

TEN LITTLE CHIPMUNKS

by Craig Sodaro



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SYNOPSIS: The laughs, frights, and fights are thick when billionaire Thaddeus Thornbury realizes the end of his life is near and invites all potential heirs to his secluded mansion on Chipmunk Island. These include his sisters, Isabelle and Rita, along with Rita's two children; his shifty lawyer, Noah; his voluptuous secretary, Holly; his grumpy cook and her cookie-loving daughter, Coco; and two long-lost country cousins. When all have arrived, Thornbury reads his will: the last surviving member of the weekend party will inherit the entire Thornbury empire. Conveniently, two strangers shipwrecked on the island appear just in time to notarize the will and join the familial festivities. Following a toast, poor Thaddeus promptly dies from rat poisoning. Amidst thunder and lightning, one by one the potential heirs begin to die, but the murderous plots are foiled in Sodaro's rapid-fire, double-crossing mystery.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(10 females, 4 males, 1 either)

ANNOUNCER (m/f) a radio voice (*2 lines*)

ISABELLE BLUNT (f) fifties, sister of Thaddeus
Thornbury (*93 lines*)

MRS. CHIPS (f)..... forties, the cook at Chipmunk
Manor (*45 lines*)

CHASE RANCIDDE (m)..... twenties, nephew of Thaddeus
Thornbury (*37 lines*)

BROOKE RANCIDDE (f) also twenties, Chase's sister (*84 lines*)

RITA RANCIDDE (f)..... forties, sister of Thornbury,
mother of Chase and Brooke
(*42 lines*)

COCO CHIPS (f) teens, daughter of Mrs. Chips
(*47 lines*)

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NOAH NAGLE (m).....	forties, Thornbury's lawyer (75 lines)
HOLLY BERRY (f).....	twenties, Thornbury's secretary (54 lines)
KATIE SUE (F).....	twenties, a long-lost cousin (103 lines)
COREEN (f)	twenties, her sister (92 lines)
THADDEUS THORNBURY (m)	eighty-one, head of the Chipmunk Empire (111 lines)
STELLA (f).....	thirties, his nurse (62 lines)
NICK (m).....	twenties, a shipwrecked romantic (116 lines)
KAREN (f).....	twenties, his date (104 lines)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 – The Great Room, late afternoon.

SCENE 2 – The same, an hour later.

SCENE 3 – The same, a half hour later.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1 – The Great Room, a short time later.

SCENE 2 – Various rooms at the manor, played before the curtain. A short time later.

SCENE 3 – The Great Room, an hour later.

SETTING

The Great Room of Chipmunk Manor located on the remote Chipmunk Island. Arch entrance up center leading to main entrance of house and stairs to second floor. Wing entrances down left and right. Large curtained window up right, fireplace at left. On mantel above fireplace sit ten chipmunk statues or stuffed animals. Portrait of Thaddeus hangs above fireplace. Desk against right wall set with phone. Couch downstage set with chairs and table(s.). Bookcase left.

COSTUME NOTES

Unless specified, modern everyday dress.

ISABELLE – Fur coat

RITA – Combination of “old hippy, young matron” -colorful long skirt, sandals, fancy top, perhaps some beads.

NOAH – Suit and tie

HOLLY – A “voluptuous” dress or outfit

KATIE SUE/COREEN – Western dress: jeans, cowboy boots, vests, western shirts, etc.

STELLA – Nurse outfit at the beginning, then change to summer clothes - shorts, tank top, sunglasses, visor, etc.

THADDEUS – Smoking jacket at the beginning, then change to summer clothes: golf shirt, shorts, sunglasses, etc.

FIGURE – Long, black robe with a hood. A mask and gloves can be worn to conceal the wearer’s identity.

SOUND EFFECTS AND LIGHTING

- ☐ Gunshots
- ☐ Glass shattering
- ☐ Thunder and lightning

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PROPS

- ☐ Several suitcases
- ☐ Backpack
- ☐ Spoon
- ☐ Formal invitation
- ☐ Briefcase
- ☐ Blanket
- ☐ Cane
- ☐ Wheelchair
- ☐ Silver tray set with eleven wine glasses
- ☐ Bottle of wine
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ Legal paper (last will and testament)
- ☐ Napkin
- ☐ Knife in Chase's back
- ☐ Small bit of paper
- ☐ Cookie
- ☐ "Rat Poison" box
- ☐ Forks and knives
- ☐ Tea tray set with cups and saucers
- ☐ Throw pillows on couch
- ☐ Large books
- ☐ Blow-up dummy dressed as a nurse (use Stella's costume from Scene 1)
- ☐ Flashlights
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Stacks of money
- ☐ Gun
- ☐ Identification badge

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

In darkness we hear:

ANNOUNCER: In breaking news, gazillionaire Thaddeus Thornbury, who made his fortune supplying chipmunks to national parks, is said to be near death. The man, who found his niche by breeding and raising funny furry animals for the amusement of tourists, is spending his last days at his secluded Chipmunk Island mansion surrounded by his loving family and devoted friends.

SETTING: *Lights come up on the Great Room of Chipmunk Manor. Arch entrance up center leading to main entrance and staircase to second floor. Wing entrances down left and right. Large curtained window up right, fireplace up left. On the mantel above the fireplace sit ten little chipmunk statues (or stuffed animals). Above the fireplace is a portrait of a grumpy Thaddeus. Desk with a phone is against the right wall, tables and chairs here and there about the room. Bookcase left.*

AT RISE: *ISABELLE enters center followed by MRS. CHIPS who struggles with several suitcases. ISABELLE wears a fur coat. Thunder and lightning occasionally during the scene.*

ISABELLE: Is the old buzzard dead yet?

MRS. CHIPS: Not yet, Madam.

ISABELLE: Don't call me "madam." It makes me feel old.

MRS. CHIPS: *(Sniffing.)* But you're his sister. You've gotta be at least - -

ISABELLE: His *younger* sister! *Much* younger!

MRS. CHIPS drops the suitcases

ISABELLE: Be careful with my bags! Why don't you take them up to my room?

MRS. CHIPS: I thought since you're so young, you can do your own lifting!

MRS. CHIPS exits right as CHASE and BROOKE enter down left

CHASE: And that's why the chipmunk crossed the - - (*He notices ISABELLE.*) Well, look who's here!

BROOKE: Auntie Isabelle! What an unpleasant surprise!

ISABELLE: What are you two doing here?

CHASE: (*Sarcastically.*) We're surrounding our dear uncle with devotion and love in his last hours.

ISABELLE: You've probably poisoned his I.V.

BROOKE: We thought we'd let you do that.

CHASE: After all, Auntie . . . you were the one who said wild horses couldn't drag you to Chipmunk Island again after that last fight you and Uncle Thaddie had.

BROOKE: Come to think of it, she looks like wild horses *did* drag her here.

CHASE: Tell us, Auntie Isabelle, have you married again?

ISABELLE: You know I did! I sent you an announcement.

BROOKE: Auntie, we get so many of those from you . . . why can't the post office toss them with the junk mail. Is this number eight or nine?

ISABELLE: Norman is number five. And this one will last.

CHASE: Hope springs eternal.

MRS. CHIPS enters center followed by RITA RANCIDDE, bizarrely dressed as a cross between an old hippie and a young matron. She carries a backpack.

MRS. CHIPS: They're right in here, Mrs. Rancidde, if they haven't killed each other yet.

RITA: Chase! Brooke! You beat me here!

CHASE: Not hard, Mother.

BROOKE: We've told you to junk the VW bus and get something with a little twenty-first century oomph!

