

ARLENE'S BEAUTY WORLD

by Michael Soetaert



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SYNOPSIS: Will Detective Cannon and Officer O'Malley solve the case of the Fruitcake Bomber before he...or she...strikes again? Could it be one of the kindly old ladies who gets coiffed at Arlene's Beauty World? Or could it be Maurice's attempt at stealing the formula for Basic Blue? Could it be Chester who's engaged to the owner, Janis? Or could it be Janis trying to blow up Chester? Whoever it is, there's no one who can stop the fun at Arlene's Beauty World.

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(7 females, 4 males, 1 either: flexible, doubling possible)*

- GERTY POINDEXTER (f) Chester's Grandmother. He moved her to the old folks' home because it is next door to Arlene's Beauty World, and he wanted her to be near Janis. She is doing her best to see the good in everything. She dresses like it's always a Sunday morning back in the spring of 1968. *(84 lines)*
- ABIGAIL (f) She is a ditz. She is absent from reality, and very cheerful. She dresses very nicely, wearing an expensive dress with pearls. *(71 lines)*
- BEULAH TARKINGTON (f) She is bitter. She played well all her life only to have those who cheated get all the good stuff – especially her husband. She has, for the most part, given up trying to look good or be nice. She is always in her night gown and robe. *(33 lines)*

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- HELGA VON SHTOMPKEN (m).....A former instructor from East Germany. Helga should be played by a guy, the larger the better. Classic German dress with the crossing straps. You should be able to see “her” hairy legs. Helga’s hair should be two, tight buns on each side of the head made from long, coiled braids; one needs to be removable. Speaks with a heavy German accent. She has a severe temper on a pretty short fuse. *(18 lines)*
- YOUNG HELGA (f).....The Younger Version: Helga, from time to time, will undergo an amazing transformation, looking quite younger. This person needs to look nothing like the Old Helga: small, petite, and pretty. *(1 line)*
- NEVY (f)Not a happy person. Uses a walker that she doesn’t need, but enjoys making noise with it. Truly, the only thing she wants from life is to get her hair done. *(17 lines)*
- DETECTIVE DIRK CANNON (m)30s. Clean cut. Dresses like a big city cop from the ‘60s. Speaks with clear diction, quick, choppy and to the point. Except when speaking to the audience, then he takes on a more casual street slang. He’s not married. He will fall in love with O’Malley. *(226 lines)*

- DETECTIVE O'MALLEY (f)..... 30s. Clean cut. Dresses like a big city cop from the '60s. Speaks with clear diction, quick, choppy and to the point. Except when speaking to the audience, then she takes on a more casual street slang. (212 lines)
- JANIS (f)..... 25. Owner of *Arlene's Beauty World*, a beauty parlor. Currently only kept in business by the ladies from the old folks' home next door. She also sells fruitcake from her salon. She has been engaged to Chester for 17 years, only because she can't get the ring off. In the meantime, she is perpetually annoyed, to the point of aggravated acceptance. Dresses for work: a smock over slacks and a shirt. (117 lines)
- CHESTER (m)..... 25. He's oblivious. He refuses to believe Janis when she tells him to die, or worse. Life is wonderful because he gets to be with the girl he loves. Sport coat type, but no tie. (92 lines)
- MAURICE (m) He needs to be played about as flamboyantly as possible. He's the hair competition. His business isn't very good, either. He desperately wants to get his hands on the Basic Blue formula. (36 lines)
- OFF STAGE VOICE (m/f)..... Can be doubled with Young Helga. (12 lines)

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SETTING

Arlene's Beauty World is a throw back to a 'sixties beauty salon. Center stage is an old style chair with the attached bonnet. To the right of the hair dryer is the waiting area: a couch—which needs to be bolted to the floor and another chair with a table set in front. There are several old magazines on the table. A dead plant or two would be appropriate. To the left of the hair dryer is a workstation—a chair in front of a table and a mirror with all the appropriate paraphernalia...you know, brushes, scissors, hair dryer, circular saw...that sort of thing. There is also a wind-up timer that rings. There is a door that leads to the backroom and Janis' office more or less UL behind the dryer and the workspace. There is a glass-paneled front door DR that has one of those old time bells on it that rings when it's opened. Next to the front door is an old card table – the more beat up the better – with several fruitcakes wrapped in foil stacked on it. There is a sign taped to the table that says, "Fruitcakes for Sale. Make Offer."

*This is dedicated to my mother, Hazel.
Your fruitcake was the best.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *When everybody's through looking for a program, bring the lights down. While dark, after a beat...*

OFF STAGE VOICE: Bingo!

There is a loud explosion off stage. After another beat, open the curtains. ABIGAIL, and BEULAH are sitting in the chairs DR. ABIGAIL has a magazine that SHE is making no attempt whatsoever to read, and BEULAH has a fly swatter that, from time to time to punctuate what SHE says, SHE swats anything that may or may not be there. GERTY is sitting under the hairdryer while HELGA is impatiently standing next to GERTY, picking up and putting down the timer.

HELGA: *(Finally picks up the timer and runs it ahead until it goes off.)* Acht! Time's up. You're through!

GERTY gets up and HELGA quickly parks herself under the bonnet. GERTY comes over and joins the others. SHE will have knitting in a bag that SHE will work on from time to time, but it is obviously a tangled mess.

BEULAH: *(Noticing the mess that GERTY is working on.)* Good heavens, what are you making there, Gerty?

GERTY: Well, Beulah, it's a maternity top.

ABIGAIL: Oh! How exciting! Who's it for?

GERTY: Me. I've been working on it for a while.

They're quiet for a little more.

BEULAH: Poor Esther. They say she was a terrorist.

ABIGAIL: Oh, no, Beulah. Esther was no terrorist. She never traveled anywhere in her entire life.

GERTY: No, Abigail, a *terrorist*. Not a tourist.

ABIGAIL: Oh. Is there a difference?

GERTY: Usually. They say she was a suicide bomber.

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BEULAH: You know Gerty, that just doesn't make sense. If she were going to commit suicide, why did she spend 12 years in an old folks home before doing it?

ABIGAIL: It could've been Wednesdays. They always serve chicken patties on Wednesdays. It's the chicken patties that keep me coming back.

GERTY: Oh, I don't think it's so much the chicken patties as you're just a bit touched.

ABIGAIL: Touched? (*Giggling.*) Oh, no. But don't get me wrong. The boys wanted to, but I wouldn't let them.

BEULAH: No, dear. She doesn't mean touched that way. She means you're loopy.

ABIGAIL: Well, there's that too.

GERTY: The police say that she hid a bomb in a fruitcake, and then for no reason whatsoever she blew herself up, right in the middle of a perfectly good bingo game.

BEULAH: It was such a waste.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I don't think anybody was planning on eating the fruitcake, anyway.

NEVY, with her walker thumping the whole way, crosses DR to L. When she gets about C stage, she stops.

NEVY: Is it my turn to get my hair done?

GERTY: No, Nevy. After Helga gets done with the dryer, it's Beulah's turn.

NEVY: Oh! Poodle spit! (*Continues off stage L.*)

ABIGAIL: That nice young man who does the weather on channel 4 says there's a slight chance for rain today.

HELGA: (*Pushing the bonnet back.*) *Nein! Nein, Abigail. Ict nict rain today. Vhenever der rain fallen, I feel it unt meinen buns.*

BEULAH: You feel it in your hair, Helga?

HELGA: *Nein! Nict mein hairen. Meinen o-ther buns.*

GERTY: Helga! This is a family play. Besides, ladies don't say those kinds of things.

HELGA: *Dumkoff! Nict meinen o-ther buns. Meinen o-ther buns. Mein honey buns. (She holds up a honey bun.) See? Der humidity makes der honey drippen, unt noct einen drop!*

BEULAH: Well, that's just silly. If you ask me, your buns are on too tight.

HELGA: *Mein hairen ist just finen!*

BEULAH: Not those buns, dear.

GERTY: Beulah! Be nice.

BEULAH: (*Ignoring GERTY.*) Besides, that handsome weatherman on Channel 9 says that it's definitely going to rain today. And he should know. He has a poodle.

ABIGAIL: A poodle? Why, Beulah, that's just silly.

BEULAH: (*Getting tiffed.*) Well, if anybody should know about silly, it would be you.

GERTY: Now, girls, the weather is nothing to fight about. Besides, that pretty weathergirl on channel 5 says it's going to be sunny, and she's always right.

BEULAH: Like she was right last Sunday when you didn't take your umbrella to Meeting?

GERTY: Well, she's more right than your poodle-man.

BEULAH: Is not.

GERTY: Is too.

They stand and get in each other's face.

BEULAH: Not!

GERTY: Too!

HELGA: (*She has crossed to the other three.*) Now schtop it! You're both be-ink ridiculous!

BEULAH: (*Turning on HELGA.*) More ridiculous than your honey buns?

ABIGAIL: (*Standing.*) I think you're all being silly.

All heck breaks loose, starting with general yelling—"Shush up!" "Blow it out your buns!" "Nein!"—you get the idea, and quickly escalates into standing and shoving, and then a "sword" fight with canes between BEULAH and ABIGAIL. But just when they start to spar, JANIS enters from the office and breaks it up.

JANIS: (*while crossing toward the LADIES and getting in-between them, more or less*) What in the world! Stop it! Sit down!

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EVERYBODY sits.

BEULAH: *(While taking her seat; pointing at ABIGAIL.)* I'm sorry Janis, but, she started it!

