

# DID SOMEONE SAY MURDER?

*by David J. LeMaster*



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# DID SOMEONE SAY MURDER?

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**SYNOPSIS:** Care to attend "murder night"? Join an array of wacky characters as they dine and watch the world's greatest detective, Rathbone, solve murders right in front of their eyes. There's only one catch – anyone can be the victim, and you're on your own in finishing the evening alive. Designed for a single, permanent set, *Did Someone Say Murder?* is easily managed in the smallest and most informal of spaces. Can Rathbone solve the mystery before the killer runs out of murder victims? Can you solve the mystery before Rathbone does, or will the killer manage to escape the evening and kill again? Murders, false identities, spies, double-crossings, tricks, surprises, thrills and a most scrumptious lobster dinner propel this mystery to its deliciously shocking ending. Lobster optional.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(8 females, 4 males, 4 either)*

RATHBONE (m/f).....The world's greatest detective,  
determined to solve the case. *(187 lines)*

JOE (m).....A guy on a date. *(180 lines)*

MARY (f).....His date. *(152 lines)*

HOSTESS (f).....A conceited young lady. *(90 lines)*

WAITER (m).....An authoritative young man. *(58 lines)*

WAITRESS (f).....Who wants to be an actress. *(50 lines)*

MR. ELSINORE (m).....Rich and arrogant. *(120 lines)*

MRS. ELSINORE (f).....His rich and arrogant wife. *(79 lines)*

MRS. SALT (f).....An old woman. *(45 lines)*

MRS. CABBAGE (f).....Another old woman. *(26 lines)*

FLOWER GIRL (f).....Sells flowers. *(35 lines)*

BUSBOY (or GIRL) (m/f).....Busses tables. *(17 lines)*

MR. MITHINGTON (m).....Elsinore's enemy. *(53 lines)*

MRS. MITHINGTON (f).....His confused wife. *(29 lines)*

MANAGER (m/f).....The person in charge of the evening and  
the host of the murder. *(108 lines)*

COOK (m/f).....In charge of the manager. *(53 lines)*

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**DURATION:** 90 minutes.

**SETTING:** A posh restaurant – ritzy, beautiful, and the site of a murder.

**TIME:** Present.

### SET

We are in a lovely, expensive restaurant. The entrance to the restaurant is center stage, where the Hostess station is located by a door. There are four tables across the stage. On far stage right sits JOE and MARY's table, which is located by a(n imaginary?) window. Next to them is the ELSINORE table, just right of the HOSTESS station. MRS. CABBAGE and MRS. SALT will sit at a table left of center. The MITHINGTONS' table is far left, separated from everyone else. They obviously got the bad spot. There is a door to the kitchen stage right, next to JOE and MARY's table, and they are inconvenienced by the door as characters run in and out. The MANAGER, RATHBONE, the WAITER and WAITRESS, and the COOK all come from the kitchen door. The four tables are fully furnished with plates, silverware, tablecloths, drinking glasses, napkins, candles, drink menus, and at least two chairs.

### DIRECTOR'S NOTES

It is at the discretion of the director whether or not to use real food. Directors may choose to perform this play as a "dinner theatre," providing the audience with a dinner (like chicken or lobster) to go with the characters onstage. There is one intermission. Although the four couples obviously have their own places at tables, they are in no way restricted to staying in their chairs. RATHBONE and the MANAGER should be free to roam about the stage. RATHBONE must have great energy to control everyone's focus throughout the majority of the show and should bounce from couple to couple as he accuses them of various murders. There is a "sudden clap of thunder" toward the end of Act One, followed by a blackout during which the characters wait for a murder. There are also gunshot sounds at the end of the first act during a second short blackout. Finally, RATHBONE pulls a weapon at the end of the Act Two. The weapon may be a knife, a gun, a concealed gun, or something more creative. RATHBONE's gasmask at the end of the first act can also be creative. As long as it covers his mouth and nose, the mask does not need to be elaborate. The BUSBOY, the COOK, the

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MANAGER, and RATHBONE may all be played by either a male or a female. Changes in pronoun reference, etc., may be made accordingly. There are a number of twists at the end involving either a change in character or a change in accent/personality. All changes are at the discretion of the director, but each change should be comic and exaggerated, giving the individual actors the opportunity to create completely different physical and vocal characteristics from what they have played up to that point.

**ACT ONE**

**AT RISE:** *We are in a very ritzy, fashionable restaurant. There are numerous tables across the stage. We're in dining-mood lighting. Enter a young couple, JOE and MARY. They walk through the door, obviously out of place in such a ritzy restaurant, and stand at the door, waiting for someone to seat them.*

**JOE:** Here we are!

**MARY:** Oh, what a beautiful place, Joe. Are you sure we can afford to eat here?

**JOE:** Nothing's too good for you, my love.

**MARY:** It looks very expensive.

**JOE:** Shee-shee, Fru-fru? Yes, it does. But don't worry. Tonight we'll eat, drink, and be merry. We'll have burgers and fries the rest of the week.

**MARY:** The rest of our *lives* from the looks of this place. *(Pause.)* Where is everyone?

**JOE:** *(Glances at watch.)* It's still early. Maybe they don't open the doors until later.

**MARY:** Have you been here before?

**JOE:** No. But the reviews are excellent.

**MARY:** I'm so excited. *(Enter HOSTESS. SHE looks them over for a moment and sneers. HOSTESS leaves.)* Did you see that?

**JOE:** Miss?

**MARY:** She turned up here nose at us. Like we're not classy enough to be here.

**JOE:** Oh, I'm sure she didn't mean it that way.

**MARY:** Maybe we shouldn't dine here after all.

**JOE:** The reviews are good. It looks marvelous. We're staying.

**MARY:** If you're sure...

**JOE:** Miss? Miss?

*Enter HOSTESS. SHE glares at them.*

**HOSTESS:** Yes?

**JOE:** We'd like a table for two, please.

**HOSTESS:** Table for two. Did you have a reservation?

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**JOE:** The paper says you don't need reservations.

**HOSTESS:** You always need reservations. What do you think this is, McDonalds? (*SHE goes to the appointment book, reads intently; pause.*) Smoking or nonsmoking?

**JOE:** Nonsmoking.

**HOSTESS:** We don't have anything in nonsmoking.

**JOE:** Do you have anything on the patio?

**HOSTESS:** How do you know we have a patio?

**JOE:** I assumed...

**HOSTESS:** Of course we have a patio! Ha ha!

**JOE:** Oh. Well, we'd like a place on the patio.

**HOSTESS:** There's nothing available there, either.

**JOE:** Oh. I suppose smoking will be okay, then.

**HOSTESS:** We don't have anything in smoking either. We're completely booked. Call before you come next time. Goodbye. (*SHE turns to leave. MARY stops her.*)

**MARY:** Wait a moment. Miss? Look. Is it just me?

**HOSTESS:** Yes?

**MARY:** You're being very cold to us. I don't see anyone else around...

**HOSTESS:** No.

**MARY:** Well, then. Why can't we sit where we want?

**HOSTESS:** They're all reserved.

**MARY:** I don't see any reservation markers.

**HOSTESS:** Maybe they're invisible.

**MARY:** They're all reserved? Every single table?

**HOSTESS:** We're booked solid. It's murder night.

**MARY:** I beg your pardon?

**JOE:** Maybe we *should* go somewhere else—

**MARY:** Did you say murder night?

**HOSTESS:** Yes. That's what I said.

**MARY:** I've heard of these things! They have dinner and these actors come out and you get to play detective and there's a murder mystery—

**HOSTESS:** Not even close, Toots.

**MARY:** I beg your pardon?

**HOSTESS:** No actors. No playing detective for the audience. No getting up and going home afterward if you get killed. Just murder, plain and simple. With dinner. Got the picture?

**MARY:** How intriguing.

**HOSTESS:** I'm afraid it's very expensive and requires reservations far in advance.

**JOE:** Why don't we just call the restaurant down the street. If they don't want our business here. . .

**MARY:** I like it here.

**JOE:** But you said yourself—

**MARY:** I changed my mind. I want to be here for murder night.

**JOE:** What? Murder?

**MARY:** I'm intrigued.

**HOSTESS:** Oh, it's quite intriguing. And deadly, too.

**MARY:** Sounds delicious!

**JOE:** Honey—

**MARY:** *(To JOE.)* Give her a tip and see if she'll seat us.

**JOE:** Tip?

**MARY:** *(Whispering.)* She wants a tip. Don't you know anything about dining in these fancy restaurants?

**JOE:** But murder night?

**MARY:** Don't be frightened, darling. It's just a publicity stunt. *(To HOSTESS.)* Isn't that right?

**HOSTESS:** What?

**MARY:** No one really gets killed on murder night. Do they?

**HOSTESS:** If I were you, I wouldn't stick around to find out.

**MARY:** Oh, how delightful!

*HOSTESS turns her back on JOE and MARY as another couple approaches. JOE keeps looking through his clothes for cash.*

**MR. ELSINORE:** Table for two. Under Elsinore.

**HOSTESS:** Oh, yes. Mr. Elsinore. Right this way.

**JOE:** Wait a second. We were here first. You have to seat us. And I'll, uh, give you a tip on my credit card.

**HOSTESS:** Do you have a reservation, sir?

**JOE:** *(Looks at her book.)* Yes. It's... *(Looks at book.)* under Mithington.

**HOSTESS:** Oh, is it?

**JOE:** Mithington. Mr. and Mrs. Mithington. Isn't that right, honey?

**MARY:** (*Delighted.*) Yes! The Mithingtons.

**JOE:** And we'd like to be seated.

**HOSTESS:** Mithington, eh? Are you sure?

**JOE:** Yes.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Elsinore—

**HOSTESS:** Just a moment Mr. Elsinore.

**MR. ELSINORE:** We'd like our table.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Those people obviously don't have a reservation.