ISABELLE: Rita! How charming! You look so . . . colorful! Like a blotter.

RITA: (*Pointing to the fur coat.*) That's . . . that's not real is it, Isabelle?

ISABELLE: Oh, dear . . . I forgot! You're allergic to fur!

RITA: (*Horried.*) How could you! Don't you understand those little animals were probably mothers . . . and they were cruelly trapped and yanked from their families and skinned alive just so you could show off how much money you make? You murderer!

ISABELLE: (*Slipping off the coat.*) You'd better hang the corpse in my room, Mrs. Chips.

MRS. CHIPS: I'm no accessory after the fact!

ISABELLE slings the coat over a chair as COCO enters left licking a spoon, chocolate all over her mouth.

COCO: Mama! I need some more chocolate chips for the cookies!

RITA: Can this be Coco?

ISABELLE: How could you tell?

MRS. CHIPS: Yup! This is my baby!

COCO: Mother! I'm no baby! I can recite the Gettysburg Address backwards!

CHASE: (*To BROOKE.*) Too bad she can't find her mouth.

MRS. CHIPS: C'mon, Coco, let's go find those chips or there won't be any dessert.

RITA: Mrs. Chips, how's my brother doing?

MRS. CHIPS: Hard to tell, ma'am. He won't see anybody but his nurse, Stella. And she's as tight-lipped as they come.

RITA: He doesn't leave his room?

MRS. CHIPS: (*Sighing.*) Too sick for that. Don't you read the papers?

MRS. CHIPS and COCO exit left.

RITA: Poor Thaddeus! I didn't realize . . .

BROOKE: Well, maybe if you'd called once in a while.

RITA: You know your uncle has been . . . difficult.

ISABELLE: The last time I was here he told me to get out and not come back.

RITA: He told me the same thing.

CHASE: Then why'd you come back?

ISABELLE: The same reason as you, Chase. *(From her purse she pulls out a formal invitation. She reads.)* The honor of your presence is requested at my demise. Let bygones be bygones and come to Chipmunk Island . . . blah, blah, blah.

NOAH enters center with HOLLY BERRY. He wears a suit and tie and carries a briefcase. HOLLY is dressed voluptuously.

NOAH: Mr. Thornbury asked me to send out those invitations personally.

HOLLY: I designed them myself. See the cute holly berries all around the edge? That's my personal touch.

ISABELLE: I thought those were crabapples or something poisonous.

HOLLY: *(Giggling.)* No, silly!

RITA: Mr. Nagle . . . did you send yourself an invitation?

NOAH: No. Your brother handed me one. He wanted to save the price of the stamp.

BROOKE: But you're not even family.

CHASE: So? Uncle Thaddeus didn't care for family . . . but he did care for his fortune, and that needed a good lawyer in control, right, Noah, old boy?

NOAH: I hope I've represented your great uncle's interest well.

ISABELLE: And what you have represented well, Miss Berry . . . aside from bad taste?

HOLLY: Hey! I called my mother at Sing Sing and she said this outfit would be just dandy!

BROOKE: *(To NOAH.)* Why is Uncle Thaddeus's secretary here?

NOAH: She's on the list. That's all I know.

HOLLY: And why not? I've worked my butt off for the old man!

ISABELLE: *(Walking around her.)* No, you haven't. It's still there.

HOLLY: That was just a figment of speech.

RITA: Well . . . how many more people are coming for the weekend?

NOAH: Well, now . . . his two sisters, Isabelle and Rita. Rita's children, Chase and Brooke. Myself and Miss Berry. Mrs. Chips and Coco.

CHASE: They're the help!

BROOKE: Surely they're not guests.

NOAH: If they're on the list, they're mentioned in the will.

ALL gasp.

RITA: (*Feigning innocence.*) The will? Is *that* what this is about?

BROOKE: Oh, Mother, don't act so innocent!

CHASE: Of course it's about the will.

NOAH: Mr. Thornbury's drawn up a new one.

ISABELLE: A new will? What's in it?

NOAH: I haven't seen it!

ISABELLE: How *dare* he!

RITA: Isabelle! Thaddeus can do whatever he likes with his money.

He made it, after all . . . breeding all those poor furry little creatures just for the amusement of tourists.

CHASE: The way you feel about fur, Mother, I'm sure you won't touch a cent of his money.

RITA: You're absolutely right!

ISABELLE: Ha!

RITA: I have a nice, tidy ceramic business. I tell fortunes on the side and sell lots of incense. I have all the money I could ever want.

ISABELLE: Good! Then I'll take your share.

CHASE: What about us?

HOLLY: And me! I typed my fingers to the bone for him!

ISABELLE: They are kind of bony, at that.

RITA: Well, maybe Thaddeus is going to distribute everything equally among us.

CHASE: (*Counting.*) One, two, three, four, five, six . . . seven if you count Coco . . .

BROOKE: (*Dazzled.*) That's over a billion dollars apiece!

NOAH: Oh, and I forgot . . . there *are* a couple of other relatives.

ISABELLE: What?!

NOAH: Long-lost relatives on Mr. Thornbury's mother's side.

CHASE: Who are they?

KATIE SUE and COREEN enter center. They are wearing western clothing: jeans, vests, and so on.

KATIE SUE: Howdy!

COREEN: This here's Cousin Katie Sue, and I'm Cousin Coreen!

ISABELLE: (*Horrified.*) This must be some kind of mistake!

KATIE SUE: This *is* Chipmunk Island, ain't it?

COREEN: Feller on the boat said it was.

RITA: You're related to Thaddeus Thornbury?

KATIE SUE: Sure 'nough! His ma was aunt to our ma, Betty Jane Culpepper.

BROOKE: So you're sisters?

COREEN: We're twins!

HOLLY: Go on! You don't look anything like each other!

KATIE SUE: We're sorority twins.

ISABELLE: I think you mean fraternal.

COREEN: I knew it had something to do with college!

KATIE SUE: You can imagine how we just about dropped our teeth when we got these here invites to Chipmunk Island for the weekend!

COREEN: (*Moving to mantel.*) And lookie here, Katie Sue! Little chipmunks!

KATIE SUE: One, two, three . . . eight, nine . . . eleven!

CHASE: Ten! Can't you even count?

KATIE SUE: I never was good at math.

BROOKE: There are ten little chipmunks.

RITA: (*Ominously.*) All in a row!

HOLLY: Kinda cute little fellows.

ISABELLE: But why are they here? Thaddeus never did a cute thing in his life!

COREEN: Maybe they're party favors!

COREEN reaches out to touch one just as STELLA wheels THADDEUS into the room. She wears a white nurse's uniform; he wears a smoking jacket with a blanket tossed over his legs. He has a cane across his lap.

THADDEUS: Get your grubby mitts off that!

RITA: Thaddeus! You're up!

THADDEUS: Of course I'm up.

CHASE: Can't keep crabgrass down.

THADDEUS: I heard that, whippersnapper! *(To STELLA.)* Push me over there!

STELLA: I really think you should have stayed in bed, Mr. Thornbury.

THADDEUS: And miss all the fun?

STELLA: You're too sick for fun.

ISABELLE: Really, Thaddeus . . . you should listen to your nurse.

THADDEUS: If she had her way, I'd lie in bed watching *Batman* reruns and drinking beef broth! But I didn't make ten billion dollars doing that, now did I?

RITA: No . . . you raised poor furry animals and sold them on a slave market.

THADDEUS: We aren't going to start that again, are we Rita?

STELLA: You certainly are not! Mr. Thornbury is not to be upset this weekend. His poor heart can't take much more,

THADDEUS: One good shock and *(He tries to snap his fingers, but can't.)* . . . well, you get the picture.