ABIGAIL: *(Somewhat menacingly, but not seriously wanting to fight anybody...you know...like high schoolers.)* And I can finish it, too!

JANIS: If you don't stop this right now, I'll make you go back to the old folks' home.

They ALL immediately become contrite, putting their heads down.

ALL: *(More or less.)* Yes, ma'am. Sorry.

JANIS: *(Calming a bit herself.)* Good grief. What was this all about?

GERTY: We were bored.

They ALL nod in agreement.

ABIGAIL: *(Perking up.)* It was more fun than TV.

BEULAH: *(Still nasty.)* Unless you're predicting the weather with your buns...

HELGA: Ach! *Ich werde Ihren Hund Kick!*

JANIS: Stop it! I'm serious. I'll make you all leave!

They all calm down; they're done. During the following lines, HELGA will return to the dryer.

GERTY: But if we all leave, then you won't have any customers.

JANIS: I don't have any customers anyway.

GERTY: You will when you figure out your formula.

JANIS: Yeah, good luck with that.

ABIGAIL: *(Standing up.)* That reminds me, that strange man, Maurice, dropped by earlier and left you a message.

JANIS: *(Going over and unlocking the door and turning the sign to "Open".)* How could he drop it by earlier? We weren't even open yet.

ABIGAIL: He slipped it under the door. *(Takes out a small scrap of paper.)*

JANIS: (*Disbelief.*) Maurice wrote it on a piece of paper and slipped it under the door? Maurice wrote *anything*?

ABIGAIL: No. I wrote it on the paper after he slipped it under the door. (*Begins reading; During the course of the message, she will have to take out scraps of paper from various places on her body -- be creative.*) He says he'll...be back later...with his lawyer...but you can save...tissue, oranges, and bug bombs...

JANIS: I can save *tissue, oranges, and bug bombs*?

ABIGAIL: Oh, I'm sorry. That was my shopping list. (*Puts it back wherever it came from and gets another.*) You can save a lot of time...if you just turn over...the formula...and have a check ready...for 120 million...dollars...and don't forget to feed the dog.

JANIS: That's outrageous!

ABIGAIL: I know. I don't have a dog.

JANIS: (*Ignoring ABIGAIL.*) I will *never* give him the formula for Basic Blue, and I will *never* give him 120 million dollars!

ABIGAIL: I know. That's because you don't have 120 million dollars. Maybe you could make payments. You know, eleven dollars a week.

JANIS: Eleven dollars?

ABIGAIL: Is that too much?

CHESTER enters, carrying a grocery sack.

ABIGAIL: Oh, look, if it isn't Chester.

JANIS: (*Obviously annoyed at just the sight of CHESTER.*) Don't encourage him. Maybe if we ignore him he'll go away.

CHESTER: (*Cheery—as always; and oblivious—as always*) Good morning my Little Automated Room Deodorizer.

During the following lines, GERTY and ABIGAIL will take out yellow legal pads and start writing notes between attentively watching JANIS and CHESTER.

JANIS: What? What did you call me?

CHESTER: My Little Automated Room Deodorizer.

JANIS: That's...that's...got to be the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

ABIGAIL: (*Aside.*) She must not get out very often.

CHESTER: Oh, no. Whenever I see you, it's like everything suddenly smells fresh...automatically.

JANIS: Do you make these stupid names up on the spot, or do you think about them in advance?

CHESTER: (*Sets the sack on the table; takes out a small notebook.*) I've got a whole book. They're even indexed for the occasion. Would you like to hear some?

JANIS: The only thing I'd like to hear from you, *ever*, is goodbye.

CHESTER: (*To the OTHERS.*) She's such a kidder.

JANIS: (*To GERTY and ABIGAIL after noticing what they're doing. They have their yellow note pads.*) What are you doing?

GERTY: We're keeping a flow chart.

JANIS: What?

GERTY: A flow chart. It's what debate judges use.

JANIS: Why?

ABIGAIL: We thought it might be more fun for us. And when you're done, we can show you who won.

JANIS: You're all insane!

ABIGAIL: Oh, I'm not insane. At least, I don't think so. But then, I think that's part of being insane. Actually, I think I might be senile.

BEULAH: Let's not split hairs, dear.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I would never dream of doing that. I like rabbits.

CHESTER: Look, I brought coffee!

CHESTER takes a coffee maker, filters, coffee cups, and coffee out of a sack.

JANIS: It's not made?

CHESTER: I thought it would be fresher this way. And nothing's too fresh for you my Little Lightly Scented Dryer Sheet.

JANIS: My name is Janis!

CHESTER: (*Suddenly flummoxed.*) Oh, golly. I forgot the water.

ABIGAIL: That's OK, we...

JANIS quickly jabs ABIGAIL with her elbow.

JANIS: Gee, looks like you'll have to go get some. Hey, if you hurry, you can catch the 9:05 bus.

CHESTER: I don't need to catch the bus. I drove myself.

JANIS: I wasn't thinking about riding it. I was thinking about your falling in front of it.

CHESTER: She's such a kidder! *(Turning to leave.)* Wait for me, my Little Dehydrated Marshmallow.

He quickly leaves. JANIS suddenly bolts toward the door, throws it open, and yells out.

JANIS: And my name is Janis! *(Comes back in and crosses to the office.)* I'll be in my office. With a little luck, I can get a little work done before that idiot comes back. *(Exits.)*

ABIGAIL: Well, that was fun.

They ALL sit in their places.

BEULAH: *(Sarcastically.)* I suppose that's just about a day's worth for you.

NEVY, thumping with her walker, crosses from L to R. About mid-stage SHE stops and asks.

NEVY: Is it my turn yet?

GERTY: *(Politely.)* No, dear. I believe Abigail is next.

ABIGAIL nods in agreement.

NEVY: Oh, poodle spit!

And with that, she goes thumping off. Enter DETECTIVE DIRK CANNON DR. He is dressed in a severe dark suit. While he's talking to the audience, the girls will resume their actions: GERTY knitting, BEULAH swatting, ABIGAIL fanning herself with the magazine, and HELGA still under the bonnet. DIRK will step out on the apron into a tight spot while the rest of the stage dims, eventually fading completely.

DIRK: 11:38 was when we got the call. That's 11:38 in the morning. It's unusual to get a call at 11:38. 11:39, sure. But 11:38—it makes you sit up and take notice. Kind of like finding a frog in your cornflakes. I followed the fruitcake. That's what brought me to Arlene's Beauty World. I was assigned the case of the Fruitcake Bomber. My name is Cannon. Detective Cannon. Detective Dirk Cannon, Geriatrics Division. Geriatrics is a rough beat. Even on a good day. Heated game of bridge, words are cheap, and the next thing you know, two old ladies all jacked up on Geritol beating the living daylight out of each other with their walkers. And these old birds are tight lipped, even with their teeth out. They call it The Code. Yeah, you can try, but they're not talking. Sure, they'll say stuff, but it doesn't make any sense. Had one old lady try to blame everything on Hoover. The President, not the vacuum. Of course, that could be the dementia talking. But that's what makes these geezers so tough. You never can tell.

O'MALLEY steps out on apron. The spot shifts to her. She is dressed in a severe, dark, ankle length dress.

O'MALLEY: My name is O'Malley. Officer O'Malley. I've been assigned to work with Detective Cannon. Sure. I've heard the stories. Who hasn't? Except you. Yeah. He was a tough one. But this was my break. My chance at making detective.

DIRK loudly whistles. The spot swings back to DIRK.

DIRK: I usually work alone. And I never work with a dame. Especially girl dames. Who can concentrate with a dame around? Maybe a hairdresser, but not me. Out here on the beat, the difference between life and death is being able to concentrate. That, and not getting shot...or stabbed...or blown up...or run over by a delivery van...or just generally not dying.

O'MALLEY whistles and spot shifts back to her, but before she can talk, DIRK whistles, and the spot shifts back to him. O'MALLEY whistles again and the spot moves between them, wavers a minute, and then widens to include them both.

DIRK: *(To O'MALLEY.)* Seems we're forced to work together.

O'MALLEY: Why is that?

DIRK: Only one spotlight.

O'MALLEY: All I ask is to be treated fairly, like a cop.

DIRK: I can't help but notice you're a dame.

O'MALLEY: I can't help but notice you're not. Just remember, I'm a cop first. You keep that straight, and we'll get along just fine.

DIRK: Fine is how I like things. Most people choose not to work with me.

O'MALLEY: I'm not most people.

DIRK: I suppose you've heard stories about my last partner.

O'MALLEY: Stories are all I've heard. They say that you lost him.

DIRK: I'm not proud of it. But there you have it. *(Stepping toward the audience, which he will do throughout the play.)* I never wanted a partner. He knew what he was in for. I'm through with beating myself up. The way it is, is just the way it is. Life's that way. That's the way it goes. *Que sera, sera.* After all, enough is enough. *(Stepping back; to O'MALLEY.)* Did I leave out any clichés?

O'MALLEY: No. That's pretty much all there is. How did it happen?

DIRK: We were at the mall when I lost him. I told him not to go in. But he said he had to. How do you talk sense to someone who has to?

O'MALLEY: You don't.

DIRK: Exactly. I told him to stay in the car, but he wouldn't listen. He went inside anyway. So I left him. Yeah, I ditched him at the mall. I haven't seen him since.

O'MALLEY: You try ditching me, I'll get a cab. And then we'll see who's waiting on who back at the station.

DIRK: You must be counting on getting a quick cab.

