amongst themselves, but they avoid STEVE because his hands are still covered in blood.)

JOHN. You've been a detective for years. You've had to have seen a ton of murder cases, right? *(sees that they are finally out of earshot)* Listen, buddy, these people are counting on you to be the detective here, okay? Now, if we drop the charade now, who knows what will happen? *(smooth-talking)* I'll tell you what'll happen. I'll lose all my customers and never be a trusted face in the community for the rest of my life. You don't want that to happen do ya?

PHIL. Well, I guess not, but I have no idea what I'm doing!

JOHN. Sure you do. You've listened to enough detective stories to have this wrapped up in no time. Hell, you'll probably be a better detective than me. Everything I know about crime solving I could have learned from a comic book. Trust me. Those things are a lot more accurate than they look. *(realizing he has gone too far with the sweet talk)* I mean, you'll do fine.

PHIL. I guess, but this just got a lot less fun. Okay, so when I go into the room, you are coming too, right?

JOHN. NO!

(EVERYONE at the 26 table looks quickly to JOHN, confused.)

JOHN. *(trying to cover)* Uh. . . No, this watch is just a knock-off. *(laughs nervously)* Doesn't even work most of the time. Only right twice a day.

PHIL. Will you be quiet? You'll blow it for us! And to think, I thought you were the careful one of the two of us.

JOHN. No, I can't go into the room with you. Are you crazy? As far as those people *(pointing to the crowd*

around the 26 table) are concerned, I would be contaminating your crime scene.

PHIL. So what am I supposed to do? Shouldn't I call for backup?

JOHN. No backup. This will be my sixth bust of the week, that I've gotten myself, if you pull this off. That's no easy task. Newspapers eat that stuff up. All you have to do is go in there and see how he was killed and then look for anything suspicious. Also, check the room for any hidden doors to get in. We need to know who went into that room last, but first, you need to take control of the situation. I mean, what would Sherlock Holmes do?

PHIL. (*thinking to himself*) Sherlock Holmes? Ah ha! (*turns to address the others, suddenly more heroic*) I'm going in there!

(*PHIL starts toward the SR hallway, but stops when JOHN speaks.*)

JOHN. But first? (Phil looks at him strangely and starts toward the door "butt first")

PHIL. Um... ok

JOHN. Not butt first... like, inaugurally.

PHIL. Oh yeah. (*walks backward to where his charge began*) But FIRST, um. . . Oh, we must lock down the building! Alice, (*pointing at ALICE*) I will need you to stay and help, since you work here and may know more about the building than the suspects will tell us!

EVERYONE. Suspects?!

JOHN. Um, John, are you sure. . .

PHIL. Yes, suspects. As I recall, the only people that went toward the office where the killing happened were Louie, Steve, and Kate. So I can deduce that it must be one of them!

(PHIL realizes he has actually made a relatively smart statement and looks to JOHN for approval. JOHN nods.)

PHIL. Right!

ALICE. This is way better than radio!

PHIL. Thank you! Anyway, Alice, you may go and tell the rest of the employees and guests to go and that the casino is closed and lock all the doors. Nobody leaves!

KATE. Why would she tell them to go if you are saying that “nobody leaves”?

PHIL. Correction. The employees and guests may go because the casino is closed, then lock the doors and nobody in present company leaves!

LOUIE. What guests? I’ve been alone in here all day.

PHIL. Fine, correction of the correction. The employees may go because the casino is closed and nobody in present company may leave!

ALICE. You forgot to mention the doors.

JOHN. Oh for goodness sakes! We all know what he means. Just go do it and let him get to his work.

(ALICE exits quickly through the SL hallway.)

PHIL. Right! My work. . . It’s. . . My work. . .
(moves nervously toward BROCK’s office) Just gonna go and see how the dead . . . person is doing. It’s totally professional and. . .

(JOHN walks up behind PHIL and pushes him offstage. From offstage, we hear PHIL scream a very girly scream.)

PHIL. Holy cow!

JOHN. (to justify PHIL’s behavior) So. . . He always does this. It’s his style. Very mysterious. (realizes he is

jabbering on) Um. . . I'm going to go get some chairs for everyone. Be right back.

(JOHN exits stage left.)

STEVE. Why are we even investigating? It's obvious!

LOUIE. Yeah, you killed that man!

STEVE. What? I didn't kill anyone. It was you. . . You. . . You. . .

KATE. *(to STEVE)* MURDERER!

STEVE. *(thinking KATE has given him a word to use)* Murderer! Dat's it! Wait. . . *(realizing what she meant)* He's da murderer here, not me.

KATE. Save it! You have the most motive here and you were the last one in the man's office. You are so guilty it hurts.

STEVE. ME? What about you, huh? What did you have to see da main man for?

KATE. Why would I kill him? All he did was fire me. There's more jobs out there.

STEVE. So you just gave him your resignation and den gave him his permanent vacation?

LOUIE. Nobody is going to hire you if you leave here and you know it. Brock has connections all over this city. He would have made your life hell so you off'ed him quick.

KATE. And what about you, golden boy? Maybe you killed him 'cause he wouldn't give you credit to feed your little sick addiction. Couldn't you be a little more like a real man and be addicted to women?

LOUIE. Well, if you're not convicted of murder later. . .

KATE. Killers aren't my type. Neither are guys who play with balls for a living.

STEVE. Do casino owners do anythin' for you?

(KATE shoots STEVE a "don't bother" look.)

STEVE. Just askin'!

(PHIL enters.)

PHIL. My, that is not something that I'll want to see again.

(ALICE enters from SL, very excited.)

ALICE. I've got it! *(very bright)* Maybe he killed himself!

LOUIE. You know, that's a good point. He wasn't exactly the happiest guy on the planet!

STEVE. You know, I was thinkin' dat dere^{2*} for a second, but I'm sure dat he wouldn't have stabbed himself in da back. I don't think he coulda reached it.

PHIL. *(surprised)* he was stabbed?

(PHIL runs back offstage into BROCK's office.)

PHIL. *(offstage)* OH! That's how he died.

(EVERYONE looks down the hallway like PHIL is an idiot. JOHN enters from SL carrying two chairs.)

JOHN. Here, everyone. Make yourselves comfortable.

(JOHN hands one of the chairs to KATE and motions for STEVE and LOUIE to sit in the chairs along the SR wall. KATE and JOHN place their chairs in front of the empty 26 table at stage left. ALICE doesn't move from behind her table.)