**HOSTESS:** No. But if they want to be a "Mithington" on murder night...

**MRS. ELSINORE:** (*Amused.*) Oh. Yes, how unfortunate.

**MARY:** What?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Tell, me, Mithington. Just what is it you do for a living, old boy?

**JOE:** Um. I'm an accountant.

**MR. ELSINORE:** (*Knowing.*) Is that right? (*To HOSTESS.*) Yes. They're perfect to be here for a murder night.

**HOSTESS:** (*To JOE and MARY.*) This way.

**MARY:** Wait, Joe. Maybe we shouldn't stay.

**JOE:** Oh, come on, Mary. Don't tell me they've frightened you with all this silly murder talk. You said—

**MARY:** I've changed my mind.

**JOE:** You wanted to eat here, and we're going to eat here.

**HOSTESS:** Even if you take the Mithingtons' place?

**JOE:** That's right.

**HOSTESS:** Very well. (*To ELSINORES.*) You'll excuse me for a moment.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I suppose.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** How rude.

**MR. ELSINORE:** How crass.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Ridiculous.

**MR. ELSINORE:** They deserve what's coming to them.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Indeed.

**MARY:** What was that?

**MR. ELSINORE:** You'll find out.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Yes. Poor things. You'll find out.

**HOSTESS:** Right this way, Mr. Mithington.

**MARY:** Wait a minute. I don't know about this. . .

**HOSTESS:** Do you want to take the Mithington reservation or not? I don't have all night.

**JOE:** Yes! Yes, we do.

**MARY:** *(To HOSTESS.)* Did you say "murder night?"

**HOSTESS:** *(Takes them to seats.)* Here. *(Tosses menus to table; points at the chairs.)* Your waiter will be with you in a moment. Mithington.

*SHE goes back and politely escorts the ELSINORES to their table. JOE and MARY lean over table and try to whisper.*

**MARY:** I've got a bad feeling about this.

**JOE:** Well you had your chance. I wanted to go and you thought murder night sounded charming.

**MARY:** *(Trying to convince herself.)* They must be putting on a play.

**JOE:** Yes. That's it. A murder mystery play. It'll be fun. *(Pause.)* I just hope it's not too expensive.

**HOSTESS:** *(To MR. ELSINORE.)* I trust you'll have a marvelous evening, Mr. and Mrs. Elsinore.

**MR. ELSINORE:** *(Tipping her.)* Thank you, my dear.

**HOSTESS:** *(Seating them.)* Here you are. *(Takes out MRS. ELSINORE's chair.)* Can I get you anything?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Not just now, dearie. Thanks.

**HOSTESS:** Thank you.

*SHE goes back to the hostess table. SHE sneers at JOE and MARY as SHE goes by.*

**MARY:** See? He tipped her so she'd treat them well. Why don't you go tip her, Joe?

**JOE:** Well. Um. She's already seated us. Besides. I don't have any cash. *(Enter BUSBOY, with water.)*

**BUSBOY:** Water?

**JOE:** Oh. Yes, thanks. We'd like to know about your specials—

**BUSBOY:** I'm not the waiter. I'm the bus boy.

**MARY:** (*Embarrassed.*) Haven't you ever been in a fancy place like this before?

**JOE:** Well...

**BUSBOY:** Your waiter will be with you in a moment.

**JOE:** Thanks.

**BUSBOY:** Bread?

**JOE:** Yes.

**MARY:** No.

**JOE:** Why not?

**MARY:** I can't eat bread. It goes right to my thighs.

*BUSBOY shrugs and goes to the ELSINORE table.*

**BUSBOY:** Your waiter will be with you in a moment. Water?

**MR. ELSINORE:** (*Looking at menu.*) No. But the Chablis looks quite good tonight.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Yes. Let's order some.

**BUSBOY:** I'll get your waiter.

**JOE:** (*Looking at menu.*) Wait a minute. There's no food on this menu.

**MARY:** It's a drink menu.

**JOE:** Where's the real menu?

**MARY:** Maybe they don't have a formal menu. They just tell you what they have for the evening.

**JOE:** How do I know the price?

**MARY:** I don't know.

**JOE:** This is insane. We shouldn't have come here.

**MARY:** You asked me to dinner. Why are you worried about the price?

**JOE:** I just don't want to order something that's really expensive, that's all.

**MARY:** What, you don't think I'm worth a big dinner?

**JOE:** It's not that.

**MARY:** What is it, then?

**JOE:** Forget it?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** What about the lobster tonight?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Excellent choice. It always goes well with a murder.

*Enter FLOWER GIRL, holding a basket of roses. SHE approaches JOE and MARY.*

**FLOWER GIRL:** (To JOE.) Would you like a beautiful long-stemmed rose for your date this evening?

**JOE:** Uh.

**MARY:** Oh, how beautiful.

**JOE:** How much?

**FLOWER GIRL:** Just fifteen dollars.

**JOE:** Fifteen!

**MARY:** Joe.

**JOE:** But—

**MARY:** I'm not worth fifteen dollars?

**JOE:** No, it's not that—

**MARY:** First you complain about the menu—

**FLOWER GIRL:** What are you, some kind of cheapskate?

**MARY:** He is.

**FLOWER GIRL:** I'll give it to you for twelve.

**JOE:** Do you take credit cards?

**FLOWER GIRL:** No.

**MARY:** Pay her for the flower, Joe.

**JOE:** I don't have any cash.

**MARY:** You came to dinner without cash? How did you expect to pay the valet outside?

**JOE:** You mean I have to pay that guy that parked the car?

**MARY:** Yes.

**JOE:** With cash?

**MARY:** Oh, for goodness sake!

**FLOWER GIRL:** What a cheapskate.

**JOE:** It's an expensive place. I thought I'd put it on a credit card.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Give me back my flower.

*SHE snatches the flower from MARY. MARY begins to cry.*

**JOE:** Wait. Don't cry. I'll get the flower. (To FLOWER GIRL.) Is there a money machine nearby?

*Enter BUSBOY with bread. HE puts the bread on JOE's table and wipes the table with a crumb catcher.*

**BUSBOY:** Bread?

**JOE:** Sure. You know where I can get cash?

*FLOWER GIRL snatches the rose from MARY and approaches MR. and MRS. ELSINORE.*

**FLOWER GIRL:** Rose for the lady?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Yes. *(Takes out his wallet and gives her cash.)* And send this one to the girl over there.

*FLOWER GIRL gives him a rose and hands a rose to MARY.*

**MARY:** Oh, thank you!

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Henry?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Oh, come now dear. She needs a rose.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** You're flirting with that girl!

**MR. ELSINORE:** I am not. *(To FLOWER GIRL.)* Give it to her.

**MARY:** Oh! Thank you!

**JOE:** *(To MR. ELSINORE.)* I'll pay you back.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Nonsense. *(Pause.)* You'll get yours.

**JOE:** What?

**MARY:** *(With rose.)* It's so beautiful.

**JOE:** What did he mean, "You'll get yours?"

**BUSBOY:** *(To MR. ELSINORE.)* Bread?

**MR. ELSINORE:** No. *(Takes out more cash.)* Oh, miss!

**FLOWER GIRL:** Yeah?

**MR. ELSINORE:** *(Gives money.)* Buy a flower for yourself, too.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Oh! Thank you.

**MR. ELSINORE:** *(To MRS. ELSINORE.)* Now, my dear. I wasn't flirting with the first girl. But I am with *her*.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** How dare you!

**MR. ELSINORE:** Makes you mad enough to kill me, doesn't it?

*Pause. They all look at each other as MR. ELSINORE's words sink in. BUSBOY and FLOWER GIRL both exit. MRS. SALT and MRS. CABBAGE enter and approach HOSTESS.*

**HOSTESS:** Hello, Mrs. Salt. Mrs. Cabbage. So good to see you both.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Hello, Miss—

**HOSTESS:** Monroe.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Right. Monroe. Were you here the last time?

**HOSTESS:** Yes.

**MRS. SALT:** Of course she was, Dorothy. Don't you remember?

**MRS. CABBAGE:** I remember the soup.

**MRS. SALT:** It was excellent.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** You make the best soup.

**MRS. SALT:** *You* didn't have the soup. *I* had the soup.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** You did?