O'MALLEY: I don't count on anything but by badge and my gun.

DIRK: I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to ask you not to use that cliché until you make detective.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) She might've been a dame, but I could tell she had moxie. And I needed for her to have moxie. I'd left mine at the house. (*DIRK steps back.*) I guess if we have to work together, O'Malley, I ought to know a little something about you. Tell me, O'Malley, why did you become a cop?

O'MALLEY: I guess it's in the blood. My grandmother was cop. She walked beat on the Lower Bottoms. She really cleaned things up.

DIRK: The Lower Bottoms? I didn't think there was anything lower than the Bottoms.

O'MALLEY: The sewer is. There was a lot to clean up. She was killed in the line of duty.

DIRK: She was killed in the sewer?

O'MALLEY: Alligators got her.

DIRK: Alligators? In the sewer? I thought that was just a myth.

O'MALLEY: Apparently, so did she. Come to find out, it was the Martini Brothers.

DIRK: The Martini Brothers were alligators?

O'MALLEY: No.

DIRK: Oh. That explains it.

O'MALLEY: They were smuggling alligator eggs into the country. Big business in alligator eggs.

DIRK: Alligator eggs? Who would want alligator eggs!

O'MALLEY: Alligators. And alligator egg smugglers. Actually, they wanted alligators—the smugglers, that is. Baby alligators. Eggs are easier to smuggle. They eat less. You ever buy an alligator from Woolworth when you were a kid?

DIRK: No.

O'MALLEY: That's because of my grandmother. She caught the egg smugglers. She cracked the case. But not before they got her. I guess that's why my mother became a cop.

DIRK: Because her mother was killed by alligators?

O'MALLEY: Good a reason as any. She walked beat in the Upper Bottoms.

DIRK: The Upper Bottoms? I thought anything above the Bottoms just wasn't the Bottoms.

O'MALLEY: Power lines. She was on pigeon patrol. Homely pigeons.

DIRK: Don't you mean "homing" pigeons.

O'MALLEY: No, homely. These were some pretty ugly birds. That's what she was doing on the power lines. She was trying to clean up the neighborhood by shoeing them away. But they got her.

DIRK: The pigeons?

O'MALLEY: Nope. Mockingbirds. It may be a sin for humans to kill mockingbirds, but apparently they have no problems killing us. They tricked her. Got her to stand on two wires at the same time.

DIRK: How could they do that?

O'MALLEY: I don't know. I wasn't there. I hadn't been born yet.

DIRK: Excuse me?

O'MALLEY: My mother died before I was born.

DIRK: How is that possible?

O'MALLEY: I was adopted.

DIRK: Oh.

O'MALLEY: There was nothing left for me to do than become a cop.

DIRK: Why?

O'MALLEY: Why not? I already had the uniform. It's the only thing my mother left me. That, and her gun. (*Holds up a gun covered in feathers.*) They may have gotten my mother, but she didn't go alone.

DIRK: I never did ask you your first name, O'Malley.

O'MALLEY: O'Malley is my first name. Actually, my first name is "O." My middle name is Malley. I always thought they sounded better together.

DIRK: That's not a usual name for a dame.

O'MALLEY: I'm not a usual dame. O'Malley's a cop name. My mother wanted me to be a cop. So she named me after O'Malley. He was a cop that used to walk beat in the Middle Bottoms. It was my mother's way of assuring that her daughter became a cop.

DIRK: I thought you said your mother died before you were born.

O'MALLEY: I did.

DIRK: How could she name you if she were already dead.

O'MALLEY: I don't know. You'd have to ask her.

DIRK: (*Writing a note to himself on his pad.*) I'll do that. (*After a beat.*) You know, quite frankly, Officer O'Malley, I feel uncomfortable calling a fellow cop by his first name. Especially when he's a dame. Propriety. What's your last name, O'Malley?

O'MALLEY: Kos-ca-fa-nos-ka-fa-zo-vitch-ski. (*Do the best you can; you only have to say it once.*)

DIRK: Let's stick with O'Malley.

O'MALLEY: So where do we start, Cannon.

DIRK: The first thing is to interview the suspects.

O'MALLEY: Suspects?

DIRK: Suspects.

ABIGAIL: (*From off stage.*) Is there an echo in here?

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: Stage goes black. A tight spotlight comes up on stage left apron. On the wall is a white strip of paper—or whatever—marked at regular intervals with lines marking off height, like you would see in a police lineup, which is the look we're going for. ABIGAIL comes from the dark, wanders through the spotlight, and disappears off stage. There is the sound of something crashing over backstage.

ABIGAIL: (*From off stage.*) Sorry.

ABIGAIL wanders back on stage and back into the light, straightening out her dress the whole while.

ABIGAIL: (*While squinting into the light; nervous giggle.*) I got lost.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Name, please.

ABIGAIL: (*To the VOICE.*) I'm sorry, but how can I do that? I don't know who you are.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Your name.

ABIGAIL: (*Giggling.*) Oh. (*To audience.*) My name is Abbey. Really, it's Abigail. Like Dorothy Gail, but without the tornado. All my friends call me Abbey. (*A bit down.*) But I don't have many friends. Not anymore. (*Back to old self.*) I guess that's what happens when you don't die. You know, Methuselah must have known a lot of people who died.

There is the clearing of the throat from Off-Stage.

ABIGAIL: (*Giggling.*) Oh. They want me to stay on track.
(*Confidentially, to the audience.*) I tend to drift a bit.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Occupation.

ABIGAIL: I'm old.

OFF STAGE VOICE: That's not an occupation. What do you do for a living?

ABIGAIL: Oh, dear. I thought being old was enough.

OFF STAGE VOICE: What was your occupation?

ABIGAIL: I was a bookkeeper for my husband's business. He made things. A lot of things. A lot of bridges. Why, he made that big bridge that went across the river. You know, the one everybody drove on. You know, it's a wonder more people didn't get hurt when it fell down. He mostly made the pillars. Somebody else made the top. You know, the part you drive on. I guess you could walk on it, too. But I think driving would be faster.

There is the clearing of the throat from Off-Stage.

I'm sorry. At first my husband only had one truck and two other boys working for him. But then, things got better. All the other people who owned trucks in town started to have accidents. Horrible accidents. Falling off roofs. Tripping down stairs. Blowing up. One moment they were starting their car and the next thing you know—Bam!

There is the clearing of the throat from Off-Stage.

And, like I said, things got better. My husband was doing really well...until the police came. You know, they blamed my husband for all those people who fell down stairs and got electrocuted in their bathtubs. Like it was my husband's fault that they were making toast while taking a bath. Even I know that's not a smart thing to do.

There is the clearing of the throat from Off-Stage.

Sorry. But it didn't matter how much my husband said he was innocent. They said he wasn't. And that was that. Not only did they make him go to jail, but they took away all of his money, too. Well, except for the little bit I was able to hide away in a shoebox back in the closet, and all those unnumbered bank accounts in the Caimans and Switzerland and Costa Rica. After all, a lady needs to be able to take care of herself. I suppose I could live somewhere else, but those good men from the government said that this is probably the safest. So here I am.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Thank you.

ABIGAIL wanders out of the spot, leaving the spot blank for a beat.

Next.

NEVY comes thumping on with her walker.

Name, please.

NEVY: *(Stops, squints into the light for a second, and then...)* Oh blow it out your buns! I haven't got time for this! I need to get my hair done! *(thumps off; after a beat...)*

OFF STAGE VOICE: Next!

HELGA comes out goose-stepping the entire way and does a precision military turn before doing the old double stomp and coming to attention.

HELGA: *(Severely.) Mein Name ist Helga Von Schtompken. (Note: "Name" is pronounced nah-maa in German, more or less)*

OFF STAGE VOICE: Talk in American, please.

HELGA: *Acht!* I'm sorry. But I don't know Spanish.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Continue, please.

HELGA: My name *ist* Helga Von Schtompken. I was *der* head mistress at *der* Berlin School *fer* Untroubled Boys. *It vas en Berlin.* East Berlin. Ve took nice, untroubled boys from nice, untroubled homes, and ve made them troubled! *Ya!* My specialty vas teaching them to blow things up. Small things. Big things. They verked in a lot of aggression that vay. It vas goot life, but, *acht!* *der* Cold War ended. And they tear down *der* Wall. *Ich*t vas such *unt nice* vall, too. And so von day *Mein* husband, Otto, say, “Helga, it timen to go to America!” And so he sent me here—in ver I became *unt* high school algebra teacher. But, ach! How you say? Things go kaput. They tell me I could not longer teachen *unt* algebra. *(Increasing rage until she’s screaming.)* How can you teach quadratic equations if you can’t blow something up! *(Wait a beat while composing self; calm again.)* There vas *nicht* more to do do but—how you say—retire. *Unt* everyvon knows in America, once you retire, you move to retirement home.

HELGA will do the old double stomp, make a precision turn, and goosestep off. After a beat.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Next.

BEULAH will enter. She is nervously clutching her handbag to her chest with both hands.