BROOKE: Then why are we here if we're not going to argue?

HOLLY: Something about the new will, right, Mr. T?

THADDEUS: How are you, Holly?

HOLLY: I'm just fine, Mr. T. *(She sits on arm of wheelchair.)* But we sure miss you at the office.

STELLA: Mr. Thornbury! Your blood pressure's rising!

HOLLY: *(Running her fingers through his hair.)* It's just not the same without you!

STELLA pushes HOLLY off the wheelchair.

HOLLY: Hey! I coulda gotten hurt!

ISABELLE: Ridiculous! Everyone knows bimbos bounce!

HOLLY: Hey!

THADDEUS: I see you haven't changed, Isabelle.

ISABELLE: Why should I change?

THADDEUS: Still running all those Chipmunk Kitchen restaurants?

ISABELLE: We're up to three hundred twenty-eight nation-wide. We're opening our first overseas restaurant in Malgala. They love chipmunk stew over there.

RITA: Murderer!

THADDEUS: And what are your offspring up to, Rita?

RITA: Well, Chase works at Blockbuster video.

THADDEUS: Now there's a career for you.

CHASE: (*Sarcastically.*) You want popcorn with your movie?

THADDEUS: And what does little Brooke do?

RITA: She's a systems analyst for a major U.S. airline.

THADDEUS: No matter what you say, Rita, you sound like the host of a game show.

ISABELLE: The Price is Fur!

RITA: Very unfunny, Isabelle. You've always been so cruel and heartless. I don't think in my entire life you've ever had a good word for me.

ISABELLE: Oh, come, come, Rita, darling. Why, I've said lots of nice things to you.

THADDEUS: Like what?

ISABELLE: (*Thinking.*) Well, there was the time that . . . well, there was another time, I'm sure . . . well, I know I said something nice when . . . (*Blithely.*) Humph! I guess you're right.

KATIE SUE: You two oughta be a whole lot more like us!

COREEN: Why, we're not only twins, we're best friends!

KATIE SUE and COREEN: Two peas in a pod!

THADDEUS: And I'm happier 'n a polecat with a mouse in its mouth that you two could make this shindig! I really wanted Rita and Isabelle to meet the other side of the family.

ISABELLE: The downside?

STELLA: Mr. Thornbury, now that you've greeted your guests, I must insist you go back upstairs to your room.

THADDEUS: Holy smokes! Must be time for *Batman*!

STELLA: You need your rest!

THADDEUS: She's secretly in love with Robin.

STELLA: That is absurd. I'd prefer someone older.

NOAH: Mr. Thornbury, perhaps you ought to listen to your nurse.

THADDEUS: I see you made it, Nagle. Bring the paperwork?

NOAH: Of course, just as you requested.

THADDEUS: Push me over to the buzzer, woman!

STELLA: I'm pushing you to bed! (*She pushes THADDEUS right.*)

THADDEUS: No, you're not! We've got business!

STELLA: Over my dead body!

THADDEUS pushes his cane into the wall as they reach right exit so STELLA can't push the chair any further. He then stands, using his cane.

THADDEUS: That can be arranged, woman!

RITA: Thaddeus! Let me help you!

THADDEUS: (*Swinging cane to keep her back.*) Think I'm helpless?
Hardly, girl!

Using cane, he presses button on right wall. A piercing scream is heard.

KATIE SUE: What in tarnation's that?

COREEN: Somebody's getting' their liver tore out!

ISABELLE: That's just the buzzer to summon the help.

CHASE: Uncle Thaddeus has always had a warped sense of humor.

THADDEUS: 'Least I have one!

MRS. CHIPS and COCO enter left.

MRS. CHIPS: Mr. Thornbury! You must be feeling better!

THADDEUS: I was 'til I spotted the vultures in the parlor.

NOAH: Now, that's not fair, Mr. Thornbury.

HOLLY: You invited us, remember?

THADDEUS: So I did! And to welcome you, we need a toast. The
Mouton Rothchild 1897, Mrs. Chips.

MRS. CHIPS: But that's your finest bottle! You sure you want to
waste it on this crowd?

THADDEUS: Come, come, Mrs. Chips. These are my family and
dearest friends! Who better to waste it on?

MRS. CHIPS moves to desk on which sits silver tray and eleven wine glasses. One glass in the center is taller than the others. She opens the bottle and pours during next dialogue. Each character but THADDEUS must at some point before the wine is served, pass by or come over to the desk, even for a moment.

BROOKE: Uncle Thaddeus, Mr. Nagle here tells us you've made a new will.

THADDEUS: Yup!

ISABELLE: What was wrong with the old will? Rita and I share the balance of the estate after a few tidbits for the help.

MRS. CHIPS: Tidbits! You think workin' here for all these years is worth a tidbit or two?

HOLLY: Yeah! I slaved for the guy!

COCO: And I had to grow up here!

MRS. CHIPS: Don't talk with your mouth full, Coco.

BROOKE: And Auntie Isabelle . . . you're forgetting that the current will leaves Chase and me . . . well . . . where does it leave us?

CHASE: Empty-handed.

ISABELLE: Rita already said that she isn't interested in any money. You can just divide her share.

RITA: That doesn't mean I wasn't planning to donate my share -

BROOKE: Oh! And stiff us, ha?

MRS. CHIPS: If anybody's stiffed, it's us!

HOLLY: Yeah! Us grunts deserve a break!

KATIE SUE: Gosh, Coreen, they sure do like to tangle!

COREEN: You'd think they'd learn to live 'n let live.

KATIE SUE: After all . . . it ain't none of any of your money. You hear that? It ain't none of your money!

COREEN: Uncle Thaddeus can do whatever he wants to with it.

KATIE SUE: 'Sides, you're all actin' like he's dead and gone.

COREEN: Why, anybody can see he's got years and years and years and years of livin' left in him.

ISABELLE: Aren't you the optimist.

THADDEUS: You see, Stella? You see what I've been telling you?

STELLA: Actually, it's a wonder you've lasted this long with a family like this!

THADDEUS: Greed runs in the family like brown eyes.

NOAH: You're right, Thaddeus. We've been acting like children.

COCO: Speak for yourself!

MRS. CHIPS: (*To COCO.*) You're slobbering on the floor.

NOAH: Why don't you just read us the will and - -

Thunder and lightning.

KATIE SUE: That storm is sure a humdinger!

COREEN: How'll we ever get back to land?

THADDEUS: You aren't getting back 'til Monday.

ISABELLE: What?

THADDEUS: Boat won't come back 'til then.

CHASE: Who says?

THADDEUS: I says, whippersnapper! You're all spending the weekend.

RITA: That's what the invitation said.

BROOKE: We'll see about that. (*She takes out cell phone and dials.*) You're so . . . twentieth century, Uncle Thaddy. I can order a helicopter just like that! (*She grimaces.*)

CHASE: What's wrong?

BROOKE: No service. I can't understand it! We always get service here.

THADDEUS: I can. Old twentieth century Thaddy has scrambled the satellite signals to Chipmunk Island. We're completely cut off from the rest of the world.

KATIE SUE: Gosh! It's almost like being at home, ain't it, Coreen?

ISABELLE: Brother Thaddeus, is there a purpose to all this . . . intrigue?

THADDEUS: Now don't go getting' ahead of me, here, Sister Isabelle.

RITA: (*With growing hysteria.*) What are you trying to do, Thaddeus? You know I hate being trapped anywhere! I'm a free spirit! I don't want to be stuck on an island! I can't stand it! Why have you done this? Oh, please! Please!