**MRS. SALT:** Yes.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** What did I have?

**MRS. SALT:** You had the chicken.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Oh, yes! The chicken.

**HOSTESS:** Your usual table?

**MRS. SALT:** We'd like one by the window tonight, if you don't mind.

**HOSTESS:** That one's taken.

**MRS. SALT:** It is?

**HOSTESS:** By them.

*SHE points at JOE and MARY. MARY is embarrassed.*

**MRS. SALT:** Who are they?

**HOSTESS:** *(a giggle.)* They say they're the Mithingtons.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Don't be absurd.

**MRS. SALT:** They're not the Mithingtons.

**HOSTESS:** I didn't think so.

**MRS. SALT:** What about that table?

**HOSTESS:** Yes. It's free.

**MRS. SALT:** Then we'll sit there.

*SHE takes them to a table. MARY whispers to JOE.*

**MARY:** Did you hear that?

**JOE:** Where is the darned waiter?

**MARY:** She said that table was free.

**JOE:** Maybe it's the smoking section.

**MARY:** But it's just over there.

**MR. ELSINORE:** (*To Hostess.*) Oh, Miss?

**HOSTESS:** Yes?

**MR. ELSINORE:** We haven't seen the waiter.

**HOSTESS:** I'll send him to you.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** And when is the murder?

**HOSTESS:** Soon.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Good. (*To MR. ELSINORE.*) You're not nervous, are you dear?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Just hungry.

*FLOWER GIRL and BUSBOY approach MRS. SALT and MRS. CABBAGE.*

**FLOWER GIRL:** Roses?

**BUSBOY:** Water? Bread?

**MRS. CABBAGE:** No, and no.

**MRS. SALT:** I'll take a rose.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Whatever for?

**MRS. SALT:** For later.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Later? Are you meeting someone after dinner?

**MRS. SALT:** Perhaps.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Who?

**MRS. SALT:** None of your bees-wax.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Fifteen dollars.

**MRS. SALT:** Fifteen? They were ten last time I came.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** You didn't get a flower last time I was here.

**MRS. SALT:** That's because I wasn't with you.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Really?

**FLOWER GIRL:** Thank you, Ma'am.

**MRS. SALT:** (*Pointing to MR. ELSINORE.*) Give it to that man over there.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Him?

**MRS. SALT:** Yes.

**FLOWER GIRL:** (*Gives to MR. ELSINORE.*) Here.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I beg your pardon?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Well! I never!

**FLOWER GIRL:** From her.

*SHE points to MRS. SALT, who waves. MR. ELSINORE is repulsed.*

**MR. ELSINORE:** Oh, dear.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Well. I can certainly see that it's murder night.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Yes. It certainly is.

*FLOWER GIRL leaves. MRS. SALT and MRS. CABBAGE bury their heads in the wine list. The ELSINORES do the same. MARY cannot contain her curiosity. SHE turns to the ELSINORES.*

**MARY:** Excuse me.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Henry.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Hmm?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** That girl is trying to get your attention.

**MARY:** Excuse me?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Yes? What is it?

**MARY:** What is the murder?

**MR. ELSINORE:** I beg your pardon?

**MARY:** The murder. The hostess keeps mentioning it.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Yes?

**MARY:** What is it?

**MR. ELSINORE:** It's the reason we came.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Haven't you been here before?

**MARY:** No.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Then why did you have a reservation?

**MARY:** (*Embarrassed.*) We really didn't. My boyfriend got carried away.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Oh, dear.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** How unfortunate.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Why ever did you come?

**MARY:** Is this bad?

**MR. ELSINORE:** You'll see.

**MARY:** What do you mean "you'll see?"

**MRS. ELSINORE:** *Don't order the chicken.*

**MARY:** *(Panicked)* What?

**JOE:** Mary, please. Turn around.

**MARY:** *(Frantic.)* She said not to order the chicken.

**JOE:** Why? Isn't it cooked?

**MARY:** Don't you get it? That's a clue. It's murder night, and we shouldn't order the chicken!

**JOE:** They're just being rude.

**MARY:** Rude? Then why didn't they just say, "get lost, honey?"  
*That's rude. They said, "Don't order the chicken." That's advice.*

**JOE:** That was their way of saying "get lost, honey." You know.  
*(Voice.)* "Don't order chicken." Sounds snippy to me.

*Enter WAITRESS and WAITER. They go to JOE and MARY'S table.*

**WAITER:** Hello. My name is Jeremy, and this is Heather. She's in training.

**WAITRESS:** I'm Heather. I'm in training.

**WAITER:** She's going to make a fantastic waitress.

**WAITRESS:** Yes. But what I really want to be is an actress.

**WAITER:** May I interest you in an appetizer?

**WAITRESS:** I've played Shakespeare and Chekov and Stoppard.

**MARY:** *(Indicates the ELSINORES.)* I think they were here before us.

**WAITER:** That's okay. We're waiting on you.

**WAITRESS:** And Shepherd, and Mammet, and Ibsen, and Brecht. . .

**MARY:** Oh, I don't mind. Wait on them. It's okay. I don't want to make them mad at us. Not on murder night.

**WAITER:** Nope. You're first.

**WAITRESS:** *(Reciting.)* Oh, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt!  
Oh, that this too, too—

**MARY:** You played Hamlet?

**WAITRESS:** Yes.

**MARY:** And not Ophelia?

**WAITRESS:** It was a progressive company.

**MARY:** Oh.

**WAITRESS:** What?

**MARY:** Nothing.

**WAITRESS:** You find something wrong with that?

**MARY:** It's just that usually Hamlet is played by a man.

**WAITRESS:** Who says it has to be a man?

**WAITER:** Would you like to try the crab claws?

**WAITRESS:** I can do everything he can do. He just has to train me.

**WAITER:** Or perhaps some nice fried cheese.

**JOE:** Fried cheese. Yes. We'll have that.

**WAITER:** We're out of fried cheese.

**JOE:** Oh.

**WAITER:** What about crab claws?

**JOE:** Yes.

**WAITER:** We're out of those, too.

**WAITRESS:** Oh, that this too, too—

**WAITER:** Would you mind?

**WAITRESS:** Sorry.

**MARY:** Um. (*Pause.*) Could you settle a question for us?

**WAITER:** Certainly.

**MARY:** Just what is the murder night?

**WAITER:** (*Dramatic alarm.*) What?? Where did you hear that?

**MARY:** The hostess said it was murder night.

**WAITER:** She did?

**WAITRESS:** I thought that was tomorrow.

**WAITER:** Shh.

**MARY:** Um. Would you mind explaining—

**WAITER:** It's self-explanatory.

**JOE:** Just order some food. How about the artichoke salad?

**WAITER:** We're out.

**JOE:** All right, then the—

**MARY:** Would you be quiet? I've got to find out about murder night!

**JOE:** You're making a fool of yourself. Just order some food and enjoy yourself.

**MARY:** What food? There's no menu.

**JOE:** Oh, yeah. I forgot.

**WAITER:** No menu?

**JOE:** No. Only the wine list.

**WAITER:** Would you like some wine?

**JOE:** No. We want some food.

**WAITER:** What would you like?

**JOE:** I don't know. We don't have a menu.

**WAITER:** There's one in your hand.

**JOE:** It's a wine list.

**WAITER:** So it is.

**MARY:** (*Exasperated*) Could we see the manager?

**WAITRESS:** Why?

**WAITER:** I'll handle this. Why?

**MARY:** I really didn't like the way the hostess handled things.

**WAITER:** I'll tell the manager.

**MARY:** *I'd* like to tell the manager.

**WAITER:** Why?

**MR. ELSINORE:** May we please order?

**WAITER:** What would you like?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Chicken.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Yes. Me, too.

**MRS. SALT:** And for me.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** I'll have chicken soup.

**MRS. SALT:** Chicken cacciatore.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Chicken ala king.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Chicken and dumplings.

**MRS. SALT:** With chicken wings.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** And chicken salad.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** And chicken-fried chicken.

**MARY:** But you told me not to order the chicken!

**MRS. ELSINORE:** It's delicious.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Scrumptious.

**MRS. SALT:** Outstanding.

**WAITER:** (*To MARY.*) Is that what you want?

**MARY:** No. I do not want the chicken.

**WAITER:** That's all we serve.

**WAITRESS:** We only have chicken.

**MARY:** You don't have anything but chicken?

**WAITER:** We have murder.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I'll have that.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Oh, yes. A side of homicide.