BEULAH: (*Relaxing a bit.*) Hello. I'm Beulah. Beulah Tarkington. Tarkington was my husband's name. Now a days, young ladies don't take their husband's names when they get married. But we would've never dreamed of doing it any differently, not in my day. Now a days, they don't even bother to get married. But marriage is good. And proper. And what you should do. And when you make your vows you should stick to them. (*Getting increasingly angrier.*) Not go running around with every cheap tramp that wears trashy clothes and gaudy makeup! (*Calms back down.*) I've had a good life. A bless-ed life. My husband, Edgar, provided for me for almost 30 years. I never did without. And he was kind, too. He never wanted to hurt my feelings. (*Increasing anger.*) That's why he lied about that cheap tramp he had on the side for 17 years! (*Calm again.*) And then, he died. They say his cigarette lighter exploded. And I didn't even know he smoked. Fortunately, my Edgar left me well provided for. (*Increasing anger.*) Except that cheap tramp managed to get every last cent! (*Calm again.*) And then, she died. They say her oven exploded. You know, that sort of thing doesn't usually happen with electric appliances. Luckily, I had my dear, sweet son, Edgar, Jr., to fall back on. We scrimped and saved and worked really hard to put him through college. Medical school's not cheap, you know. (*Increasing anger.*) It might've been easier had not that two-timing son of a...

There is a sudden, loud clearing of the throat from off-stage.

(*Calm again.*) husband of mine, God rest his soul, (*Increasing anger.*) been spending it on that cheap tramp! (*Calm again.*) God rest her soul. But my son. My dear, loving boy. When I had no place to go he sent me here. (*Increasing anger.*) He lives in a 10,000 square foot home, and I get an apartment the size of a bathroom! (*Calm again.*) But he does need the room. He may get married some day. And when he does, I have the perfect gift for him. A gas grill.

Beulah exits.

OFF STAGE VOICE: Next!

GERTY: *(Enters.)* This is so much better than watching TV. Although, I am missing Family Feud. I just love to hear what the survey says. I find it fascinating that no matter how many people agree on something, they can still be wrong. *(Responding to unheard voice off.)* Pardon me? Oh! *(To audience.)* My name is Gerty. Actually, it's Gertrude. But only my mother calls me Gertrude. But she hasn't done that for a long time. *(Confidentially.)* You know, a lot of people don't like retirement homes. But I think it's nice to settle down. Especially after moving around so much. It was my husband's job. Mr. Poindexter blew things up. Buildings and bridges, mostly. You know, where everybody gets to watch. One minute they're there, and the next, they're gone. The building. Not the people. The people are still there. Of course, there's not much point in staying around once the building is gone. Sometimes I'd get to help. One time I even got to push the button. It was crazy. No. Really. We blew up an insane asylum. They needed to make room for one of those big hotels where people stay while they gamble. You know, I often wonder where it was that all those crazy people went. *(After a beat.)* Well...they have to go *somewhere*. I think it's so exciting. I get to be part of a murder investigation. And you do too. *(Excited.)* Do you want to know who did it? *(Holding up the script.)* I read ahead. *(Responding to unheard voice off.)* Pardon me? Oh. *(To audience.)* They told me not to tell you. They said if I did there would be no reason for you all to stay around to intermission. And I suppose they're right. Well, enjoy the rest of the show.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *The lights dim completely for a beat, and then come back up on the ladies sitting in their former places. DIRK and O'MALLEY will enter through the door, causing the bell to ring as they do so. GERTY will slowly get up and make her way toward them. While she's doing that, they will both be examining the fruitcake. They will both have their notepads at the ready, and will write in them from time to time.*

DIRK: *(Taking the foil off one of the fruitcakes; he will break off a small piece and sample it as if it were cocaine, or worse.)* Yup. That's fruitcake, all right.

O'MALLEY: That's just weird.

DIRK: More than weird.

O'MALLEY: Very weird.

DIRK: Very weird.

GERTY: *(Finally getting there.)* Do you two have an appointment?

DIRK: No ma'am. We're here on business.

O'MALLEY: Fruitcake business.

GERTY: Oh. Well, you don't need an appointment for the fruitcake.

DIRK: Are you responsible for these fruitcakes, ma'am?

GERTY: *(Thinking he's talking about the other girls.)* Oh, no. They pretty much take care of themselves.

DIRK: I'm not talking about the other patrons, ma'am. I'm talking about the fruitcake on this table. Are these yours, ma'am?

GERTY: On, no. They're Arlene's fruitcakes.

O'MALLEY: *(Gesturing to the other ladies.)* Which one is Arlene.

GERTY: Oh, none of them. Arlene's not here.

DIRK: Do you know when she'll return.

GERTY: Should I?

O'MALLEY: That depends.

GERTY: On what?

O'MALLEY: Whether or not you should.

GERTY: Arlene left over two years ago.

DIRK: Left?

GERTY: Right.

O'MALLEY: Left.

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GERTY: No, right.

DIRK: But she left.

GERTY: That's right.

O'MALLEY: Do you know when she'll be back?

GERTY: Oh, you'd have to ask her.

O'MALLEY: So you know where she went?

GERTY: No. Only that she's gone. She left with the maintenance man at the apartment building where they used to live. (*Confidentially.*) I think they had a thing between them.

DIRK: A thing?

GERTY: Sometimes it may have been less than that.

BEULAH: (*Joining in from her seat.*) Didn't she leave to go play Reno in Keno?

GERTY: No, dear. I think it was Keno in Reno.

BEULAH: It could've been Stratego in Chino

ABIGAIL: Or anywhere in-between-o.

DIRK: (*Stepping forward; to audience.*) I could tell I was getting the runaround, like a marathon runner with a nail through one of his Nike's. (*Stepping back; to GERTY.*) Where did she get her fruitcakes?

GERTY: Oh, she didn't get them anywhere. She made them.

DIRK: Excuse me?

GERTY: Certainly.

DIRK: Certainly what, ma'am?

GERTY: Certainly you're excused.

DIRK: Excused from what?

GERTY: Oh, that would be up to you.

DIRK: Pardon me?

GERTY: For what?

DIRK: Let's start again.

GERTY: Certainly.

DIRK: Don't you dare?

GERTY: Dare what?

O'MALLEY: (*Intervening; referring to her notepad.*) You stated she made her own fruitcake.

GERTY: (*Proud of herself.*) I did, didn't I.

O'MALLEY: Is that possible?

GERTY: To say that? (*Thinks a beat.*) Apparently so.

O'MALLEY: No, ma'am, to make fruitcake.

GERTY: Oh, yes. (*Confidentially.*) She had a recipe.

DIRK: Why would she do that, ma'am?

GERTY: Oh, I think it would be really hard without one, don't you?

DIRK: Without what, ma'am?

GERTY: A recipe. Isn't that what we were talking about?

O'MALLEY: I'm really not sure anymore.

DIRK: Try to keep up, O'Malley. We were talking about fruitcake, ma'am. Why would anybody choose to make fruitcake?

GERTY: Oh, I wouldn't know about anybody. I can only tell you about Arlene. She's the only one I've ever known who's ever made a fruitcake. Unless you count my parents.

DIRK: (*To O'MALLEY.*) Now do you understand why we don't carry guns on this beat, O'Malley?

O'MALLEY: It would be too easy.

DIRK: Way too easy.

GERTY: What would be too easy?

DIRK: To shoot you, ma'am.

GERTY: Oh, that sounds exciting!

DIRK: My point exactly. (*To O'MALLEY.*) Where were we?

O'MALLEY: (*Reading from her notes.*) Shooting the old lady.

DIRK: No. Before that.

O'MALLEY: (*Still referring to her notes.*) You wanted to know why anybody would want to make a fruitcake.

DIRK: Don't start that again.

O'MALLEY: Roger.

GERTY: Who's Roger?

DIRK: My ex-partner. He's filed an injunction. We can't use that joke. OK, lady. Why did Arlene make fruitcake?

GERTY: Oh, I'm really not sure . . .

DIRK: (*Aside to O'MALLEY.*) And that's why we can't carry a billyclub, either.

GERTY: ...But I think she made fruitcakes because she was bored.

O'MALLEY: Bored?

GERTY: Oh, yes. Business is pretty slow here. And then she tried to sell them.

DIRK: (*To O'MALLEY.*) Delusional.

O'MALLEY: Must be.

GERTY: And then, when she couldn't sell them, she gave them away.

O'MALLEY: Gave them away?

GERTY: Gave them away.

ABIGAIL: My hearing aid must be going bad. I keep hearing an echo.

BEULAH: Just turn it off. You're not missing a thing.

ABIGAIL removes a very large apparatus from under her dress—an old cassette recorder would work fine—and switches it off.

DIRK: (*Picking up a fruitcake.*) How many did she give away, ma'am?

GERTY: Oh, all of them.

DIRK: All of them?

GERTY: All of them.

ABIGAIL: (*Shaking her hearing aid.*) Nope, that didn't work, either.

O'MALLEY: How come there are still fruitcakes here, then?

GERTY: Oh, they came back.

ABIGAIL: Oh, I know what she means. Fruitcake always comes back on me, too.

NEVY, thumping with her walker, crosses from L to R. About mid-stage she stops and asks ABIGAIL.

NEVY: Is it my turn yet?

ABIGAIL: No, dear. I think we're going to have an intermission.

NEVY: Oh, poodle spit!

And with that, she goes thumping off.

GERTY: Oh, this is exciting! An intermission! (*Gets a worried look on her face.*) But how are we going to do that?

ABIGAIL: (*Moving out on the apron; shadowing her eyes while looking for the light person.*) Yoo Hoo! Young man! (*Or woman; pause.*) Could you please turn off the lights? We're going to have an intermission.

The lights go out, leaving the house completely dark. In the darkness the others can be getting off stage, including GERTY.

**Note: If you do not want to feed the audience fruitcake—then skip to Act Two.*

ABIGAIL: *(After a beat.)* Oh. Not yet.