THADDEUS: Rita, the drama queen. Got anything to calm her down, Stella?

RITA: You can't calm me down! Not knowing I'm stuck here!
Nowhere to go! Nothing to do!

STELLA slaps the hysterical RITA, who immediately stops.

STELLA: Feel better?

HOLLY: Gosh . . . you coulda given her an aspirin or something.

STELLA: (*Threateningly.*) Yeah, I could have, but I didn't!

HOLLY: (*Frightened.*) Just a suggestion.

NOAH: Thaddeus, can we get back to the will?

THADDEUS: That's right! You're all so anxious! Well, let's not keep the guests waiting any longer, Stella. Wheel me over to the fireplace.

STELLA does so.

KATIE SUE: We sure do like your chipmunks, Uncle Thaddy.

THADDEUS: Why, thank you, Katie Sue. They're . . . symbolic. A symbol of my life's work . . . bringing joy to millions . . . no, billions of tourists . . . in the form of funny, furry friends. What would have been the joy of seeing Yellowstone as a child if you didn't have chipmunks to chase after? What would have been the fun of Jefferson Gap National Parkway without furry friends popping up everywhere? And would there have been a point to visiting the Grand Canyon aside from watching the chipmunks dart as close to the edge as possible without falling over?

CHASE: Well, now that you mention it - -

RITA: Chase!

THADDEUS: I have given the world smiles! Not to mention all those millions of photos of chipmunks that show lots of grass, leaves, and twigs but no chipmunks because they were too fast for the camera.

ISABELLE: Is there a point to all this, brother?

THADDEUS: Just reminiscing, my dear. But I suppose we ought to get back to business, eh? The will is here . . . Noah . . . you are to read it. I will then sign it. (*From his pocket, THADDEUS pulls out will and hands it to NOAH.*)

NOAH: (*Reading.*) The last will and testament of Thaddeus Thornbury. I, Thaddeus Thornbury, being of sound mind and body do hereby bequeath my entire fortune including Chipmunk Island to the last surviving member of the following list: My sisters, Isabelle and Rita; Rita's two offspring, Chase and Brooke; my lawyer, Noah Nagle; my secretary, Holly Berry; my two grand-nieces on my mother's side, Katie Sue and Coreen; and my devoted housekeeper, Mrs. Chips and her daughter, Coco.

ISABELLE: (*Horried.*) What do you mean "last surviving member?"

THADDEUS: Shhhhh!

NOAH: (*Reading.*) Should more than one on the list attempt to claim my fortune, all my money goes to the Save the Chipmunks Foundation. Should one survivor claim the fortune and then attempt to share it with the others, all my money goes to the Save the Chipmunks Foundation. Should no member survive, all my money goes to the - -

ALL: Save the Chipmunks Foundation.

THADDEUS: You're getting the picture.

NOAH: Thaddeus, you can't be serious about this will!

RYTA: It sounds illegal.

THADDEUS: I had my legal team check it over. Nothing illegal about it.

CHASE: But it doesn't make any sense!

THADDEUS: Of course it makes sense!

BROOKE: There's only one way to get your money.

THADDEUS: (*Ominously, rubbing his hands together.*) I know! (*ALL look one to another.*) And Noah, you're not quite finished.

NOAH: Really, Thaddeus! I thought I was your lawyer. You could at least have checked with - -

THADDEUS: Read!

NOAH: (*Reading.*) The surviving member of the list has fifty hours from the time of my death to claim my fortune or all my money goes to the - -

ALL: Save the Chipmunks Foundation.

THADDEUS: You understand completely, then! Now, we'll just sign the will.

NOAH: Wait a second! There's no one here who can sign the will!
We're all beneficiaries.

THADDEUS: Only one of you is a beneficiary.

NOAH: But we're all potential beneficiaries. Signatures of beneficiaries would never stand up in court, and the will could easily be thrown out.

THADDEUS: How about Stella? She's not on the list.

STELLA: I'll be glad to sign if it will get you back to bed!

THADDEUS: That's right! *Batman's* on!

NOAH: But you still need someone else not on the list, Thaddeus.
There must be two witnesses.

THADDEUS: Well, I guess I'll have to scratch somebody off the list.

ALL: No!

THADDEUS: Then what shall we do? We need another witness!

KAREN and NICK stumble on center, wet, in rags, as thunder and lightning boom.

NICK: Help us!

KAREN: Help!

CHASE: Witnesses!

ISABELLE: Right on cue!

KATIE SUE: Why, gosh, you two, you're soakin' wet!

COREEN: And you look like you just got done pig wrestlin'!

NICK: We were out in our boat . . .

KAREN: The storm came up . . .

NICK: Our boat sank!

KAREN: But we saw your light and swam and swam.

NICK: And swam and swam and swam and swam - -

ISABELLE: We get the picture.

THADDEUS: Lucky for you Chipmunk Island was in range. You're welcome to join our little weekend party. On one condition!

NICK: Anything!

THADDEUS: Sign this! *(He hands will to STELLA who signs. She hands it to NICK.)*

NICK: Right here?

THADDEUS: That's right!

NICK signs will, hands it back to THADDEUS.

KAREN: Nick, what'd you sign?

NICK: Beats me!

ISABELLE: A will! One that just might be murder!

NICK: Ha?

THADDEUS: No skin off your nose, young man! Let's have a toast,
Mrs. Chips.

MRS. CHIPS: About time!

She and COCO begin passing out glasses. The tallest one, of course, is for THADDEUS.

MRS. CHIPS: I poured the wine hours ago. Don't blame me if it's gone flat.

THADDEUS: At \$5,000 a bottle, it better have more staying power than that. That's right, everybody take a glass. You'll never taste anything quite like this again. Bought the bottle in an old wine shop in the south of France last time I was there. Always knew it would come in handy for a special occasion. Sorry, you two newcomers, but there's not enough for you. Mrs. Chips will see to you just as soon as we all raise our glasses high! *(ALL raise their glasses.)*

This little chipmunk went to market . . .

This little chipmunk stayed home.

This little chipmunk had roast beef . . .

And this little chipmunk went ready, set, go!

ALL drink. Immediately THADDEUS begins choking and sputtering.

ISABELLE: Thaddeus?

RITA: What's wrong?

STELLA: Mr. Thornbury!

HOLLY: Call a doctor!

KATIE SUE: Call an ambulance!

STELLA: *(Holding his wrist.)* Call the coroner! He's dead.

ALL gasp.

CHASE: But how?

STELLA: He's been poisoned!

The curtain falls.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING: *The same, an hour later.*

AT RISE: *THADDEUS is gone. His glass still sits on table. Other glasses sit here and there. MRS. CHIPS and COCO enter left gingerly with trays.*

MRS. CHIPS: Hurry up, Coco! We gotta get these glasses out of here!

COCO: Even the glass with the poison in it?

MRS. CHIPS: *(Horried.)* Shhhhhh!

COCO: Which one was it?

MRS. CHIPS: *(Pointing to THADDEUS' glass.)* That one. But we'll put 'em all through the dishwasher just to be sure!

Just as COCO is about to pick up THADDEUS' glass, NOAH and HOLLY enter center.

NOAH: I wouldn't touch that glass if I were you!

COCO: But . . . but . . . *(She bursts into tears.)* You scared me!

COCO runs off right.

MRS. CHIPS: *(Indignantly.)* We're just doing our job, sir!

NOAH: You heard what Nurse Stella said.

HOLLY: Mr. Thornbury was poisoned!

Thunder and lightning.

MRS. CHIPS: But are we sure?