**MRS. SALT:** With a touch of mayhem.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Just a bit of death.

**MARY:** What's going on here!?

**WAITER:** Murder for everyone, then?

**MARY:** Joe! Do something.

**JOE:** I demand to see the manager!

**MR. ELSINORE:** Whatever for?

**JOE:** *(To MARY)* We're not satisfied with the service?

**MARY:** Right.

**JOE:** Right. We're not satisfied with the service.

**WAITER:** Well! I never!

**WAITRESS:** Well! I never!

**HOSTESS:** *(Entering.)* What's going on here?

**JOE:** We want to see the manager.

**WAITRESS:** They're not satisfied.

**HOSTESS:** I don't know why.

**JOE:** We don't even have menus.

**HOSTESS:** Why do you need a menu? Would you like some bread?

**JOE:** We've already had bread. And a rose. And now, I've got a headache.

**MR. ELSINORE:** *(Thrilled.)* Perhaps it's the effects of cyanide!

**HOSTESS:** I'll get the manager.

**MARY:** I'm frightened.

**JOE:** Of what?

**MARY:** These people are crazy.

*WAITER and WAITRESS have disappeared. BUSBOY returns with water.*

**BUSBOY:** Water?

**JOE:** Yes.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Don't drink it!

**JOE:** I beg your pardon?

**MR. ELSINORE:** It's murder night. Don't drink the water.

**BUSBOY:** Nonsense. It's just water. See? *(HE drinks some. All watch, frightened.)* Delicious.

**JOE:** I'll pass.

**BUSBOY:** *(Shrugs.)* Suit yourself.

*Exit BUSBOY; enter WAITER and WAITRESS with food.*

**WAITRESS:** *(To MARY.)* Chicken?

**MARY:** No. I do not want chicken.

**WAITRESS:** You ordered chicken.

**MARY:** I didn't order chicken!

**WAITER:** *(With ELSINORES.)* Chicken for everyone!

**MARY:** I don't want chicken—

**MR. ELSINORE:** Ah, the chicken!

**WAITER:** *(To MRS. ELSINORE.)* Chicken.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Thank you.

**MARY:** *(To MRS. ELSINORE.)* You told us not to eat the chicken.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** *(Taking a bite.)* It's delicious.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Marvelous.

**MRS. SALT:** Excellent.

*Enter MR. and MRS. MITHINGTON; they approach HOSTESS.*

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Table for two. Mithington.

**HOSTESS:** Mithington! I knew it!

**MARY:** We're going to get thrown out.

**JOE:** I demand to speak with the manager.

**WAITER:** Again? Isn't the chicken okay?

**JOE:** It's not the chicken. It's the hostess.

**HOSTESS:** I've already seated the Mithingtons.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** What?

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** That's impossible.

**HOSTESS:** *(Pointing)* They're right over there.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** That isn't us.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** There must be some mistake.

**HOSTESS:** I'm sorry. You'll have to sit at the last table.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** But we want *that* table.

**HOSTESS:** Sorry.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Where is the manager?

**JOE:** I demand to speak to the manager!

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Bring us the manager.

*Lights change color. Everyone gasps. Enter MANAGER.*

**MANAGER:** Quiet! *(Pause.)* Sit down, Mr. and Mrs. Mithington.

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**MR. MITHINGTON:** But they have our table!

**MANAGER:** It doesn't matter. Sit down anywhere. You'll still be served. Everyone gets served. . . on murder night.

*HOSTESS takes the MITHINGTONS, nervous, to a table. MANAGER looks at everyone.*

**MANAGER:** Well, now. It looks like we're all here.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I suppose so, but they took our—

**MANAGER:** Does everyone have chicken?

**MARY:** May I have something else, please?

**MANAGER:** Don't you like it?

**MARY:** No.

**MANAGER:** *(To WAITRESS.)* Go get her the special.

**WAITRESS:** *(Snickers.)* Oh! The special.

**MARY:** What special?

**MANAGER:** You'll love it.

**MARY:** Maybe I'll keep the chicken.

**MANAGER:** Don't be ridiculous. You don't want the chicken, so you may have the special.

**JOE:** May I have the special?

**MANAGER:** No.

**JOE:** Why does she get the special when I don't?

**MRS. SALT:** Oh, be quiet, would you?

**MRS. CABBAGE:** You're such a dreadful bore.

**JOE:** But why can't I—

**MARY:** You can have mine.

**MANAGER:** No, he can't. *You* must eat the special.

**MARY:** I don't want the special. I want to go home.

**MANAGER:** I'm terribly sorry, but nobody can leave. *(To HOSTESS.)*  
Are they all here?

**HOSTESS:** Yes.

**MANAGER:** Very well. *(Whispers in HOSTESS' ear; SHE nods and leaves.)* Ladies and gentlemen, I'm happy to welcome you here tonight. As you know, it's a very special evening. *(WAITRESS and WAITER enter with a covered dish.)* Ah. Here we are. The special for this woman right here.

**MARY:** Please, I don't want it!

**MANAGER:** You offend me, my dear. We've made it just for you.

**MARY:** No!

**MANAGER:** Very well. Anyone else not satisfied with their dish?

**JOE:** Well. I would like the check.

**MANAGER:** Nonsense. We're just getting started. (*HE waves WAITER and WAITRESS away.*) Now, I'd like to introduce our special guest this evening. You've read about him in the papers. You've seen him on the TV news. The one. The only. The world's greatest detective: Rathbone.

*Enter RATHBONE, to great applause; JOE and MARY look confused.*

**RATHBONE:** Thank you! Thank you, all. I'm delighted to be here with you this evening. Is everyone having a good time?

*General murmur of agreement, pause.*

**JOE:** Why is there a detective at dinner?

**MANAGER:** Don't you know?

**HOSTESS:** (*To MANAGER.*) They forced their way in.

**MANAGER:** Is that so? I thought they were the Mithingtons.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** We're the Mithingtons. They took our reservation.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Cads.

**MANAGER:** Oh, dear.

**JOE:** Look, could we just leave?

**RATHBONE:** Wait! (*Takes out magnifying glass and looks at JOE and MARY.*) Trying to get out before anyone notices, eh? Very suspicious indeed.

**MANAGER:** Please, Rathbone. Things haven't yet begun.

**RATHBONE:** Oh, I think they have. And *you* (*To JOE.*) are under great suspicion, sir. Great suspicion, indeed.

**JOE:** What did I do?

**MARY:** This is all your fault. You took the Mithingtons' reservations.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Cad.

**JOE:** But I did it for you, Mary.

**MANAGER:** Please. We're wasting time.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Yes. Let's begin the evening. I'm ready for a good murder.

**MANAGER:** Very well. I'll dispense with the formalities. You all know why you're here.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** (*Points at JOE and MARY.*) Not them. They forced their way in.

**MANAGER:** Oh, yes. Well, I suppose a bit of explanation is due.

**RATHBONE:** Do hurry. I'd like to get started.

**MANAGER:** We're here for murder night, don't you see?

**MARY:** Yes, but—

**MANAGER:** Which means any moment now we're due a murder.

**MARY:** That's impossible.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** It's quite possible, my dear. In fact, it's indisputable. Someone in this room will be murdered.

**MARY:** But why?

**RATHBONE:** So I can solve the crime, of course.

**MARY:** How do you solve a crime that everyone's expecting?

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Good point, my dear. If we're all here expecting a murder, then there's no crime to solve.

**MANAGER:** Not necessarily. You all paid two hundred dollars a plate—

**JOE:** Two hundred dollars!

**MANAGER:** (*Continuing.*) To enjoy a good murder. And I've set one up for you. The only thing that has to happen now is—one of you has to take the initiative and kill someone.

**MARY:** Impossible! This is illegal.

**MANAGER:** Nonsense. We have a murder's permit.

**MARY:** There's no such thing.

**MANAGER:** It's hanging on the wall by the men's room.

**JOE:** Perhaps I should go inspect it.

**MANAGER:** Sit down.

**JOE:** But—

**MANAGER:** (*Ferocious.*) Down! (*JOE sits.*) Thank you. The murder is perfectly legal, my dear. I've worked it all out with the police, you see. Rathbone is such a genius detective that they can't keep him busy with everyday crime and killing, so they've given us permission to have a nice murder right here, under controlled

circumstances, where Rathbone can solve the crime this evening and take the murderer straight to jail.

**RATHBONE:** It helps that my father is a multi-billionaire.

**MANAGER:** Yes, that does help, Rathbone. The police make far less fuss over things when your father's worth billions.

**MARY:** This is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. I'm leaving.

**RATHBONE:** Methinks the lady doth protest too much.

**WAITRESS:** Hey! That was my line. We did Hamlet when—

**RATHBONE:** Silence! (*To MARY.*) Why is it, young lady, that everyone else here came for a good murder, while you and your— what is he? Husband? Fiancée?