A spot comes up on her.

ABIGAIL: That's better. *(To the audience.)* I hope you don't mind, but we have all this fruitcake that we just can't get rid of. You see, we had to buy it all for the show. We try to give it away, but it just keeps coming back. So we're going to try to feed it to you. Please be nice to the servers. It's not their fault. Besides, we'd like to get the deposit back. *(After a pause; to the light person.)* OK. You can turn off the light now.

The house returns to total darkness.

ABIGAIL: *(After a beat; still in darkness.)* Don't you think that we might ought to have some lights on in the audience?

Bring up houselights; drop spot; and if ABIGAIL is really fast, she can already be gone.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *After the intermission, with the houselights still up, ABIGAIL will come out on the apron.*

ABIGAIL: *(Shouting at the light person.)* Yoo Hoo! Young man! *(Or woman; pause.)* We're ready.

Bring down the houselights, during which time everybody will get into position. When the stage lights come back up, the ladies are doing what they do and DIRK and O'MALLEY are still sampling fruitcake. JANIS enters from the back room. She is rather harried.

JANIS: If you want to eat the fruitcake, you have to buy it first.

**Note: The next two lines can be omitted if you didn't serve fruitcake.*

DIRK: *(Indicating the audience.)* What about them?

JANIS: Trust me. They've paid.

DIRK: *(Showing her his ubiquitous badge.)* We're not here on fruitcake business, ma'am.

O'MALLEY: No, ma'am. We're here on police business.

JANIS: Is there a difference?

DIRK: Sorry, ma'am. We're not allowed to use sarcasm.

O'MALLEY: Department regulations.

DIRK: *(Reading from his notepad.)* We're looking for the proprietor of Arlene's Beauty World.

JANIS: Well this is her.

O'MALLEY: "She," ma'am. "This is she." "Is" is a linking verb and requires the subjective case on each side of the verb.

JANIS: Well, it's me.

O'MALLEY: "It is I." Same rule, ma'am.

DIRK: Then you must be Arlene.

ABIGAIL: Oh, no. She's not Arlene.

GERTY: I don't see why she just doesn't change the sign.

BEULAH: It's because she's cheap, dear.

GERTY: I bet she could ask those nice young men who are always decorating the alley to do it for free. And they even have their own paint.

JANIS: I'm Janis. (To O'MALLEY.) Was that OK?

O'MALLEY: Perfectly acceptable, ma'am.

JANIS: Why did you say you were here?

DIRK: Fruitcake ma'am. We're investigating the Fruitcake Bomber. And all of the clues lead here, ma'am.

O'MALLEY: The explodee frequented this shop and this shop sells fruitcake. Do the math.

HELGA: *Ya!* I told them and I told them that they would need *der* math. But would they listen? *Nein! Vell, ict* serves them right!

JANIS: You can't seriously think that one of these sweet old ladies would blow somebody up.

ABIGAIL and GERTY wave, HELGA gives a Nazi salute, and BEULAH gives a rude gesture.

DIRK: Seriously is the only way I know how to think, ma'am. And, yes, ma'am, I do think that one of these sweet old ladies could blow somebody up.

O'MALLEY: Of course, ma'am, you could be a suspect, too.

JANIS: Are you out of your minds?

DIRK: No, ma'am. Department regulations. We're not required to be logical, rational, or even compassionate, but we are required to be sane.

JANIS: What possible motive could I possibly have for blowing up anybody?

The perpetually happy, and perpetually clueless—do you suppose there's a connection between the two? CHESTER enters. He is carrying a bouquet of pathetic plastic flowers.

CHESTER: Good morning! (Offering the flowers to JANIS.) I couldn't find any water, so I brought you flowers my Little Lightly Frosted Cupcake.

JANIS: My name is Janis! (*Taking the flowers and throwing them in a trashcan by the front desk.*) And I don't want your stupid flowers. The only thing I want from you is a front row seat at your funeral so I don't have to spit as far.

CHESTER: (*Undaunted, as always, by JANIS' hatred.*) She's such a kidder. (*Takes the flowers out of the trash, carefully picking off other bits of debris.*)

JANIS: What are you doing?

CHESTER: Well, if you don't want them, my Little Plum Pudding Pop, I suppose I ought to take them back.

JANIS: You can take flowers back to the florist? (*As an afterthought.*) And my name is Janis!

CHESTER: Oh, I don't know about the florist. I was going to take them back to the cemetery.

O'MALLEY: Excuse me, sir, but who are you?

CHESTER: My name's Chester, but you can call me Ter. (*A beat while O'MALLEY doesn't respond.*) How about Chess?

O'MALLEY: Sorry, sir. Department regulations. We're not allowed to use nicknames.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) This guy was about as believable as an intelligent cheerleader. I needed some answers. And I needed them now. (*Stepping back.*) Tell, me, Buddy, what's your occupation?

CHESTER: I'm sorry...what?

DIRK: Your occupation. Your job. What is it that you do...do?

CHESTER: Nothing.

O'MALLEY: Nothing?

CHESTER: Nothing.

ABIGAIL: Is there an echo in here?

O'MALLEY: How can you do nothing?

CHESTER: It's really quite easy. It doesn't involve much planning at all. The only bad thing is, it's hard to know when you're done. (*After a pensive moment.*) You know, I always remember what my dad told me.

DIRK: And what was that, sir?

CHESTER: He said, "Son..." That was me. "Son, if you can't do something right, don't do it at all." So I don't.

O'MALLEY: Don't...what?

CHESTER: I don't do it at all.

O'MALLEY: Don't do what?

CHESTER: Everything.

DIRK: Everything?

CHESTER: Everything.

ABIGAIL: There's that echo again.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) I heard this sort of nonsense before. Mrs. Ekels, high school algebra teacher. And like high school algebra, his story made no sense. (*Stepping back.*) Excuse me, but what do you do for money?

CHESTER: I've thought about it, and I'm sticking with the American dollar. I know the exchange rate is lousy, but after all, this is America, and I am an American. (*Salutes.*)

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) Yeah, I was getting the runaround. Like a two bit cab fare on a Tuesday afternoon. (*Stepping back.*) Tell me, sir, what is your business here?

CHESTER: Oh, I'm the boyfriend.

JANIS: You are *not* my boyfriend!

CHESTER: Isn't it just adorable the way my Cherry Doodle scrunches her nose when she pretends she's angry?

JANIS: My name is Janis! And I'm not pretending!

CHESTER: See? She did it again.

DIRK: (*To GERTY.*) Are they like this all the time, ma'am?

GERTY: Sometimes worse.

ABIGAIL: They're better than TV.

GERTY: She can't stand him.

ABIGAIL: They fight all the time.

CHESTER: Oh, no. We never fight.

DIRK: (*To JANIS.*) Are you sure you two aren't married, ma'am?

JANIS screams and exits into the backroom UL.

CHESTER: Oh, we're not married. Not yet. My Little Moist Scented Towelette and I are engaged. We just set the date.

JANIS: (*Stepping out of the back room.*) My name is Janis! And I will never marry you! (*Retreats back into the room, slamming the door behind her.*)

CHESTER: Oh, she's such a kidder.

GERTY: (*Getting up and crossing over.*) How exciting! When are you two finally going to be married?

CHESTER: The first Sunday in the first June of 2058. (*Just add 50 years to whatever the year happens to be.*) I hope the church hasn't been reserved yet. June's such a busy month for weddings. Won't my little Whipped Crème Sugar Free Topping be beautiful in white?

JANIS: (*Coming out of the backroom.*) I hate you! I loathe you! Die! (*Slams door, but immediately opens it back up.*) And my name is Janis!

DIRK: Young love.

O'MALLEY: It's a wonderful thing.

CHESTER: Oh, yes, certainly it is. In fact, tomorrow is our anniversary, isn't it my Little Spiced Ham.

JANIS: (*Comes out of office.*) Spiced Ham? (*Crosses to CHESTER.*) Did you just call me Spiced Ham?

CHESTER: Well, I suppose I did, my little Doodle Dumplings.

JANIS: Wait a minute! Go back to Spam. My name is Janis! Not Spam! Not Spiced Ham! In fact, don't *ever* compare me to *any* processed meat product, ever! Got that straight?

CHESTER: Sure my little . . .

JANIS: Stop! Oh, no you don't! You don't get a free one. Go back to the one after Spam.

CHESTER: What? Doodle Dumpling?

JANIS: That's the one! Don't you *ever* call me Doodle Dumpling again. My name is Janis.

CHESTER: Are we caught up?

JANIS: Yes.

CHESTER: OK, then, my little Cherry Cheese Cake.

JANIS: My name is Janis!

CHESTER: She's such a kidder. (*To O'MALLEY and DIRK.*) As I was saying, tomorrow is our anniversary. We will have been engaged for 17 years. I've been out shopping today for the perfect present.

JANIS: You want to give me the perfect present? Step in front of a bus.

CHESTER: She's such a kidder.

O'MALLEY: (*Trying to figure things out on her notepad that just won't figure out.*) You've been engaged for 17 years? Excuse me, sir, but you don't seem that old.

CHESTER: I'll be 26 this year. So will Pumpkin Butter.

JANIS: My name is Janis, you idiot.

DIRK: I can do the math. That means you were 9 when you got engaged.

CHESTER: Actually, I was 8 ½. So was Puddin' Pie.

JANIS: My name is Janis.

CHESTER: She's such a kidder.

O'MALLEY: Why the long engagement?

