

THIS COULD BE MURDER

by Craig Sodaro



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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARTI TRUMAN (m/f)	Television director. (14 lines)
POLLY DEWETT (f)	Host of “The Polly Dewett My Way Show.” (149 lines)
EDWINA MEDDLETON (f).....	Etiquette expert. (71 lines)
SATYNNE LINING (f).....	Fashion designer. (53 lines)
SHAG BERBER (m)	Carpenter. (64 lines)
DAISY PLANT (f).....	Horticulturalist. (60 lines)
ART KRAFT (m).....	Craft specialist. (36 lines)
VINNIE ROMANO (m)	Chef. (51 lines)
VERNA BROOMALL (f)	Housekeeper. (161 lines)
MAXINE STAR (f)	Polly’s agent. (61 lines)
BEULAH ASP (f)	Audience guest. (23 lines)
SADIE SWITZER (f).....	Another guest. (33 lines)
TIGER SWITZER (m).....	Sadie’s husband. (31 lines)
DR. REGGIE REYNOLDS (m/f)	Another audience guest. (29 lines)
PRECIOUS (f)	Verna’s missionary sister. (90 lines)

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 – Cozy Cottage

SCENE 2 – Two hours later

SCENE 3 – Later that night

ACT TWO

SCENE 1 – The following morning

SCENE 2 – That evening, about eight o'clock

SCENE 3 – An hour later

COSTUMES

Modern. Anything special is mentioned in the script. SHERIFF LEGHORN and DEPUTY DIBBS could wear a police badge/ cap/uniform. “Dress up” each of the experts to exaggerate their specialty.

PROPS

- ☐ Mug (Polly)
- ☐ “Thank You” notes
- ☐ Video camera
- ☐ Miscellaneous bottles on craft table
- ☐ Tray of cookies
- ☐ Afghan/blanket
- ☐ Magazine
- ☐ Plate of sandwiches
- ☐ Box of junk
- ☐ Fabric
- ☐ Another box (Shag)
- ☐ Suitcases (Sadie/Tiger)
- ☐ Notebook (Dibbs)
- ☐ Duster/robe (Verna)
- ☐ Feather duster
- ☐ Guns (Dibbs/Sheriff)
- ☐ Paper airplane

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- ☐ Doll/glue gun
- ☐ Soufflé dish
- ☐ Doughnut
- ☐ Piece of paper (Polly)
- ☐ Letters/charred letters
- ☐ Roll of blueprints
- ☐ Gun (Polly)
- ☐ Invitations (Patience & Precious)
- ☐ Statue (Verna)
- ☐ Paper bag (Verna)
- ☐ Fondue pot
- ☐ Coupon
- ☐ Golf ball
- ☐ Playing card
- ☐ Small gun (Tiger)
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Letter with face
- ☐ Calculator
- ☐ Flower
- ☐ Dollar
- ☐ Black book
- ☐ Spoon
- ☐ Dolly
- ☐ Knife

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *POLLY stands near the fireplace, with a mug in her hand. Guests are scattered about the room, with NOAH on the couch, SHAG at the craft table (his foot on the table), DAISY on the couch along with ART. SATYNNE stands next to VINNIE up right in a homemade outfit. VINNIE wears an apron and chef's hat. EDWINA sits primly in a straight back chair, writing thank you notes. SADIE SWITZER, BEULAH, TIGER, and REGGIE sit about here and there. MARTI TRUMAN stands behind the CAMERAPERSON, who uses a hand-held video camera to record the proceedings. Lights left and right illuminate the scene.*

MARTI: Break from commercial in five, four, three . . .

MARTI holds up two fingers, then one, then points to POLLY.

POLLY: *(Warm, homespun.)* Wasn't that a wonderful message. I'm sure every household in America needs one of those. And why stop at one? Why not two or three? Well, happy homemakers, it's time to wrap up our fifth anniversary Dewett-My-Way Show starring yours truly Polly Dewett. May I say that when I first published my now famous how-to-it book "Recycle in Style," I never dreamed I would end up with my own television show and legions of loyal fans just waiting to see what my little hands could do to help them turn their garbage into treasures. No one could be more fulfilled than I am at this moment. And I'd like to thank all the little people who have helped me all these years . . . Edwina Meddleton, our etiquette expert who is sitting right there writing thank you notes.