**JOE:** Boyfriend.

**MARY:** Ex-boyfriend.

**JOE:** Mary!

**RATHBONE:** Ah! The two of you have great motivation then, for murder.

**MANAGER:** Ingenuously done, Rathbone.

**RATHBONE:** Thank you. Actually, you all have reasons for murder.

Mr. and Mrs. Elsinore, bickering over flowers. Mr. Elsinore, buying a flower for the young man's date. The young man's date demanding a dinner that the young man obviously can never hope to pay for. The two ladies, hiding secret pasts... And the Mithingtons, completely overlooked by the hostess and replaced at their favorite table. Each of you has a justification to kill someone in this room.

**WAITRESS:** Oh! And I hate the waiter.

**WAITER:** Shh.

**WAITRESS:** Well, I do. I have every reason to kill you.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Do be quiet, dear.

*WAITER and WAITRESS exit arguing.*

**MARY:** This is absurd.

**RATHBONE:** (*Pause.*) Well?

**MARY:** Well what?

**RATHBONE:** Well? It's time for the murder.

**MANAGER:** Yes. (*Pause.*) Well? We're waiting.

**JOE:** Waiting for what?

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**RATHBONE:** The murder.

**MANAGER:** Yes. Get on with it, whichever one of you.

**RATHBONE:** *(Pause.)* For Heaven's sake, hurry up!

**MR. ELSINORE:** *(To MANAGER.)* Wait a moment. You're telling me that you're not going to kill one of the dinner guests?

**MANAGER:** Me? Goodness, no. Why ever would I do that?

**MR. ELSINORE:** I paid you to see a murder!

**MANAGER:** And so you did! *(To crowd.)* We're waiting, and whichever one of you wants to kill somebody, I wish you'd hurry up.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I didn't pay to commit murder. I paid to watch a murder. And to see it solved.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That's right!

**MANAGER:** Well, someone has to do the killing.

**RATHBONE:** Wasn't anyone hired to commit the crime?

**MRS. SALT:** Not I.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Nor I.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** This is ridiculous!

**MANAGER:** Oh. Oh, dear.

**MR. ELSINORE:** We've been cheated.

**RATHBONE:** Eh? And just what were you expecting, Mr. Elsinore?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Violence. Crime. Murder!

**RATHBONE:** And did you have a victim in mind. Perhaps... you paid for someone to kill Mrs. Elsinore for you?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Darling!?

**MRS. SALT:** This is no good. He solved it too quickly.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Not at all. There hasn't been a murder yet. Someone has to kill Mrs. Elsinore, first, before Rathbone can arrest them. *(To MR. ELSINORE.)* Take your knife and stab her in the heart, dear.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** How dare you!

**MR. ELSINORE:** I didn't pay to have you killed. I swear it.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** You heartless cad! Mother was right about you all along.

**MR. ELSINORE:** But darling—

**MRS. ELSINORE:** I'm leaving!

**MANAGER:** Sorry, Mrs. Elsinore. You can't leave. We're locked inside until Rathbone gets his man. *(Pause.)* Or woman.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Egad! Henry!

**MR. ELSINORE:** I'll protect you, snookums.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** But you're trying to kill me.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I'm not.

**JOE:** (*A realization.*) Wait a minute—Mary and I didn't pay two hundred dollars a plate like everyone else! Gosh-darn it, I guess that means we can't enjoy our dessert, then. So I guess you'll have to kick us out of here.

**MARY:** Yes! We haven't paid a thing.

**JOE:** So, sorry. We've got to go.

**RATHBONE:** (*Dramatic.*) Don't move. You're a prime suspect.

**JOE:** But no crime's been committed.

**RATHBONE:** That doesn't mean anything. There *will* be a crime. And as soon as it happens, you're the first one I'm coming to. You hear me, buddy? I've got my eye on you.

**MANAGER:** Are we all finished, now? Perhaps I should explain things more clearly. Each of you paid this evening for two reasons. First, you wanted to watch the world's greatest detective in action. But second, because for each of you, there is someone in this room you secretly would like to see murdered.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** (*Slaps her husband.*) You cad!

**MR. ELSINORE:** But Eleanor!

*With a sudden clap of thunder, the lights go out—screams, shouts.*

**MANAGER:** Don't panic, everyone. We must have blown a fuse.

**RATHBONE:** Nobody move!

**MANAGER:** Monroe, darling? Could you do something about the lights?

*The lights go back on. Everyone is still seated.*

**RATHBONE:** Egad! Someone has committed a murder!

*Pause. They all look around. Nobody's dead.*

**MANAGER:** Well. Maybe. Not yet.

**HOSTESS:** What about the waiter and waitress?

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**RATHBONE:** Of course! The waiter and waitress have been murdered!

*WAITER and WAITRESS both enter.*

**WAITER:** No, we're fine.

**WAITRESS:** I think I blew a fuse. I was trying to use the blender and the microwave at the same time.

**HOSTESS:** Is anybody dead?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Not me. Much to my husband's chagrin.

**MR. ELSINORE:** That's not true, darling.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I'm alive.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Me, too.

**JOE:** Could we leave now?

**RATHBONE:** Not so fast! Your little lady!

**JOE:** What?

**RATHBONE:** (*Pointing to girl.*) Her!

**JOE:** Mary!

**RATHBONE:** She hasn't moved!

**MARY:** What? Oh, terribly sorry. I was distracted.

**RATHBONE:** Confound it! Will somebody kill somebody else so I can solve this thing?

**HOSTESS:** Wait a minute!

**ALL:** Yes?

**HOSTESS:** Heather, the waitress, said she was using the microwave and the blender at the same time.

**ALL:** Yes?

**HOSTESS:** Why was the waitress cooking!?

**RATHBONE:** Egad!

**WAITRESS:** I had to! The cook has a knife in his back.

**RATHBONE:** What?

*WAITER and MANAGER rush offstage. They come back with a bloodied cook's hat.*

**MANAGER:** It's true. The cook is dead.

**RATHBONE:** At last! Nobody move.

**MANAGER:** He was face down, boiling in the soup.

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**MRS. SALT:** The soup! Uh! (*holds up bowl.*) Somebody take this away.

**MANAGER:** Well, now. There's your murder.

**RATHBONE:** You're all suspects.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Wait a minute.

**MANAGER:** What's that?

**MR. ELSINORE:** I thought one of the dinner guests was to be murdered.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** You *do* want to be rid of me!

**MR. ELSINORE:** It's not that, my dear. It's just—

**MANAGER:** Yes?

**MR. ELSINORE:** It's what we paid for.

**MANAGER:** It's true.

**RATHBONE:** Ah ha! Then the cook isn't dead.

**WAITRESS:** Oh, yes. The cook is dead. (*Enter COOK, hatless.*)

**COOK:** No, the cook is not dead.

**WAITRESS:** Cookie!

**COOK:** (*To MANAGER.*) You took my stinking hat.

**MANAGER:** I was trying to make a dramatic moment for everyone.

**COOK:** Give me back my hat. (*HE does.*) Who wanted to send back the chicken?

**WAITER:** (*Points to MARY.*) She did.

**MARY:** No, I didn't.

**COOK:** And you wouldn't take the special?

**WAITRESS:** She wouldn't!

**MARY:** Would you be quiet? (*To COOK.*) I didn't mean it—

**COOK:** Why are you here if you don't like my cooking?

**MARY:** I do! I do like your cooking.

**JOE:** I don't.

**MARY:** Please—

**COOK:** You don't like my cooking?

**JOE:** No.

**COOK:** I ought'a murder you for that!

**RATHBONE:** Egad! You heard him!

**COOK:** Who's this?

**MANAGER:** The detective.

**COOK:** Is it murder night?

**MANAGER:** Yes.

**COOK:** So none of you came here for my cooking? Just because you wanted the show of seeing someone get murdered?

**MARY:** I came here for your cooking. I don't like deaths.

**COOK:** Is that so? (*To WAITRESS.*) Go get her the special.

**WAITRESS:** (*Exiting.*) Oh, the special!

**MARY:** Please—

**COOK:** You afraid to eat the special?

**MARY:** Should I be?

**COOK:** It's murder night, isn't it?

**MARY:** Oh, please.

**COOK:** Then eat the special.

*WAITRESS comes in with the covered dish. All are tense.*

**WAITRESS:** Here it is! One special.

**MARY:** No, no, no, no, no, no...

**COOK:** Just for you. (*HE opens the dish. It is lobster.*) Lobster special.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** I want the lobster.

**MRS. SALT:** I'll take the lobster.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** I'll take the lobster.

**COOK:** It's just for her.

*The lights black out again. More screams.*

**MANAGER:** No one panic. It's just another fuse. . .

*There are three gunshots, followed by a scream. The lights come back on.*

**RATHBONE:** At last! There's finally been a murder!

*Triumphant, HE raises his arms, takes a deep breath, and falls over dead. Blackout.*

## **END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

**AT RISE:** *We're exactly where we left off at the end of Act One. MANAGER looks at RATHBONE's body. HE's upset.*

**MANAGER:** Oh, dear. I didn't plan for *this*.

**MARY:** A real murder?!

**MANAGER:** I *planned* for a real murder. It's just the *wrong* murder.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** How ingenious. Kill the detective first. Then no one can solve your crime.