JANIS: (*Desperately tugging on the ring.*) Because I can't get the ring off!

DIRK: (*Examining the ring.*) It's a toy ring.

CHESTER: Oh, no it's not. It's functional. That's a Cap'n Crunch Decoder Ring. You can use it to send secret messages. And receive them, too!

JANIS: The only message I want to send you is to die!

CHESTER: She's such a kidder.

O'MALLEY: (*Coming close to letting her curiosity override her professionalism.*) Tell me, ma'am, how did you two meet.

CHESTER: (*Cutting in.*) We were in the second grade together. I remember it like the day before yesterday, the first time I really noticed her. I was melting crayons on the heat register, and I accidentally melted hers by mistake.

JANIS: Mistake? You got inside my desk and took them out. You stunk then, and you stink now.

CHESTER: What a kidder. Then, that very same day, at recess, we were on the playground, and Fuzzy Bunny said if I could catch her, she'd marry me.

JANIS: Fuzzy Bunny? My name is Janis! Janis! I'll race you now. I've been practicing. Short distance. Long distance. I don't care! I'll even give you a head start! Just go away.

CHESTER: Oh, she's such a kidder.

JANIS: And you're such an idiot. Die!

O'MALLEY: Usually, ma'am, my job forbids curiosity. But since it's a Tuesday, I'm going to ask.

JANIS: It's not Tuesday . . .

O'MALLEY: If we wait long enough it will be. So tell me, why don't you just leave him?

JANIS: (*Tugging on the ring.*) Because I can't get the...the...the darned ring off my finger!

DIRK: Why would that matter?

JANIS: Are you kidding? Who's going to date a girl who's wearing a decoder ring? I've tried soap and grease. I've thought about cutting it off—the ring, not my finger. I've even considered cutting off my finger. I almost think it would be worth it. But, Oh, no, it's still there. Both the ring and my finger. And besides, this idiot is always hanging around. Just try asking me out.

O'MALLEY: Excuse me?

JANIS: Not you, him.

DIRK: Excuse me?

JANIS: Ask me out.

DIRK: I'm sorry, but did you say you want me to ask you out?

JANIS: (*Grabbing him by the shirt collar; menacing.*) I said, "Ask me out!"

DIRK: I'm sorry ma'am, but I can't ask you out. You're engaged. It's the Guy Code

O'MALLEY: I've always heard about this Guy Code. You'll have to tell me more about it later.

DIRK: I'm sorry, but I can't do that.

O'MALLEY: Why not?

DIRK: Because of the Guy Code.

O'MALLEY: That makes sense.

JANIS: (*Letting him go; defeated.*) Makes sense? Of course it makes sense. It makes sense to everybody but me.

CHESTER: (*Stepping up; still his good natured, haven't got a clue self.*) Are you bothering my fiancée?

DIRK: No.

O'MALLEY: Yes.

JANIS: Maybe.

CHESTER: At first, we were going to wait to get married until we got out of grade school. And then it was junior high school and high school. And then we decided to wait until after we both got out of college.

JANIS: We?

CHESTER: Now I'm thinking about going for the record.

O'MALLEY: There's a record for being engaged?

CHESTER: Sure. There's a record for everything. It's because people care.

O'MALLEY: What *is* the world record for being engaged?

CHESTER: 67 years.

GERTY: (*To CHESTER.*) That's how old I was when Mr. Poindexter shoved off.

DIRK: Shoved off, ma'am?

GERTY: He went fishing. He was eaten by piranha. Ever since that day, I've sworn off fish.

O'MALLEY: And this...late Mr. Poindexter...

GERTY: Oh, no. He wasn't late. Apparently he got there right at dinner time.

O'MALLEY: Your dearly departed...

GERTY: Oh, he was departed, all right.

O'MALLEY: This dead guy, this Mr. Poindexter, he was your husband?

GERTY: Yes. And he was Chester's grandfather, too.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) This was a new angle on the case. But I didn't like it. Like onion rings without onions. It could be a coincidence, yeah, but coincidences rarely added up. It complicated things. Like finding out that the Village People weren't kidding. (*Stepping back; to CHESTER.*) It seems awfully convenient that your grandmother is in a nursing home right next to where your girlfriend works.

JANIS: (*Adamant.*) I'm not his girlfriend!

CHESTER: You bet it's convenient. That's why I put her here.

DIRK: (*Checking his notepad.*) Let me get this straight...you put your grandmother in an old folks home just so you could be near your fiancée?

CHESTER: Well...she was old.

GERTY: Oh, it's not so bad. I don't have to cook for myself anymore, and there are lots of nice people who tell me what to do all the time. It's so much easier when you don't have to think. Kinda like being a conservative. And I do get to see my grandson more...

CHESTER: Isn't she swell?

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) It was clear the old lady had a motive. She also had the opportunity. But did she have the means?

BEULAH: Oh, she can be plenty mean. Don't let that sweet smile fool you.

DIRK: I'm sorry, ma'am, but you're not supposed to hear me.

BEULAH: But you're right there.

DIRK: Sorry, ma'am. Department regulations.

BEULAH: Well, I didn't vote for it.

DIRK: (*Stepping out even more.*) I could tell we were getting nowhere fast. Which would've been OK, if I hadn't been wanting to go somewhere else. It was clear my partner and me...

O'MALLEY: ...my partner and I...

DIRK: ...we...needed to regroup, reorganize, get our bearings, figure some things out...

EVERYBODY: We get it already!

DIRK whistles and the stage goes dark. A tight spot hits him DR. O'MALLEY joins him there.

O'MALLEY: Neat trick. How do you do it?

DIRK: I just whistle. You do know how to whistle, don't you?

O'MALLEY: Please don't use that joke.

DIRK: No problem. (*After a beat.*) What do we have so far?

O'MALLEY: (*Showing off the items as she goes.*) I've got a comb, a book of matches, and a Dum Dum.

ABIGAIL: (*From the dark.*) No, thank you.

NEVY, thumping with her walker, crosses from L to R. Give her a soft follow spot. When she gets close DIRK and O'MALLEY, she stops.)

NEVY: Is it my turn yet?

O'MALLEY: No, ma'am. This is police business.

NEVY: Oh, poodle spit!

And with that, she goes thumping off.

DIRK: This is serious. There's a bomber on the loose. He...

O'MALLEY: Or she...

DIRK: Or it...

O'MALLEY: Or they...

DIRK: ...are undoubtedly going to strike again.

O'MALLEY: Undoubtedly.

DIRK: And you know what they say...

O'MALLEY: No.

DIRK: Blow me up once, shame on you. Blow me up twice, shame on me.

O'MALLEY: Why would they blow you up twice.

DIRK: In case once wasn't good enough.

O'MALLEY: Makes sense.

DIRK: Exactly. The way I see it, everyone's a suspect.

O'MALLEY: Everyone?

DIRK: Everyone.

ABIGAIL: *(From the dark.)* Echo!

O'MALLEY: What about that guy sitting in the second row? Is he a suspect?

DIRK: Could be.

O'MALLEY: *(To the guy in the second row.)* We're going to have to ask you not to leave town, sir.

DIRK: It could've been any of the old ladies. They all have the means...

O'MALLEY: Especially that German one.

DIRK: How do you mean?

O'MALLEY: She's really mean.

DIRK: I know what you mean. They had the opportunity...*(Waits.)*
No joke?

O'MALLEY: No.

DIRK: Good. And they all have the motive.

O'MALLEY: Motive?

ABIGAIL: *(From off stage.)* I keep mine in a glass.

O'MALLEY: Motive? How do you figure?

DIRK: They're old. They've been stuffed in an old folks' home with nothing to do but watch reality TV and play bingo.

There is a loud explosion off-stage.

O'MALLEY: What was that?

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DIRK: Sounded like a car backfiring.

O'MALLEY: Must've been.

DIRK: Where were we?

O'MALLEY: (*Checking her note pad.*) The old ladies with nothing to do.

DIRK: Yeah. Who can blame them?

O'MALLEY: Not me.

DIRK: Not me.

ABIGAIL: (*From off stage.*) Not me.

O'MALLEY: Of course, it could be the dame.

DIRK: How so?

O'MALLEY: Trying to blow up her boyfriend.

DIRK: She doesn't call him her boyfriend.

O'MALLEY: Exactly.

DIRK: Why did she blow up the old lady, then?

O'MALLEY: She was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

DIRK: What? The dame?

O'MALLEY: No. The old lady.

DIRK: Oh. That makes sense.

O'MALLEY: It does?

DIRK: I think so.

O'MALLEY: Good. Of course, it could be the critics.

DIRK: Not likely.

O'MALLEY: How so?

DIRK: They usually wait until curtain. Besides . . .

O'MALLEY: Besides?

DIRK: Besides. There's no need for the critics to blow us up.

O'MALLEY: Why is that?

DIRK: Because we'll bomb on our own.

O'MALLEY: Oh. (*Checking her notes.*) Then they all could be our man.

DIRK: Or woman. There's only one way to know for sure.

O'MALLEY: What would that be?

DIRK: We need to go undercover.

O'MALLEY: (*Smacks him, but other than that, no change in emotion, which will be true for the entire following sequence.*) I'll have you know, I'm not that kind of girl.

DIRK: *(Not responding physically to being hit, which will be the same throughout the following.)* That's not what I meant. I meant undercover.

She hits him again.

You know, where we get out of our normal clothes...

She hits him.

To get the low down...

O'MALLEY hits him again.