NOAH: How else would he have died so quickly?

Thunder and lightning.

MRS. CHIPS: You're right! I had best put this glass in a Glad Bag as evidence.

Just as MRS. CHIPS is about to pick up the glass with a napkin, STELLA enters the room briskly center and moves to glass.

STELLA: Just as you say! Evidence! Can't be too careful with it!

She grabs glass with her bare hands.

NOAH: Nurse Stella! What are you doing?

HOLLY: You're smudging it!

STELLA: How careless of me! *(Thunder and lighting as STELLA exits left. We hear the sound of glass shattering.)* Oooooooooops!

MRS. CHIPS: I'll go get the dustpan. *(She exits left.)*

HOLLY: Gosh! So much for that evidence.

NOAH: And what do we do now?

HOLLY: You don't really think anybody's gonna take that will seriously, do you?

NOAH: How else can we take it?

HOLLY: *(Looking around, nervously.)* I mean seriously enough to . . .

NOAH: Knock off everyone on the list?

HOLLY: Golly . . . I didn't mean anything like that!

NOAH: But how else can anyone inherit the Thornbury fortune? The will says "survivor." The last survivor!

HOLLY: You're right, Mr. Nagle. And somebody already has . . .

NOAH: Poor Thaddeus. Just like that! *(He snaps his fingers. Instant thunder and lightning.)*

HOLLY: You better not snap your fingers any more. The lights could go out!

The lights go out. Thunder.

NOAH: Are you there, Miss Berry?

HOLLY: I'm here! But there's somebody else in this room!

NOAH: You're right! He's crawling up my pants leg!

HOLLY: Who are you? What do you want?

VOICE: *(Weakly.)* Help me! Help me!

Lights come up. HOLLY and NOAH are holding CHASE, whose back is to audience. A large knife protrudes from his back, which HOLLY and NOAH can't see.

NOAH: Chase! What's wrong with you, man!

HOLLY: Why are you on your knees?

NOAH: Cat got your tongue?

CHASE falls to the floor at their feet. HOLLY screams.

NOAH: Chase! You've been stabbed!

CHASE: That's what I've been trying to tell you.

CHASE passes a small bit of paper into NOAH'S hand, then dies.

HOLLY: He's been stabbed with Mr. Thornbury's best letter opener!

NOAH: Where was the letter opener?

HOLLY: On the hall table!

NOAH: So anybody could have used it as a weapon!

Thunder and lightning. MRS. CHIPS enters left with COCO, who is eating a cookie.

MRS. CHIPS: Who's screaming? You could have woken the dead!

COCO: Look, Mommy!

HOLLY: Mr. Rancidde's been stabbed!

A scream off center.

NOAH: What was that?

MRS. CHIPS: It sounded like - -

COCO: Another scream!

Thunder and lightning as KATIE SUE and COREEN enter center.

KATIE SUE: This place is noisier than the fun house at the State Fair!

COREEN: Why, look, Katie Sue! Cousin Chase doesn't look any too good.

KATIE SUE: He really ought not sleep on the floor like that. Ain't good for his back.

NOAH: Neither is the knife stuck between his shoulder blades.

KATIE SUE: You mean he's . . .

HOLLY: Gone to that big corral in the sky!

Thunder and lightning.

COREEN: Oh, Cousin Chase, who could've done this to you?

KATIE SUE: And wait 'til that poor, sweet mother of his finds out! Her heart's gonna break like a soda cracker.

HOLLY: I hadn't thought of that.

MRS. CHIPS: You mean before you killed him?

HOLLY: Me? I . . . I couldn't have done it!

NOAH: That's right. Miss Berry was right here with me the whole time.

COREEN: Then maybe *you* did it, Mr. Nagle!

COCO: Yeah! The lights went out in here, didn't they?

KATIE SUE: (*To COCO and MRS. CHIPS.*) But then either of you two could've done it!

NOAH and HOLLY: Yeah!

HOLLY: Put that in your skillet and fry it!

ISABELLE races on center followed by BROOKE.

ISABELLE: It's awful!

BROOKE: Poor Mother!

MRS. CHIPS: Something happened to Miss Rita?

ISABELLE: She took too many sleeping pills!

BROOKE: We couldn't wake her up!

KATIE SUE: You know what works for us when it's hard to get outta bed?

COREEN: We do a pig call. It'll pop the dead right outta their coffins.
Soooooooooooooooooooo!

NOAH: Stop it! I think they mean poor Rita is . . .

ISABELLE and BROOKE: Dead!

Thunder and lightning.

COREEN: (*Pointing to CHASE.*) Now ain't that a horrible coincidence!

BROOKE: Chase!

ISABELLE: Cut down in the prime of life!

MRS. CHIPS: Oh, no! The prime rib! It's burning!

MRS. CHIPS and COCO race off left.

HOLLY: Should we let her out of our sight?

NOAH: We wouldn't want the prime rib to burn.

HOLLY: But she could have killed Chase just as easily as you or me!

ISABELLE: And perhaps Rita as well!

KATIE SUE: Bein' the housekeeper, she'd know all the secret passageways.

COREEN: And just how long it'd take to get from up there to down here.

BROOKE: She'd know exactly where to find the letter opener.

HOLLY: We already covered that!

BROOKE: Just wanted to help.

HOLLY: Well, somebody better go in there and watch her, 'cause who knows what kind of poison she'll lace that prime rib with!

ISABELLE: You're right!

ALL move left in a group.

BROOKE: Let's not all rush in at once.

KATIE SUE: It's just that she's in the kitchen.

COREEN: And she's got a couple of real sharp items in there.

KATIE SUE: You ever see what a cook can do with a meat cleaver?

NOAH: Perhaps we're better off right here. Together.

HOLLY: Just don't touch the prime rib.

ISABELLE: It almost seems like we don't . . . trust each other.

NOAH: (*Insincerely.*) Of course we do.

KATIE SUE: Sure 'nough! We're all kin!

COREEN: Or are we?

Thunder and lightning as NICK and KAREN enter center wearing mismatched, over and undersized clothes.

NICK: Thanks for the dry clothes.

BROOKE: They don't exactly fit, do they?

KAREN: At least they aren't freezing cold. That ocean's just this side of ice.

NICK: Excuse me . . . but why is that man lying on the floor with a knife in his back?

NOAH: Afraid he's . . . dead.

KAREN: Oh, no! Have you called the police?

ISABELLE: There isn't any way. My dear late brother Thaddeus Thornbury scrambled all the satellite signals to Chipmunk Island before his untimely demise.

KAREN: So this is Chipmunk Island!

KATIE SUE: Can't you tell with all the cute little chipmunks on the mantel?

COREEN: Hold on, there, Katie Sue!

BROOKE: (*Looking at the mantel.*) Oh, my gosh!

HOLLY: There were ten chipmunks when we got here. Now there are only . . .

NOAH: Eight!

ISABELLE: And Chase and Rita are dead!

NICK: Kind of a coincidence, ha?

ISABELLE: And so's your arrival here on Chipmunk Island.

KAREN: We're sorry. We never intended to intrude.

NICK: It was all my fault. I thought the boat ride would be romantic.

KAREN: (*Lovingly, to NICK.*) Did you . . . really?

NICK: (*Ibid.*) Yes . . . just you . . . me . . . and the sea.

BROOKE: And now two murders and a houseful of suspects.

KAREN: (*Ignoring her.*) I just didn't realize how much you cared,
Nick.

NOAH: Perhaps we'd better move Chase to a more . . . comfortable
spot.

KATIE SUE: A nice bed where he can begin his eternal rest.