**JOE:** He's faking it!

**MR. ELSINORE:** How would you know? Did you kill him?

**JOE:** Of course not.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Really? He suspected you before he died.

**JOE:** Of what?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Of being the killer.

**JOE:** Don't be ridiculous.

**HOSTESS:** You've acted strangely all night.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Yes! Taking the Mithingtons' reservations like that.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I'd planned this night for months.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** My darling.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** We were going to sit right over there. Where they are. And they took the table and left us over here. At this old thing.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Oh, my darling.

*They play kissy-face; pause.*

**MRS. ELSINORE:** *(Looks at MR. ELSINORE.)* Isn't that romantic, Henry?

**MR. ELSINORE:** I think I'm going to be sick.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Rathbone can't be dead. We paid to watch him solve a crime.

**MRS. SALT:** I want my money back.

**MRS. CABBAGE:** Yes!

**MANAGER:** Ah! Wait a moment, now. You came to murder night to watch a crime solved. But no one said that Rathbone had to solve it.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Then who solves it, then?

**MANAGER:** You do.

**MR. ELSINORE:** We won't solve anything. We refuse.

**JOE:** Someone call the police.

**MANAGER:** Rathbone *was* the police.

**JOE:** Call the *real* police.

**MANAGER:** I'm terribly sorry. That's not the way the evening goes. Rathbone paid the police department off. They wouldn't come, even if we begged.

**JOE:** (*Rising.*) This is absurd.

**HOSTESS:** (*To JOE.*) Sit down.

**JOE:** I will not sit down! We came here for a dinner, not a murder.

**HOSTESS:** You forced your way in here, bub, and you're going to stay.

*JOE sits. Enter FLOWER GIRL and BUSBOY. HE staggers up to the ELSINORE table.*

**BUSBOY:** Water? Water?

**MR. ELSINORE:** For heaven's sake, we don't want any water!

**BUSBOY:** Water. Water.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Wait. I think he's trying to tell us something.

**MR. ELSINORE:** What is it, boy?

**BUSBOY:** Water!

*HE groans and falls over, dead. FLOWER GIRL screams.*

**MR. ELSINORE:** At last! The intended murder.

**MANAGER:** No. That's not it, either. You see, we never kill part of the wait staff. (*Pause.*) Looks like we've got an uninvited murderer in our midst.

**HOSTESS:** (*Examining body.*) He's been poisoned. (*Pause.*) It was the water!

*All react in panic. Pause. For the first time, we realize that MARY is gorging herself on the lobster. Pause. They all look at her.*

**MARY:** (*Eating.*) This is the best lobster I've ever eaten.

**JOE:** How can you eat at a time like this?

**MARY:** Well. It's really good.

**JOE:** But the water. Someone poisoned the busboy's water.

**MARY:** So don't drink the water.

**JOE:** But don't you understand? That water was meant for me!

*Dramatic pause; MARY shrugs and eats.*

**MARY:** This is delicious. My compliments to the chef.

**JOE:** For goodness sake, you don't even care.

**MARY:** How can I care for anything when I'm eating such delicious food?

**COOK:** You like it?

**MARY:** I love it.

**COOK:** It's perfect lobster. World famous.

**MARY:** It should be famous. It's wonderful.

**COOK:** Ah, a woman after my heart.

**MRS. SALT:** Say. If you don't mind, I'd like some lobster, too.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Me, too.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** And me.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** And me! Why is she so special she gets a special and none of the rest of us is special enough for a special?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** My dear, you're blabbering again.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Terribly sorry, dear.

**JOE:** (*To MARY.*) Put that fork down! Doesn't anyone care about the deaths?

**MARY:** I won't put my fork down. This is delicious. I deserve it. I came on this stupid date with you to this restaurant and I've been put through two grizzly murders—

**MRS. ELSINORE:** It's not a bear, dear. The word is grisly.

**MARY:** Grisly murders.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Grisly? Do you mean something with gristle? She isn't having steak.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** No. Grisly. Meaning a horrible—

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**MARY:** Who cares about the stinking murder?! This lobster is delicious, and I have to put up with this loser at my dinner table, so I deserve to eat every succulent bite.

**COOK:** You really like it? My lobster got four stars in the *Times*.

**MANAGER:** Yes. And so did the restaurant.

**COOK:** Restaurant. Humph. You wouldn't have a restaurant if it weren't for my lobster.

**JOE:** Would someone please like to solve this murder?!

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Very well. I'll do it.

**MR. ELSINORE:** You? You're just an accountant.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Wrong. *That man (Points at RATHBONE.)* was just an accountant. *I'm* actually a detective.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** What?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** *(Showing badge.)* I came disguised as Mithington. I'm not really Mithington.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** You're not?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** No, dear.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Where is my husband?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I wouldn't know.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** But if you're not my husband, then who are you?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I'm Rathbone!

**ALL:** What?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That man *(Indicates the dead RATHBONE.)* is a fake. That's why I was so angry about your taking my place on the reservation list, Joe. Because if I wasn't here to solve tonight's crime, then the crime wouldn't be solved.

**JOE:** But how did you know?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** What?

**JOE:** You must've known Rathbone—er... that man... was going to be killed. Otherwise you wouldn't have a murder to solve. So that means you are the murderer!

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I beg your pardon?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Of course! Why else would you allow a vagrant like this boy to take your dinner reservation? You came in ready to commit a murder all along.

**HOSTESS:** Oh, this is fun! He did it.

**JOE:** Somebody call the police.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Wait just a moment—

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** I still want to know what happened to my husband.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I *am* your husband!

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** But you said—

**MR. MITHINGTON:** You're really Mrs. Rathbone.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** I am? And you're really a detective and not an accountant?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That's right.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** I'm very confused.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Just be quiet, Francis.

**MR. ELSINORE:** He's lying. He's not really a detective at all. *I'm* a detective.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Don't be an idiot, dear. You're not fooling anyone.

**MR. ELSINORE:** But darling—

**MRS. ELSINORE:** You could never be a detective. You're afraid of your own shadow.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I'll prove I could be a detective. (*Goes to RATHBONE and points at him.*) This man is not really dead.

**ALL:** What?

**MR. ELSINORE:** He faked his death, and he's just lying here, listening. Aren't you, Rathbone?

**RATHBONE:** (*Rising.*) Oh, all right. All right. You've got me. I'm not really dead.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Darling, how did you know that?

**MR. ELSINORE:** I saw him snatching little breaths when he thought nobody else was looking.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Oh, how ingenious of you, dear!

**MR. ELSINORE:** Thank you, darling.

**RATHBONE:** (*To MR. ELSINORE.*) I recorded the sounds of gunshots before you came and played them on the restaurant's sound system so you'd think I'd been shot.

**MANAGER:** Ingenious.

**RATHBONE:** Of course it was. But now, we've got a crime to solve, for this poor young busboy has been murdered.

**JOE:** Someone poisoned his water.

**RATHBONE:** Really. Hmm. We'll get to that. But first, (*To MR. ELSINORE.*) you, sir, are not actually a detective.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Well. No. No, I'm not.

**RATHBONE:** Good. (*To MR. MITHINGTON.*) And you're not a detective either.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I *am*.

**RATHBONE:** Do you have a reason to pretend to be something you're not, Mr. Mithington?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** You can't prove a thing.

**RATHBONE:** Not yet. But. I can prove one thing right now. Mrs. Cabbage!

**MRS. SALT:** She couldn't be a detective. I've known her all my life.

**RATHBONE:** She isn't a detective. Like the Busboy... She's dead.

**ALL:** What?

**RATHBONE:** Mrs. Cabbage is the *real* murder victim! I pretended to die so the murderer would be distracted and actually kill someone. The busboy somehow got in the way, poor fellow. Because the murderer, whoever he or she is, had Mrs. Cabbage in mind all along. And he. Or she. It. Committed murder!

**MANAGER:** (*Feeling her pulse.*) Yep. She's quite dead.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Oh, this is wonderful. We've gotten multiple murders for the price of one!

**MR. ELSINORE:** You're not supposed to be happy about it, dear.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** But this is what we paid for, isn't it?

**RATHBONE:** Is it, Mrs. Elsinore? Did you pay to see Mrs. Cabbage killed?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** What?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Blast it, darling, you're focusing the suspicion on yourself.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Oh, dear.

**RATHBONE:** Indeed. Did you know Mrs. Cabbage, Mrs. Elsinore?

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Why, no. I've never seen her before this evening.