To get the nasty details...

O'MALLEY hits him again.

To find out what's going on...

O'MALLEY starts to hit him again and then stops.

O'MALLEY: I guess that one's OK. Why do we need to go undercover?

DIRK: It's the only way. Old ladies won't talk to a cop, but they'll talk to their hairdresser. Gossip.

O'MALLEY: Gossip?

Spot off.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *The stage lights come up; BEULAH is now under the bonnet; GERTY, ABIGAIL, and HELGA are in the waiting area. Chester is gone; JANIS is in her office; and ABIGAIL has wandered up close to DIRK and O'MALLEY.*

ABIGAIL: Gossip? Who's got gossip?

ABIGAIL will feign interest for the next two lines, but then go sit down when she sees there's not really going to be any good gossip.

DIRK: See what I mean?

O'MALLEY: I see what you mean.

DIRK: That's why you have to go undercover.

O'MALLEY: Why do I have to go undercover as a hairdresser?

DIRK: Because no one would believe a guy hairdresser.

Enter MAURICE through the front door; flamboyantly.

MAURICE: I am Maurice. I am the owner, head stylist, and creative genius of *le premier* hair salon in the entire one state region.

O'MALLEY: *(Trying to take notes.)* How do you spell that?

MAURICE: *(He's a smart-aleck, to say the least.)* Oh, goody. I get to make up for the gaps in someone's pathetic education. What is it you never bothered to learn?

O'MALLEY: The name of your establishment. "Le Premier."

MAURICE: Are you daft?

O'MALLEY: There is that possibility.

MAURICE: *(Haughtily.)* The name of my establishment, as you so provincially called it, is *not* "Le Premier." "*Le Premier*" is French for "The premier." The name of my establishment is *The Hair Pin*.

DIRK: I've heard of that place. I called there trying to find rabbit cages for my sister's nephew.

MAURICE: *(Offended.)* It's not that kind of hare pen! Didn't anybody ever learn to spell in school?

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) Yeah, he was rude to me. He was rude to me when I called him on the phone the first time looking for rabbit cages. But cops gotta keep their composure. That's why they call us cops. Because they're spelled almost the same. No, really. Check it out.

O'MALLEY: I'm sorry, sir, but if you're a hairdresser, why are you here?

MAURICE: My lawyer was to meet me here. He was bringing the papers saying that I am officially commencing legal action against Arlene's Beauty World, and they are to cease and desist in using the formula for Basic Blue, or any subsequent formulas derived from the creative genius that is I. I, the creator of Basic Blue. That, and I want a few million in compensation. There may even be some pain and suffering. You have no idea the suffering I've gone through. Why truly, none at all. And you have no idea just how painful that can be.

Enter JANIS from office; SHE crosses to MAURICE.

JANIS: (*Fuming, so to speak.*) What are you doing in my shop, you two bit hack of a hairdresser?

MAURICE: Sticks and stones may break my bones, but I grossed three times what you made last year. But if you must know why I'm here, and I'm certain that you do, unless, of course, you're dumber than I've ever given you credit for, I've come to claim what we both know is legally mine. The child of my genius. The fruit of my mental loins. My invention of Basic Blue.

JANIS: You did not invent Basic Blue!

MAURICE: I love it when your temper flairs. For a brief moment you actually come close to having a personality. If you remember, when I worked here I invented Basic Blue.

JANIS: And you never worked here!

MAURICE: Have you ever crossed town at rush hour to get here? I didn't think so! Let me tell you, if that's not work, I don't know what is.

JANIS: Oh, good grief! And that doesn't even matter! You had nothing to do with inventing Basic Blue.

MAURICE: How soon they forget. I remember it just like it happened before tea. I was standing right next to that work station. (*Pointing.*) That, really tacky workstation. I mean, could it scream out incompetence any more? No, I didn't think so. But there I stood, and I asked you, "Why are you so blue?" And you said it was because all the old ladies' hair was blue. And then I said, "Why not just color it blue anyway?" And then you told me to go blow. Blow...blue...what difference does it make? It was my idea.

DIRK: Excuse me, but what is this "Basic Blue"?

JANIS: Have you ever noticed that all old ladies have blue hair? It's because, for some reason, every hair dye, no matter what color, turns old lady hair blue. So, I thought, what if we actually dyed the hair blue?

O'MALLEY: And? Was it successful?

BEULAH lifts the bonnet where she has been sitting, revealing her now bright green hair.

BEULAH: How's it look?

JANIS: (*Crossing over to the bonnet.*) Let's give it a bit longer, shall we? (*Pushes the bonnet back down.*) We've still got a few bugs to work out.

MAURICE: Yes! And when those insects...

JANIS: Bugs.

MAURICE: Bugs? Insects? What's the difference? They're all disgusting. When they're worked out, it will be worth a fortune...maybe even more! And that fortune will be mine.

O'MALLEY: Excuse me, but did you say that you were waiting for a lawyer?

MAURICE: You must be a cop. Try to keep up. Although I don't expect much from public education.

DIRK: (*Taking out his note pad and checking his notes.*) How tall was he?

MAURICE: You mean my lawyer, I presume? (*Air measuring with his hand.*) Oh, about this tall...

O'MALLEY: Was he dressed in black?

MAURICE: Probably. I've yet to meet a lawyer who had a flair for fashion.

O'MALLEY: With a white shirt?

MAURICE: What else would you wear with a black suit coat if you totally lacked imagination.

DIRK: (To O'MALLEY.) I told you that was too large to be a pigeon.

O'MALLEY: It could've been a large pigeon.

MAURICE: Oh my goodness! You ran over my lawyer!

DIRK: Not really.

O'MALLEY: Detective Cannon swerved at him, but he missed.

MAURICE: Then he's OK?

DIRK: No. O'Malley got him with the door.

MAURICE: That's awful!

DIRK: I know. I don't usually miss.

MAURICE: I can't believe this! Finally we were going to settle this for all and once. But these morons run over my lawyer!

DIRK: Hitting him with the door is not exactly the same as running him over, sir.

MAURICE: Oh, you brute! Don't worry! I shall be back! And the next time I'm bringing a lawyer who has his own car! (*Exits in a huff.*)

JANIS: (*After a beat.*) Thank you for helping me out there.

O'MALLEY: How so, ma'am?

JANIS: By making up that story about running over his lawyer so he'd leave.

DIRK and O'MALLEY give each other a knowing look and almost a knowing smile.

DIRK: Think nothing of it, ma'am.

O'MALLEY: In fact, the less you think of it the better.

JANIS will drift over to BEULAH, who is still under the bonnet, and generally make herself busy during the next few lines.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) I didn't like it at all. Like day old oatmeal. With no brown sugar. I had the feeling that something wasn't as it should be with the hairdresser. Like watching somebody play Whack-A-Mole with a handgun. (*Stepping back.*)

O'MALLEY: What do you think?

DIRK: It seems we got another suspect.

O'MALLEY: What? The hairdresser?

DIRK: Only when everything else is in the laundry.

O'MALLEY: As if we didn't have enough.

DIRK: Enough of what?

O'MALLEY: Suspects

DIRK: We don't have to count the guy in the second row.

O'MALLEY: Good. That keeps the numbers even. (*To the guy in the second row.*) You're free to go . . . but don't leave town. (*To DIRK.*) How would exploding fruitcake help the hairdresser?

DIRK: Sour grapes.

O'MALLEY: Who puts sour grapes in a fruitcake?

DIRK: Not real grapes.

O'MALLEY: Who puts artificial grapes in a fruitcake?

DIRK: Sour grapes. It's an expression.

O'MALLEY: Oh. What does it mean?

DIRK: Sour grapes.

JANIS returns to where O'MALLEY and DIRK are, near the door. Just as SHE gets there, CHESTER bursts through the door, cheery as ever.

CHESTER: Good morning, Butter Cups!

JANIS: My name's not Butter Cups! And it's not even morning!

CHESTER: I know, Low Fat Crème Filling. But I didn't get a chance to wish you good morning, not since this morning, so now I am. Good morning! And good afternoon, too!

JANIS: If I gave you a rope, would you hang yourself? (*An after thought.*) And my name is Janis.

CHESTER: She's such a kiddler! (*Bringing a crudely gift wrapped present from behind his back.*) Look, Peach Crisp! I've brought you a present.

JANIS: My name's not Peach Crisp! And I don't want anything from you, unless it's a gun.

CHESTER: (*A bit, very slight, but still a bit, crestfallen.*) I'm sorry. I didn't know you wanted a gun...(*Back to delusional self; unwrapping her present.*) See. It's a slotted spatula.

JANIS: That's not a slotted spatula! It's a pooper scooper!

CHESTER: It doesn't have to be used as a pooper scooper. It could be used as a spatula, too. Or both. See? It's just like me—versatile!

JANIS: It's just like you, alright...full of...

DIRK: (*Cutting off JANIS...thankfully; to CHESTER.*) What's the occasion, sir?

CHESTER: Pardon me?

DIRK: Why the gift?

CHESTER: Oh, I don't need a reason to give my Poopsy Whoopsy a gift...

JANIS: My name's Janis!

CHESTER: (*Like usual, ignoring the interruption.*)...but today happens to be the day before our 17th anniversary of when I first almost kissed my little Pumpkin Wumpkin...

JANIS: Auggghhhh! It's Janis!

CHESTER: It was when we got engaged on the playground. When I caught my Little Non-Toxic All-Natural Food Additive...

JANIS: My name is Janis!