Lightning, thunder, lights go out.

COREEN: Let's just get him picked up here . . .

KATIE SUE: One, two, three - -

NOAH: Hey! You're picking me up! (*A thud.*) Ouch!

KATIE SUE: Sorry!

HOLLY: Here he is! Help me, will you?

NOAH: All right, everybody. One, two . . . three!

BROOKE: (*Breathing heavily.*) For crying out loud! I knew he loved
steak sandwiches, but brother, did he love steak sandwiches!

*We hear more moans and struggles, then silence. Lights come up.
Only NICK and KAREN remain onstage.*

NICK: Whew! What is going on here?

KAREN: Did you mean what you said, Nick?

NICK: What'd I say?

KAREN: About the boat . . . and the sea . . . and you and me?

NICK: Pretty good cover, don't you think?

KAREN: (*Disappointedly.*) Cover. Yeah.

NICK: Where do you suppose we ought to start?

KAREN: Where else?

NICK: I don't suppose it's locked.

KAREN: (*Angrily.*) Why would it be?

NICK: Just asking. What are you so edgy about?

KAREN: (*Bitterly.*) I'm not edgy.

NICK: You are. You've got that look.

KAREN: What look?

NICK: The one you always get when you're mad at me.

KAREN: I'm not mad at you.

NICK: You think I can't tell when you're mad at me?

KAREN: Let's just drop it, okay? We've got a job to do.

NICK: I never brought it up. You're the one who got mad.

KAREN: Me? It's always my fault.

NICK: You're the one pouting, Karen.

KAREN: (*Pouting.*) I'm not pouting!

NICK: Fine. Then let's get to work. (*NICK moves right. KAREN, arms folded, does not follow.*) Coming?

KAREN: I'm not pouting!

NICK: All right! You're not pouting!

NICK and KAREN exit right. KATIE SUE and COREEN enter center.

KATIE SUE: You know, Coreen, this place is fishier 'n the Lake of the Ozarks.

COREEN: You're tellin' me!

KATIE SUE: It's like somebody here's got a giant flyswatter 'n they're pickin' off our kin.

COREEN: All on account of that will.

KATIE SUE: Sad what folks'll do for money.

COREEN: First Uncle Thaddeus, then Cousin Chase . . . then Aunt Rita.

KATIE SUE: Makes you wonder who'll be next.

COREEN: Maybe we ought to do something about it.

KATIE SUE: Just what I been thinkin'. I know I ain't the killer.

COREEN: And I know I ain't, either!

KATIE SUE: That puts us in the clear. But it could be Cousin Brooke.

COREEN: Yeah . . . she wears them fancy designer clothes.

KATIE SUE: And how about Aunt Isabelle?

COREEN: (*Accusingly.*) Yeah! She gets her nails done by a professional! She told me so.

KATIE SUE: What about the secretary?

COREEN: That hairdo didn't come cheap.

KATIE SUE: And the lawyer fellow?

COREEN: I bet he's got a brand new Chevy.

KATIE SUE: I can't think the cook or her kid's got any reason to bump anybody off.

COREEN: I don't know. Probably costs a bundle to keep that kid in cookies!

KATIE SUE: You're right! Now they all got a motive.

COREEN: Motive? What's that?

KATIE SUE: It's what you gotta have 'fore you bump somebody off.

COREEN: Best thing to do is keep our eyes on everybody.

KATIE SUE: How can we do that?

COREEN: You watch Cousin Brooke and Aunt Isabelle.

KATIE SUE: And you keep an eye on that lawyer fellow and the secretary.

COREEN: Good idea!

KATIE SUE: And we'll both stop in the kitchen every ten minutes for a cookie just to make sure the cook's not hackin' anybody to pieces.

COREEN: Sounds like a plan. C'mon!

KATIE SUE: Where are we going?

COREEN: We'll start with the cookies.

KATIE and COREEN exit left as HOLLY enters center. She moves to phone at desk and dials.

HOLLY: Oh, darn! I forgot. No phone service!

Hooded FIGURE wearing mask enters center.

HOLLY: If I'd have known how boring this weekend was going to be, I'd have stayed at home . . . money or no money! I'm so bored I could die!

FIGURE grabs HOLLY around the neck and dramatically strangles her behind the couch. FIGURE then takes another chipmunk from the mantel and exits right. ISABELLE enters center and sees HOLLY, though the audience can't.

ISABELLE: Oh, dear! The little secretary has gone to the big temp pool in the sky. At least the competition's getting slimmer and slimmer.

ISABELLE takes a deep breath, then lets out a bloodcurdling scream. KATIE SUE and COREEN enter left munching cookies followed by MRS. CHIPS and COCO. NOAH enters right with BROOKE entering center.

KATIE SUE: Don't tell me -

NOAH: Who is it this time?

BROOKE: Holly Berry!

ISABELLE: I'm afraid she's . . . dead.

Thunder and lightning.

NOAH: Who could have done this?

BROOKE: Not me! I was upstairs!

KATIE SUE: Coreen and me were in the kitchen.

MRS. CHIPS: With their hands in the cookie jar.

NOAH: I was locking Chase's room.

ISABELLE: And I was finding evidence in the killer's bedroom.

BROOKE: What?

MRS. CHIPS: *(Nervously.)* What evidence?

NOAH: Whose bedroom?

ISABELLE: I found this!

She holds up a small box that says "Rat Poison."

COREEN: Why, that looks like rat poison!

ISABELLE: Yes! That's what it says on the box because that's what it is!

MRS. CHIPS: Is that what killed poor Mr. Thornbury?

ISABELLE: The box is empty.

COCO: That'd be enough to bring down an elephant!

BROOKE: What do you know about rat poison, little girl?

COCO: Don't yell at me! You scared me!

COCO runs off right.

ISABELLE: I didn't find this in Coco's room!

KATIE SUE: Where *did* you find it?

ISABELLE: In Nurse Stella's room!

NOAH: Nurse Stella!

COREEN: And she ain't even family!

ISABELLE: But she *is* an officer of Save the Chipmunk's Foundation.

NOAH: Why . . . if she could kill us all off . . . her organization would get every bit of the money!

KATIE SUE: Why, that sneaky - -

COREEN: Connivin' - -

MRS. CHIPS: Rat!

ISABELLE: Where is that Lucretia Borgia, anyway? Has anyone seen her?

ALL look one to another.

BROOKE: I say we find her!

NOAH: I agree!

ISABELLE: Let's start at the top and work our way down!

KATIE SUE: Why, lookie there! Only seven chipmunks left!

COREEN: We gotta stop her 'fore they're all gone!

ALL exit center as the curtain falls.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

SETTING: *The same, a half hour later.*

AT RISE: *NICK and KAREN enter left.*

NICK: That was a bust! You'd think it'd be in one of the usual places.

KAREN: This entire trip has been a bust.

NICK: What do you mean by that?

KAREN: I merely mean it has been . . . unsuccessful.

NICK: No, you distinctly implied something else.

KAREN: You're reading too much into everything I say, Nick.

NICK: Only because you keep saying things you want me to read things into.

KAREN: I want you to? If I want to say something, I won't beat around the bush.

NICK: Come on, Karen!

KAREN: Come on? What do you mean?

NICK: Women are from Venus, men are from Mars.

KAREN: What are you talking about?

NICK: Men come out and say things directly. Women love to beat around the bush.

KAREN: That is so sexist!

NICK: It's the truth. You say this little trip has been unsuccessful. That word "unsuccessful" carries many levels of meaning. Which one do you mean?

KAREN: I mean unsuccessful!

NICK: As in our main purpose has not been accomplished?