**RATHBONE:** I see. Well. (*Examines MRS. CABBAGE.*) Someone had it in for her. She's been poisoned. And this time, it wasn't from the water.

**COOK:** Are you suggesting—

**RATHBONE:** The easiest way to poison an innocent victim. By poisoning the food.

**COOK:** What's that?

**RATHBONE:** Her lips are discolored. Her tongue has turned purple. Mrs. Cabbage was killed by a fast-acting poison extracted from King Cobra eggs. A classic ploy by a murderer. If I've seen it once, I've seen it a thousand times.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Amazing!

**RATHBONE:** Which means there's one of us who's got to do some explaining awfully fast.

**COOK:** Me?

**RATHBONE:** You're the only one who had access to all of the food in the kitchen, Cookie, old pal.

**COOK:** That's not true. The waiter and the waitress did, too.

**WAITRESS:** No, we didn't!

**WAITER:** You never let us touch the food.

**WAITRESS:** We have to fight to even bring it out to the table.

**WAITER:** Yeah. That's why she grabbed the blender when she thought you'd been stabbed.

**WAITRESS:** Yeah. *(Pause.)* What?

**COOK:** Pathetic children. You'll never pin this on me.

**RATHBONE:** It's your word against theirs, Cookie.

**COOK:** Stop calling me Cookie!? My name is Antonio(a). You hear me? Antonio!

**MARY:** This is the most delicious lobster.

**JOE:** Would you stop eating!?

**MARY:** I can't. I can't stop.

**JOE:** You're insane.

**RATHBONE:** She isn't insane. *(To COOK.)* It's your secret recipe, isn't it?

**COOK:** What recipe?

**RATHBONE:** The one whispered in every prison from Alcatraz to Sing-Sing. Your specialty. Guaranteed to be so mouth-watering good that you can't stop eating it. Until...

**JOE:** Until?

**RATHBONE:** Until you drop dead.

**MARY:** Oh. *(Pause.)* Oh, dear.

*MARY falls into her plate of food.*

**JOE:** Mary!!!

**RATHBONE:** Too late. She's been poisoned, too.

**COOK:** I've been framed.

**RATHBONE:** Have you?

**COOK:** Please. You've got to believe me. The waiter did it.

**WAITER:** How dare you!

**COOK:** You've had it in for me ever since I put that paprika in the order for table number five, and they forced you to pay their bill and leave them a tip!

**WAITER:** You take that back.

**COOK:** I won't! You had access to all the food tonight. And you had reason to kill the old woman, too. I heard you talking about it.

**RATHBONE:** What's that?

**WAITER:** You'll be quiet if you know what's good for you.

**COOK:** What's the matter? You afraid someone will find out your dirty little secret?

**RATHBONE:** What secret?

**COOK:** Mrs. Cabbage was really—his mother.

**MRS. SALT:** What?

**WAITER:** Confound you!

**RATHBONE:** Is this true?

**WAITER:** Yes, it's true! She gave birth to me all those years ago and left me in a filthy gutter to die. I was raised by gypsies, who forced me to come to work at this restaurant to pay my way in this cruel, cruel world. Yes, she was my mother, and I hated her—hated her for being my mother and hated her for being so cruel, and hated her for abandoning me and never coming back. I hated her for all of that. But I didn't kill her. Do you hear me? I didn't kill her. I swear. I swear!!!!

**COOK:** Well, Rathbone. You've found your man.

**JOE:** Yes. Check please.

**RATHBONE:** Not so fast!

**MANAGER:** What? The waiter's got the motive. He had the opportunity.

**RATHBONE:** Yes, he had the motive for three murders. But not the fourth.

**HOSTESS:** Fourth?

*HOSTESS suddenly falls over dead. Everyone gasps.*

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**RATHBONE:** Yes. That was the fourth.

**MANAGER:** (*Over body.*) She's my best hostess! I'm going to have to spend a week training a new one.

**RATHBONE:** Yes, too bad about that one. Wish I could've stopped the murder first. But, of course, the good news is we've eliminated a suspect.

**MANAGER:** But she wasn't a suspect.

**RATHBONE:** Oh. That is true, isn't it? Well, too bad.

**JOE:** The waiter must've killed all of them.

**RATHBONE:** What's that?

**JOE:** He came to our table first, and Mary asked to see the manager. It made him angry, so he killed her. Brought out the poisoned lobster, didn't you? You filthy dog!

*JOE tries to attack WAITER. MANAGER holds him back.*

**MANAGER:** Well, Rathbone. Take this man away.

**RATHBONE:** Not so fast. (*To JOE.*) You've got it all figured out, haven't you, detective boy? Or do you? Is it all just a convenient way to push the focus off yourself and onto someone else?

**JOE:** What focus on myself? There's no reason to focus on me.

**MR. ELSINORE:** (*Excited.*) Oh, yes there is! He had the opportunity to poison the girl's food, too.

**MANAGER:** Of course he did. He could've had a vial of poison to pour over the food when she wasn't looking

**JOE:** Don't be ridiculous.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Yes! And he stole our reservation.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That's all been forgotten, dear.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Oh, has it?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Yes.

**RATHBONE:** And why is that, Mr. Mithington?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Water under the bridge, that's all. Nothing to worry about.

**RATHBONE:** No. Of course not. Because... the poisoned lobster was really meant for *your wife*.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** What!?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Don't be absurd.

**RATHBONE:** Why is that absurd, Mr. Mithington? You arrived late and panicked because another couple had taken your place. You pretended to be me when you thought I died. All to take focus off yourself, Mithington.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** This is nonsense.

*During the following monologue WAITER and WAITRESS serve the MITHINGTONS their chicken. They are finished and leave by the time MR. MITHINGTON eats and rejects the poison.*

**RATHBONE:** You'd poisoned the lobster special before you got here. You slipped the Hostess a fifty and she let you in the kitchen before the restaurant opened. And then you arranged for the poisoned lobster to go to the girl instead of to your wife, who you intended to poison all along.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That's not true!

**RATHBONE:** It isn't true? Are you sure, Mr. Mithington?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** All right. All right. It is true.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** You intended to kill me?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Not you. Him. (*Points to MR. ELSINORE.*)

**MR. ELSINORE:** Me?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** You don't recognize me now, all these years and five facelifts. But it's me, Elsinore. Think back to that night in the war. Alone in the foxhole. When we realized the enemy was on all sides and we had no chance. You left me there all alone there to die. Surrounded by a hundred of the enemy. With nothing but a pistol and a map of the area.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Smythe!

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That's right, you filthy coward. It's me. Smythe. Never thought you'd see me again, did you?

**MR. ELSINORE:** How did you fight your way out of that one?

**MR. MITHINGTON:** Oh, you'd like to know, wouldn't you? So you can write it all down and turn it into a big action-adventure movie and sell it to Hollywood so you can make million dollars like you did when you wrote your own story about being in a foxhole and fighting your way out. But your story was a lie, Elsinore. A lie! A lie!

**MR. ELSINORE:** It can't be you, Smythe! Your hair was light and now it's dark.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** I had it dyed.

**MR. ELSINORE:** And you only had one eye. But now you have two.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** One's made of glass.

**MR. ELSINORE:** You had only one leg!

**MR. MITHINGTON:** My right leg is a fake.

**MR. ELSINORE:** And one arm. I've seen you use both your arms!

**MR. MITHINGTON:** All right, this is a real arm. I got it off a corpse in the Congo—a doctor sewed it right on and gave me a mechanical control. Real high-tech. They did a story about it in *People Magazine*.

**MR. ELSINORE:** You fiend! You meant that poison for me.

**MR. MITHINGTON:** That's right. I swore all those years I'd find you and take revenge for what you'd done. And now I have, Elsinore. Because, old chap, what you don't know is that the chicken you've just devoured was covered with slow-acting black widow venom. Oh, it will be a slow, painful death for you, Elsinore. (*HE begins to exhibit the symptoms as HE speaks.*) First, you'll notice a distinct tightening in your throat. Then, your labor will become forced as your lungs begin to collapse and lose air. Your legs will twitch, and you'll lose control of the muscles in your face, as your entire body begins to spasm completely out of control until, finally, you collapse, dead!

*HE collapses; is dead; pause.*

**MR. ELSINORE:** Guess he got the wrong plate of chicken.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** I'm confused. Should I be upset because he was my husband and he's dead? Or should I not feel anything because he wasn't really my husband and I don't know who I've been living with all these years?

**RATHBONE:** I'd choose the latter, if I were you.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** Oh. Jolly good, then.

**RATHBONE:** So we've solved one murder.

**MANAGER:** What?

**RATHBONE:** Mithington's. He accidentally killed himself.

**MANAGER:** But he killed all the others, too.

**RATHBONE:** No, actually he was too clumsy to kill anyone else. Except for the Hostess. He slipped her a poisoned fifty.

*FLOWER GIRL* rushes to *HOSTESS* and looks through her clothing.