CHESTER: ...and we became engaged, it also meant that I could kiss her.

O'MALLEY: (*With notepad poised.*) So this is the anniversary of your first kiss?

CHESTER: Nope.

O'MALLEY: (*Confused.*) I'm sorry, but didn't you say...

CHESTER: Oh, I caught her all right. But I didn't kiss her.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) Everything seemed out of place. What you might expect if God left Picasso in charge for a day. Only this was no museum. (*Stepping back.*) Why didn't you kiss her?

JANIS: Because he's a blithering idiot!

CHESTER: Oh, she's such a kiddier! We're waiting until we're married.

- JANIS:** *We're not waiting for anything! I'm waiting for you to die!*
And the sooner the better!
- CHESTER:** What a kidder!
- O'MALLEY:** *(As if she's got it all listed on her notepad.)* Let me get this straight. You're waiting until you get married...to kiss?
- CHESTER:** Certainly. And everything else, too.
- O'MALLEY:** You mean...
- JANIS:** He means we've never done anything! *Anything!* We've never kissed—not even on the cheek. He's never put his arm around me. He's never even held my hand!
- CHESTER:** My mother always said, "True love is worth waiting for."
- JANIS:** She didn't mean 67 years!
- CHESTER:** My mother also said, "True love is timeless."
- JANIS:** Your mother was an idiot, too.
- CHESTER:** Well, yes, there was that . . .
- JANIS:** Do you realize if we wait until we get married, we'll be in our 70s? There'll be nothing left worth waiting for!
- CHESTER:** She's such a kidder!
- JANIS:** Why are you here? Isn't there some place else you're supposed to be? Don't you have a house? A job? A bus you're supposed to be walking in front of?
- CHESTER:** I'm here because it's our almost anniversary, my Little Marinara Dipping Sauce.
- JANIS:** I am not your...what?
- CHESTER:** My Little Marinara Dipping Sauce.
- JANIS:** Boy, you must be getting to the bottom of the barrel.
- CHESTER:** You have no idea.
- JANIS:** Where was I? Oh, yeah. Why are you *always* here?
- CHESTER:** It's because I love you. We're engaged, my Little Funny Bunny.
- JANIS:** My name is Janis. And we're not engaged.
- CHESTER:** She's such a kidder.
- JANIS:** And even if we were engaged, you don't have to spend every waking hour hanging around me like some pathetic...dog...or something!
- CHESTER:** I'm your Puppy-Wuppy of Love.

JANIS: You are not my Puppy-Wuppy of Love! You are nothing to me except an irritant. I loathe you. I'd rather lose an ear in a glue gun accident than see your face ever again. I want you to leave. Forever!

CHESTER: (*Hurt; as if realizing the painful truth for the first time.*) You're serious, aren't you.

JANIS: Yes! Yes! I despise you! I can't stand you! I'd rather have my intestines replaced with eels than to ever hear your voice again! I'd rather be eaten alive by ravenous bo weevils than to ever see your face again! I'd rather...I'd rather...

CHESTER: (*Back to his old delusional self.*) See! See! She's smiling!

JANIS: I'm not smiling, you idiot! My face is contorted in pain!

CHESTER: I knew it! I knew it! I knew she was kidding. She's such a kidder.

JANIS: (*Screaming.*) Auggghhh! (*Exits.*)

DIRK: That's just weird.

O'MALLEY: Really weird.

DIRK: Weirder than weird. (*Stepping out.*) I was beginning to feel like a one legged bookie on race day. There was a lot of information to sort through, and not a whole lot of time before the Fruitcake Bomber was to strike again. We needed to go somewhere and think. Somewhere where we could figure out a plan of action. We needed a reason to get off stage. (*Stepping back.*)

O'MALLEY: Let's go get a latte.

DIRK: (*Stepping out.*) Latte? No self-respecting cop drinks a latte! Straight coffee for me. Cup of Joe. Java. (*Drifting off.*) Black gold. Texas tea. (*Back again.*) Truth to tell, I can't stand coffee. But everyone expects you to drink coffee. And who's going to respect a cop that prefers chocolate milk?

O'MALLEY: Who are you talking to?

DIRK: Them. The audience.

O'MALLEY: Can I talk to them?

DIRK: No. Not until you make detective. And then only when you get the spotlight.

O'MALLEY: You're kidding.

DIRK: No.

O'MALLEY: Why not?

DIRK: I don't know. It's just the rules. I didn't write the play. When you get the spotlight, then we pretend not to hear you. That's just the way it works.

O'MALLEY: I wish somebody would've told me these things.

DIRK: Don't worry about it. Come on. Let's go get some chocolate milk.

ACT TWO, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *Lights dim, dropping stage to total darkness. After a few moments, bring the stage lights back up. BEULAH, ABIGAIL, and GERTY are sitting in the waiting area. Enter O'MALLEY through the front door. She is wearing a smock with a name badge. She walks over and starts to handle the hairdressing supplies. It is obvious she doesn't have a clue. What she doesn't hold backwards, SHE drops. Having her knock great amounts over would be fun. Some good old fashioned slapstick. GERTY crosses over to O'MALLEY.*

GERTY: Excuse me, Officer O'Malley, but did Janis hire you?

O'MALLEY: No, ma'am. I'm undercover.

GERTY: Call me old fashioned . . .

O'MALLEY: If you insist. Old fashioned.

GERTY: *(Confused; not a hard thing to do.)* Umm...call me old fashioned . . .

O'MALLEY: I believe I just did.

GERTY: *(Plodding on regardless.)*...but don't you need covers to be undercover.

O'MALLEY: It's complicated ma'am.

GERTY: Oh! Complicated. How exciting!

ABIGAIL: *(Getting up and crossing to O'MALLEY as well.)* Oh, how exciting. Undercover.

BEULAH: *(Who has no intention of getting up.)* I used to get excited about going undercover, too.

ABIGAIL: *(Still excited.)* You might get shot. Maybe even killed.

O'MALLEY: We try to avoid that, ma'am.

ABIGAIL: What a pity. You know, we don't get a real undercover cop here very often.

GERTY: What Abigail means is never.

ABIGAIL: Do you get to wear a disguise?

O'MALLEY: I am in disguise, ma'am.

ABIGAIL: Well, so you are. I bet it's really hard going undercover.

O'MALLEY: It's not hard to do ma'am. You just have to pretend.

BEULAH: Oh, yeah. We know how to pretend, all right. Pretend your husband is really on a business trip. Pretend your son is really going to come visit. Pretend that this is the best that we can do after a lifetime of trying. Compared to that, we can pretend to believe anything.

GERTY: Oh, Beulah, I don't know why you can't be happy here. Where else in life did you have four good friends who looked forward to seeing you every day? Except Junior High. But back then, we really didn't know what a friend was. Where else can you get three meals a day without having to do a thing, and they taste just as good as when you cooked them. And you had to clean them up, too.

BEULAH: But then, you were never much of a cook.

GERTY: Well, that's true. So I guess it is easier for me. But tell me, where else could you be where somebody would take care of everything for you? Where you don't have to do a thing? Other than when you were little. And don't you miss that? You know, it may sound cliché, but life is what you make it.

O'MALLEY: I'm sorry, ma'am. But that was a cliché. I'd love to let you slide, but we're over the limit.

GERTY: And besides, Beulah, where else could you be part of an undercover operation? Don't be a spoiled sport. Going undercover will be fun. Maybe we can have a stake out, too.

ABIGAIL: I haven't had a steak out in...20 years. Dentures be darned! Count me in!

Both GERTY and ABIGAIL happily make their way back to the seats and attentively watch O'MALLEY as she continues to fidget. After sufficient fidgeting, enter HELGA. She will goosestep to the workstation, do a precision turn, the old double stomp, and then sit down.

HELGA: *It ist unt timen* that someone finally *ist heer* to do hair. I vant usual. And don't vake me ven you do it. *Nein!*

During the following, DIRK will be peeking in through the front door. The other ladies will be happily watching. After all, it is better than TV. HELGA kicks back in the chair and quickly drifts off to sleep while O'MALLEY sorts through the various tools, truly having no idea what she is doing. While she's doing that, NEVY thumps with her walker, crosses from L to R. About the time she gets to O'MALLEY, she asks...

NEVY: Is it my turn yet?

O'MALLEY: No, ma'am. I'm undercover. I actually have no idea what I'm doing.

NEVY: Oh, poodle spit!

And with that, she goes thumping off. O'MALLEY returns to the task at hand. She will size up each tool—hair dryer, straightener, hand held mixer—be creative—on HELGA's head, but decide against each. She will finally take out a very large straight razor and barely touch it to HELGA's audience side bun. It will immediately fall off. O'MALLEY will toss the razor back on the table before picking up the bun. She will pick it up the first time, realize it's basically a wad of hair, and then drop it in disgust. She will then pick it up again between her thumb and forefinger as if it were something dead. As she's trying to figure out how to put it back on. She will then go through several alternatives to get it to stay back on, all of which are conveniently in the work station. First she will try bobby pins, but it will fall back off. Next she will take out a large bottle of glue, smear some on the bun, and stick it to the side of her head. Of course, it will fall off. Then she will try a large C-clamp, but it won't be big enough. Then she will pull out a blow torch, but decide against it almost immediately. Finally she will find a hammer and nails. She will just be about to drive in a nail when DIRK comes hurriedly into the salon. He will grab the hammer just as she is at the apogee of her swing.

DIRK: If you don't mind, O'Malley, I'll take over here.

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