KAREN: True.

NICK: I'll agree with you on that level it has been unsuccessful.

KAREN: You see how simple that is?

NICK: But you also mean something deeper, don't you?

KAREN: I do not!

NICK: I think you do.

KAREN: Where do you come up with these crazy ideas?

NICK: I can see it in your eyes.

KAREN: What?

NICK: It's all in the way you look at me.

KAREN: The way I look at you? Nick, I think you're giving yourself too much credit.

NICK: Then why am I getting certain . . . vibes?

KAREN: Vibes? Just because I agreed to this weekend with you doesn't mean - -

NICK: What does it mean, Karen?

A scream from off center. Thunder and lightning.

KAREN: Shhhh! They're coming!

NICK: Let's hide!

KAREN: Why?

NICK: They might say something that will help.

KAREN: Good thinking!

NICK: See what I mean?

NICK and KAREN each hide behind a curtain on either side of the window as KATIE SUE and COREEN enter center. NOAH and ISABELLE enter down left, COCO and MRS. CHIPS enter right. BROOKE runs on center.

ISABELLE: Have you found her?

KATIE SUE: (*Terrified.*) 'Fraid so!

COREEN: We surely did, Aunt Isabelle!

NOAH: Then let's get her in here and ask about the poison.

KATIE SUE: She ain't gonna have much to say.

MRS. CHIPS: (*With relish.*) We'll make her talk!

COCO: You can do it, Ma! All you gotta do is show her your guttin' knife 'n she'll sing like a canary!

COREEN: Your guttin' knife won't do a lick of good.

BROOKE: Where is Nurse Stella?

KATIE SUE: (*Pointing out the window, but not looking down herself.*)
Down there!

ISABELLE: She's outside?

COREEN: Kind of all over outside!

ALL rush to window and look down.

NOAH: She's lying on the rocks down there!

COCO: You can hardly tell it's her!

COREEN: She's wearin' that cute little uniform.

BROOKE: *(Turning back to the room.)* So someone got to her.

MRS. CHIPS: And that means she's not the killer after all.

ISABELLE: But the poison was in her room!

MRS. CHIPS: *(Suspiciously.)* Beggin' your pardon, ma'am . . . but we only got your word for that.

BROOKE: That's right, Aunt Isabelle!

NOAH: You could have killed Thaddeus and then used the poison to blame Nurse Stella.

KATIE SUE: And when she decided to tell the truth . . .

COREEN: You pushed her to her death!

ISABELLE: No! No!

COCO: You want me to get the guttin' knife, Ma?

ISABELLE: It's not true! I never killed anyone!

KATIE SUE: Prove it!

ISABELLE: All right! Look at my nails!

ISABELLE proudly holds out her hands to admire her nails.

COREEN: What about your nails?

BROOKE: They're fabulous, as always!

ISABELLE: I rest my case! If I'd have killed anyone, I'd at least have chipped a nail.

MRS. CHIPS: Darned if you aren't right!

ISABELLE: And we've all seemed to have forgotten something.

NOAH: What's that?

ISABELLE: Where's the cute couple who coincidentally ended up crashing our party?

KATIE SUE: That's right!

COREEN: We ain't seen 'em in a month of Sundays!

NOAH bumps into NICK, who is shaking behind the curtain.

NOAH: Oh, pardon me. *(He realizes someone's hiding there.)* Hey! Wait a second! Who's behind the curtain?

NICK: Run, Karen! Run!

NICK and KAREN shoot out from behind the curtains. NICK runs right, KAREN left. NOAH, ISABELLE, BROOKE chase after NICK, exiting right. MRS. CHIPS, COCO, KATIE SUE, and COREEN race off left. A few moments later, NOAH, ISABELLE, BROOKE run on right. MRS. CHIPS, COCO, KATIE SUE, and COREEN enter right, out of breath.

KATIE SUE: Why, darned if they didn't vanish!

COREEN: Just like that!

COREEN snaps her fingers. Thunder and lightning.

ISABELLE: They've got to be somewhere.

NOAH: But we can't search this house again!

COCO: I'm too hungry.

MRS. CHIPS: How about you all come in and have some of that delicious prime rib. It's done just right.

BROOKE: Well, I suppose that wouldn't be a bad idea.

KATIE SUE: All this chasin' around has sure given me an appetite.

COREEN: I'm so hungry I could even eat squirrel stew, and you know what I think about squirrel stew, Katie Sue.

KATIE SUE: I know . . . too much buckshot in every bite.

ISABELLE: *(Suspiciously.)* Well, some of us aren't so easily lured to our deaths!

BROOKE: Aunt Isabelle . . . what do you mean?

ISABELLE: Who's to say the prime rib isn't laced with rat poison?

COCO: You think Ma would ruin a good piece of meat?

NOAH: To inherit a fortune? Of course she would!

MRS. CHIPS: *(Incensed.)* Why, how dare you! I'd never do such a thing! I'll give my own little Coco the first piece so you can see there's no rat poison in it!

KATIE SUE: Good enough for me! C'mon!

KATIE SUE, COREEN, and BROOKE exit right.

COCO: Can I really have the first piece, Ma?

MRS. CHIPS: Darn tootin'! You go on 'n dig in!

COCO runs off right.

ISABELLE: Very brazen of you, Mrs. Chips!

MRS. CHIPS: Brazen nothing! I'd never ruin a good hunk of beef!

NOAH: Well, maybe we should go have a bite, Isabelle!

ISABELLE: Over my dead body!

Thunder, lightning. Lights go out. Three shots ring out. A moment later, the lights come up. The stage is empty. KATIE SUE, COREEN, BROOKE, and COCO enter right holding forks and knives.

KATIE SUE: Them were gunshots!

COREEN: But there ain't no bodies!

BROOKE: Then where are they?

COCO: Oh my gosh! Look!

COCO points to mantel. Only four chipmunks remain.

KATIE SUE: Three more gone!

COREEN: Only four left!

BROOKE: It's only a matter of time!

Thunder, lightning, the curtain falls.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

SETTING: *The same, a short time later. A tea tray sits on the desk with cups and saucers.*

AT RISE: *The stage is empty. The curtains are drawn across the window. We hear a noise. A moment later, KATIE SUE and COREEN enter left, COCO and BROOKE enter right. COCO is eating a cookie.*

KATIE SUE: You hear something?

BROOKE: How can I hear anything with Cookie Monster chewing all the time?

COCO: *(Offended.)* Sorry! I can't help it if I eat when I'm scared!

COREEN: *(Terrified.)* If that's the case, you'll be a blimp by the time this weekend is over!

KATIE SUE: Coreen, that wasn't nice!

BROOKE: But it's true! Look!

BROOKE points to the chipmunks remaining on the mantel.

COCO: One, two, three, four!

KATIE SUE: Then that means those shots we heard - -

COREEN: *(Gulping.)* We're the only four left.

BROOKE: Plus the killers!

KATIE SUE: You think it was them two that stopped by?

BROOKE: Who else can it be?

COCO: Yeah! You don't just "stop by" Chipmunk Island. Nobody ever "stops by." Even meter readers don't "stop by."

COREEN: But why would they . . . I mean . . . nobody even knows who they are!

BROOKE: Maybe they just get their kicks out of killing.

COCO: Oh, gosh! Now I'm really scared!

BROOKE: Get yourself another cookie!

COCO: *(Terrified.)* This is the last one!

A noise from behind the curtain.

KATIE SUE: Shhhhhh! You hear that?

COREEN: Somebody's trying to get in through the window!

BROOKE: (*Grabbing throw pillows off the couch.*) Here!