EDWINA: Thank you, Polly, and I wish you continued success in helping to promote proper etiquette throughout our great land!

POLLY: How about Satynne Lining, our fashion expert?

SATYNNE: Congratulations, Polly, on five wonderful years. All America thanks you for showing us how to turn old dish towels into fashionable ponchos. What will you think of next?

POLLY: Shag Berber, our handy-dandy carpenter friend.

SHAG: Shucks, Polly, weren't nothin'! I hope I can pound your nails for another five years.

POLLY: I hope so, too, Shag! And Daisy Plant with her exceptional green thumb.

DAISY: Congrats, Polly! This 'lil ole Texas gal is tickled my thumb and I have been able to contribute a little to making our land more bah-yoo-tiful with trees, shrubs, and bushes galore.

POLLY: And bringing us some of our favorite tasty treats, chef Vinnie Romano.

VINNIE: Yeah, well, Polly, you're just like a fine cappuccino, you know? You bring out the best in any meal. You know what I mean?

POLLY: Thank you, Vinnie. And one of the most important members of our little family, Art Kraft, our craft specialist who helps me come up with all those unusual ways to use decoupage in everyday life!

ART: Thanks to YOU, Polly, we've literally decoupage'd a quarter of the land mass of the United States and we're looking to finish the job in the next five years.

POLLY: What a marvelous way to preserve everyone's garbage! And now, I'd like to thank our special guests, our loyal fans Beulah Asp, Sadie and Tiger Switzer, and Dr. Reggie Reynolds for being with us today and representing all of you out there in TV land.

BEULAH: Oh, thank you, Polly!

SADIE: You're a positive inspiration!

TIGER: Yes, we've got baby-doll Kleenex holders in every room.

REGGIE: Not to mention pine cone trolls on every table.

POLLY: Thanks also to our director, Marti Truman! (*Blows her/him a kiss.*) Love you, Marti! And a big, special thank you to the man who started it all. Yes, ladies and gentlemen, it was seven years ago that I sent my book "Recycle in Style" to Noah Lott. He took a gamble and said yes to a no-name housewife from East Orange, New Jersey . . . and now, thanks to him, I was able to move out of that two bedroom dump into this wonderful little estate I call Cozy Cottage tucked away on this little inlet in Connecticut. Oh, Noah, I thank you and all of American thanks you.

POLLY gives NOAH a kiss on the cheek.

NOAH: Well, Polly, when I first went to the editors with your book, they laughed me out of the meeting. But I told them you were just what America was looking for, and you sure have proved me right! Let's have five more years of fun!

POLLY: We sure will, Noah. And we'll start next week when I show our viewers a hundred and one uses for lint from your dryer along with ten ways to use empty tuna cans. We'll also have some delicious recipes which use - believe it or not - old coffee grounds for flavor. Until then, folks! And remember . . . don't trash it, rehash it!

MARTI: Cut! That was great, Polly! Thank you all folks!

POLLY: Marti, darling -

MARTI: Yes, Polly?

POLLY: You KNOW my left side is my good side. Why was the camera focused on my right side during that entire last segment?

MARTI: It was the only way we could get everyone in.

POLLY: People don't tune in to see everybody! They tune in to see my good side! One more mess-up like that and you're out!

NOAH: Ah, Polly, we have a contract on your new book -

POLLY: What book is that?

NOAH: "Loving Legumes."

POLLY: Yeah, what about it?

NOAH: It was due on my desk two months ago.

POLLY: Give me a break!

NOAH: Two months IS a break!

POLLY: Give me a BIGGER break! I've been busy!

NOAH: We've got a deadline.

POLLY: Noah, drop dead!

NOAH LOTT suddenly gags and falls to the couch, quite dead.

ART: Mr. Lott?

DAISY: Is he all right?

MARTI: What's wrong?

SATYNNE: Something's wrong with the old man!

BEULAH: Let Reggie look at him. He's a doctor!

REGGIE reaches down to get a pulse from NOAH LOTT.

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VINNIE: He don't look too good.

REGGIE: That's because he's dead.

POLLY: That's ridiculous!

SADIE: Don't you have something that would help, Polly?

POLLY: We've got homemade antacids . . . homegrown digitalis . . . oak root depilatory? I know, I know. Vinnie, mix up your raspberry vinaigrette. It's enough to wake the dead.