**FLOWER GIRL:** You're a genius, Rathbone! (*Holds up the bill in triumph.*) Here it is! (*Pause.*) Oh. I shouldn't have touched that, should I?

*SHE falls dead.*

**MRS. ELSINORE:** You know, if you don't solve this murder soon, there's not going to be anybody left to kill.

**RATHBONE:** Yes, I suppose you're right. What we've got to figure out now is which one of you switched that poisoned chicken.

**WAITER:** (*Points at WAITRESS.*) She brought him the chicken.

**WAITRESS:** Oh no I didn't! I took chicken to Mr. Elsinore. *You* took chicken to Mr. Mithington.

**RATHBONE:** (*Examining MR. MITHINGTON.*) Yes... (*To JOE.*) Good thing you didn't play Mithington tonight, eh, kid?

**MANAGER:** But he *did* play Mithington! He took Mithington's reservations.

**RATHBONE:** Is that so? Well, now, son. Looks like you're in a lot of trouble.

**JOE:** I don't know what you mean.

**RATHBONE:** Your girlfriend's dead.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Ex-girlfriend. She broke up with him. Remember?

**RATHBONE:** Indeed.

**JOE:** So? She was just angry with me over the rose thing.

**RATHBONE:** What rose thing?

**JOE:** The rose that I couldn't afford but Mr. Elsinore bought for her instead.

**RATHBONE:** Where is it? (*HE examines the rose at the table.*) Egad!

**MRS. ELSINORE:** What is it?

**RATHBONE:** She didn't die from the lobster special. She died from a poisoned rose.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Then the flower girl did it!

**JOE:** But the flower girl is dead.

**RATHBONE:** Is she? Perhaps she's not. Because... the hostess didn't die from a poisoned fifty.

**FLOWER GIRL:** (*Jumping up.*) All right! All right! I'm not dead. I faked my death so you wouldn't expect me.

**RATHBONE:** Expect you for what? Selling poisoned roses?

**FLOWER GIRL:** No. They're not poisoned, I swear. They're antidotes, really. Anti-poisons.

**MR. ELSINORE:** A likely story, child.

**RATHBONE:** No, it's true. They are antidotes.

**MANAGER:** How do you know?

**RATHBONE:** Because the flower girl knew that someone poisoned the chicken.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Yes, it's true. I knew. But I don't know who did it, I swear.

**RATHBONE:** And why is that?

**FLOWER GIRL:** I'm blind.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Nonsense! You came up to the tables and sold flowers to all of us.

**FLOWER GIRL:** I used my natural senses of hearing and touch to discover where you were in the room.

**JOE:** But you knew where we were at the tables.

**FLOWER GIRL:** The busboy led me there.

**JOE:** And you went back and forth from table to table.

**FLOWER GIRL:** I counted all the steps.

**RATHBONE:** And you sold roses with potent antidotes to the poison that you knew the murderer brought.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Then what happened to the hostess?

**RATHBONE:** A good question. Perhaps someone slipped her poison without meaning to, eh, Elsinore?

**MR. ELSINORE:** What?

**RATHBONE:** You tipped her, didn't you?

**MR. ELSINORE:** How did you know that?

**RATHBONE:** How else would a man like *you* have gotten a table like *that*?

**MR. ELSINORE:** How dare you.

**RATHBONE:** No. The hostess didn't die from the rose. She died from the piece of poisoned chicken she snatched off Mr. Mithington's plate.

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** But she didn't snatch chicken from his plate.

**RATHBONE:** She didn't?

**MRS. MITHINGTON:** No. I did. *(Pause.)* Oh, dear.

*SHE falls dead.*

**MANAGER:** We're running out of victims.

**COOK:** And you're not pinning that one on me, either. I didn't poison anyone's chicken.

**RATHBONE:** Blast it. How did the Hostess die?

**FLOWER GIRL:** Perhaps she isn't dead? *(Pause, no response.)*

**RATHBONE:** Well, it was a good try, anyway.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Anyone want to buy an antidote rose?

**ALL:** Oh, yes! Me! Me!

**FLOWER GIRL:** Fifty bucks apiece.

**JOE:** They were fifteen bucks before.

**FLOWER GIRL:** Supply and demand.

**RATHBONE:** Hmmm. Let's see. The poisoned chicken went to Mithington...

**MANAGER:** Could you arrest the killer and end this now?

**RATHBONE:** Not yet. I've got to figure out what happened to the Hostess.

**JOE:** Just arrest Elsinore and we'll all go home.

**RATHBONE:** And you. *(To JOE.)* Mithington got the chicken intended for Ellsinore. You got the table intended for Mithington. And your girlfriend got the lobster somebody intended for somebody else. Seems to me like you're having a lot of good luck.

**JOE:** Well. I suppose.

**RATHBONE:** You suppose. Seems awfully convenient to me. Don't you all agree?

**MRS. SALT:** So you're saying he's the killer?

**RATHBONE:** Not so fast! You have a good reason for killing Mrs. Cabbage as well.

**MRS. SALT:** Me?

**RATHBONE:** That's right, Mrs. Salt. Or should I say Agent 20059.

**MRS. SALT:** How did you know?

**RATHBONE:** It's all over your face, 20059. The minute you walk into a room. The minute you open your mouth to speak. You're a spy, and everyone knows it.

**MRS. SALT:** (*Suddenly has an accent.*) So, you think you've got me, do you? I admit it! I'm a spy.

**RATHBONE:** Ah ha!

**MRS. SALT:** Sent by the government of Transpuffingtonvania to keep secret weapons from getting into enemy hands. But I'm on a diplomatic mission. I don't even carry a weapon. I was here to keep Elsinore from Mithington.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** What?

**MR. ELSINORE:** Ridiculous, my dear. I've never seen this woman in my life.

**MRS. SALT:** And the waiter—his mother wanted to make sure he got home safely. You know. All those stories about the gypsies and things. People talk.

**WAITER:** My mother was concerned for me?

**MRS. SALT:** She wanted you in bed by eleven and says you should take your vitamins.

**RATHBONE:** Nonsense! She wasn't concerned for you. She was here to make sure Mrs. Cabbage didn't kill you.

**WAITER:** Me?

**RATHBONE:** That's right, Special Agent 420.7.

**WAITER:** Great Scott! You've blown my cover.

**RATHBONE:** Mrs. Salt knew you were a government agent. She wasn't here for Elsinore and Mithington. She's here to keep you from giving the secret message to *Mrs.* Elsinore.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Blast it, would you stop this nonsense! Nobody is a spy, and I'm not here to get a secret message.

**RATHBONE:** Really? Look underneath your chicken.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** What? (*SHE digs in her food, then gasps.*) No!

**WAITER:** Eat the message! Don't let anyone see it!

*MRS. ELSINORE grabs a piece of paper from her plate and plops it in her mouth.*

**MR. ELSINORE:** What message? I didn't see a message.

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Nevermind.

**MR. ELSINORE:** Oh, come now, dear. You can tell me, my dear. I'm your husband.

**RATHBONE:** Are you? Or are you really a spy as well!?

**MR. ELSINORE:** How dare you!?

**RATHBONE:** I've known it all along. You're not really Henry Elsinore, who sat in the foxhole with Mithington. If you had been, you'd have recognized Mithington when he walked in the door—facelift or no facelift. No. You killed the real Henry Elsinore years ago and took his place, a secret government operative in place to keep an eye on Mrs. Elsinore!

**MRS. ELSINORE:** Henry!

**MR. ELSINORE:** (To RATHBONE.) You cad.

**RATHBONE:** That's right. I first began to suspect when you didn't recognize Mithington. But then I realized you couldn't be Elsinore when I saw you eat the chicken. Henry Elsinore is allergic to chicken!

**MRS. ELSINORE:** I didn't know that.

**MR. ELSINORE:** You didn't know that because it isn't true.

**RATHBONE:** Isn't it? You're not fooling anyone—Moriarty.

**MR. ELSINORE:** I won't stand for this!

**RATHBONE:** It was you who poisoned the chicken.

**MANAGER:** I knew it!

**RATHBONE:** Along with your accomplice in the kitchen—the cook!

**COOK:** I didn't know he was a spy!

**RATHBONE:** What was that?!

**COOK:** He offered me cash to sprinkle oil on the chicken. I didn't mean to do it! I didn't mean to kill anyone!

**RATHBONE:** A likely story. Elsinore tipped the hostess. The hostess tipped the waitress. The waitress tipped the waiter. And the waiter tipped the cook. All allowing Elsinore to slip a vial of liquid to pour over the chicken in the kitchen.

**JOE:** You're a genius!

**RATHBONE:** Thank you.

**JOE:** So somebody call the police and take all these people away.

**RATHBONE:** Not so fast! The vial that you slipped to the hostess, the waiter, the waitress and the cook, Elsinore. It wasn't a vial of poison, was it?

**MR. ELSINORE:** No.



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