KATIE SUE: What's this for?

BROOKE: A weapon! Hit 'em on the head!

COREEN: Now what good's that gonna do? We gotta get ourselves a real humdinger of a weapon!

KATIE SUE and COREEN each grab a large book from bookcase instead.

KATIE SUE: (*Looking at title.*) The Divine Comedy. Never heard of it, but it sure is heavy. What you got, Coreen?

COREEN: (*Mispronounced.*) Les Miserables.

KATIE SUE: It'll make whoever it is miserable all right!

KATIE SUE and COREEN stand on either side of the curtains. With their free hands they jerk the curtains open. A blow-up dummy wearing a nurse's uniform floats into the room. KATIE SUE and COREEN beat it with the books.

KATIE SUE: Take that!

COREEN: Whaddaya mean scarin' us like that?!

KATIE SUE: That'll teach you to go hurtin' people!

COREEN: And sneakin' around!

BROOKE: Katie Sue! Coreen!

COCO: Why, lookie there! That's just a doll.

KATIE SUE: (*Disappointedly.*) A doll! No wonder it didn't fight back.

COREEN: I coulda sworn it was Nurse Stella.

NICK and KAREN enter down left.

NICK: Just like you were supposed to!

BROOKE: Oh, so you're still here.

KAREN: No boat 'til Monday. Remember?

KATIE SUE: Kinda convenient.

NICK: What do you mean?

COREEN: Gives you the whole weekend to bump us all off.

KAREN: Don't be ridiculous. A minute ago you were blaming Nurse Stella for the murders.

COCO: 'Til we saw her lyin' on the rocks down there. No way she could've done anything.

NICK: That's what somebody wanted you to think. That dummy is what you saw lying on those rocks down there.

KATIE SUE: Go on!

BROOKE: You mean . . . Nurse Stella isn't dead?

KAREN: Let's put it this way. That's not her body. If she is dead, she's resting in peace someplace else.

COREEN: But that don't make sense! Why would anybody want us to think her body's down there?

NICK: So you'd no longer suspect Nurse Stella.

BROOKE: So Aunt Isabelle was right. She must have found the poison in Nurse Stella's room.

KAREN: Bingo!

COCO: And Nurse Stella could be alive right now!

KATIE SUE: We . . . we gotta find her 'fore she finds us.

BROOKE: Wait a second! Wait a second!

COREEN: We waste any more time and our chipmunks'll be gone, too!

BROOKE: Who's to say that Nurse Stella really is alive?

KATIE SUE: Huh?

BROOKE: (*Suspiciously.*) Maybe these two strangers just cooked up this doll bit to fool us. Send us off on a wild goose chase so they can knock us off one by one. Maybe Nurse Stella is dead and they just want us to believe she isn't!

NICK: (*Nervously.*) Why . . . why would we do that?

BROOKE: I don't know. You tell me. What are you really doing here?

KAREN: (*Nervously.*) Look . . . we feel bad about crashing your party, but we really don't know what's going on.

NICK: I'll admit I climbed down on the rocks just to see if the poor woman was dead, but the minute I touched this doll, the wind carried it up to the balcony.

KAREN moves to desk.

KAREN: Is this coffee by any chance?

COCO: It's tea. Mama told me to put out some tea for after dinner.

KAREN: Good. I like tea better.

BROOKE: Look, I'm not convinced this doll just blew up to the balcony.

NICK: I don't know what we can do to set you straight.

KAREN: *(Sipping her tea.)* We'd never hurt a fly.

NICK: I'm . . . I'm a research librarian, for crying out loud.

KAREN: And I work in a day care center. Little Buddy's Playhouse.
I have the number right . . . *(She suddenly begins to cough and gasp for air.)*

NICK: Karen? What's wrong? Karen!

KATIE SUE: Oh, no! She's been poisoned, too!

NICK: Karen! Karen!

KAREN has slumped over onto the couch.

BROOKE: What'd you put in that tea, Coco?

COCO: Just a tea bag!

NICK: *(Pointing to COCO.)* There's your killer!

COCO: Me?

COREEN: Sure! You're the youngest one here. You'd have a whole lot more time than the rest of us to spend all Uncle Thaddy's bucks.

BROOKE: That's right!

COCO: But . . . but . . . maybe Nurse Stella did it!

KATIE SUE: Yeah! If she's behind all this . . . she could've sneaked in here and put some rat poison in it!

BROOKE: But the box was empty!

COREEN: They sell that stuff in three-packs at Wal-Mart!

BROOKE: We've got to find her!

COCO: Search this creepy place again?

NICK: *(Through his tears.)* You've got to! For Karen's sake - -

KATIE SUE: Gosh, you poor man - -

COREEN: Her life snuffed out, just like that.

COREEN snaps her fingers. Thunder and lightning.

NICK: We can't think about that now. All that matters is stopping the next murder! I'll go up and search the attic.

BROOKE: Coco and I will take this floor.

KATIE SUE: I guess that leaves the basement for us, Coreen.

COREEN: Sure. Why not? A nice, creepy old basement full of cobwebs.

NICK: (*Ominously.*) Who knows what you might find down there?

BROOKE: Or who!

COREEN: That's what I'm afraid of!

NICK: Go ahead . . . I'll follow.

BROOKE: C'mon, Coco. You got keys to all the rooms?

COCO: Mama's got 'em hid in the mushroom jar. (*She leads BROOKE off left.*)

KATIE SUE: I think the basement's this way, Coreen. (*KATIE SUE moves right. COREEN grabs a pillow.*) Maybe you oughtta take that book instead.

COREEN: It's okay. I'm miserable enough.

KATIE SUE and COREEN exit right. NICK picks up teacup KAREN used and smells it. He takes a sip.

NICK: Not the best tea, but I don't think it's bad enough to kill you.

KAREN: (*Sitting up.*) I didn't think I'd fool you.

NICK: You didn't have to fool me. They swallowed it hook, line, and sinker.

KAREN: I had to do something.

NICK: I know. They were ready to get a rope and hang us.

KAREN: You know, Nick . . . I didn't think you were particularly convincing.

NICK: I wasn't?

KAREN: Your grief was a bit too . . . restrained.

NICK: I knew you were faking it.

KAREN: Is that why you had to test the tea first? A tear or two would have been nice.

NICK: When you really die, I'll be cut up like an old magazine.

KAREN: Oh, I see. I have to really die before you show any kind of emotion, is that it?

NICK: We're back to that, huh?

KAREN: As far as I'm concerned, Nick . . . we've never left the subject.

NICK: Here we are in a house inhabited by a serial killer and you're worried about our relationship.

KAREN: Oh, so you admit we have one.

NICK: A professional one.

KAREN: And a personal one.

NICK: Can't we talk about this when we're off this island?

KAREN: When I'd have to sit home and wait for you to call? Not on your life! Events like this are supposed to bring people together.

NICK: Karen, murder is not romantic.

KAREN: That's not what I mean. The tension, the strain . . . the excitement . . . aren't they making you feel anything?

NICK: Yeah . . . tense, strung-out, and excited!

KAREN: Isn't there something in this room you'd just like to grab and hold forever?

NICK: *(Looking around.)* Nope!

KAREN: You're such a . . . a . . . man! *(She moves to exit center.)*

NICK: Where are you going?

KAREN: We're supposed to search the attic, remember?

NICK: You're supposed to be dead!

KAREN: Oh, I guess you like it that way, huh? *(She races off center, crying.)*

NICK: Oh, who can figure a woman! They change just like that! *(He snaps his fingers. Thunder, lightning, and the curtain falls.)*



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