REGGIE: This guy's had his last salad, lady. He's dead. Kaput! Capish?

POLLY: Poor Noah! Oh, dear! Poor Noah!

POLLY breaks into tears.

EDWINA: Here, Polly, dear . . . my hanky. You mustn't blubber like that in public.

POLLY: But Noah's . . . dead. Waaaaaa!

EDWINA: Dignity, my dear. Dignity!

MARTI: What happened to him, Doctor?

POLLY: His heart probably just gave out. He'd been having some trouble with it lately . . . I told him to take it easy! WAAAAAA!

VERNA BROOMALL enters with a tray of cookies.

VERNA: Fresh, homemade Polly Dewett cookies! They're to die for.

EVERYONE looks at VERNA.

VERNA: I say something wrong?

SATYNNE: Mr. Lott is gone.

VERNA: Where'd he go?

DAISY: He's been pruned down to the root.

VERNA: You mean he's . . .

SHAG: D-E-D.

VERNA: Dead?! What happened?

REGGIE: Looks like this guy's been poisoned.

BEULAH: Are you sure, Reggie?

REGGIE: I haven't been a doctor for thirty years for nothin'. See this white stuff around his mouth there? And see how blue his lips are and the way he's just staring off like that?

POLLY: Oh, Noah! WAAAAAA!

REGGIE: It's poison, all right.

SHAG: Poisoned! Some kind of accident, huh?

REGGIE: Doesn't look like food poisoning to me. More like some type of insecticide.

DAISY: Don't go layin' your eyes on ME! Polly Dewett only uses homegrown organic bug killers here like garlic 'n chives.

SATYNNE: Sounds more like chip dip than insecticide!

VERNA: This seems to be something like Compound 269. Those little blisters around the lips are very important, wouldn't you say, Doctor?

REGGIE: Who are you?

MARTI: Verna Mae Broomall, the housekeeper.

ART: You sure know a lot about poisons, Miss Broomall.

VERNA: Oh, my dear. I was raised on a farm. We had all kinds of horrible things around.

SHAG: But what's Noah doin' takin' Compound Whatever.

MARTI: He probably didn't do it to himself, Shag.

VINNIE: You mean he got bumped off?!

SADIE: But that would be . . . murder.

POLLY: Murder? At Cozy Cottage? That's ridiculous. There has to be some other explanation. This is America's happiest home! We're happy, happy people here. *(SHE bursts into tears.)*

EDWINA: Get a hold of yourself, Polly. You must face this with dignity. Let's go up and see if you have something in black to wear.

POLLY: I don't look good in black, remember!

EDWINA: Well, you certainly won't be in season wearing THAT!

VERNA: Maybe we better call the police first.

POLLY: The police?! We can't do that! They'll track their dirty shoes all over my beautiful hand hooked rugs.

DAISY: Shucks, Polly . . . you GOTTA call 'em. This here could be murder.

REGGIE: And nobody ought to touch anything.

MARTI: Maybe it would be a good idea if we went into the living room. That way we're less likely to disturb things in here.

SADIE: I think that's a good idea. This room gives me the creeps.

POLLY wails.

EDWINA: Come along, Polly.

REGGIE: Maybe you should stay, Miss Broomall. Just to make sure nobody disturbs anything.

VERNA: Anything you say Doctor.

The GUESTS exit left.

BEULAH: *(Exiting.)* Just think! We got to see Polly Dewett's first home murder!

TIGER: *(Exiting.)* You mean there's going to be more?

SHAG: *(To ART as they exit.)* I wonder if Polly's gonna build the coffin herself.

ART: Shag! But come to think of it . . . what is she going to do with all that nice knotty pine she's got left over from that baker's shelf she made last week?

ALL exit except for VERNA BROOMALL. SHE sits, nervously. She tries not to look at NOAH'S feet sticking out from behind the couch, but she does. After a moment, she takes an afghan and covers his feet up.

VERNA: There! Much better!

VERNA sits down to read a magazine. PRECIOUS and PATIENCE enter right. THEY are dressed in dark blue and each woman carries a suitcase.

PRECIOUS: Have we landed yet, Patience?

PATIENCE: We've been on the ground for five hours, Precious.

PRECIOUS: I still feel motion sick.

PATIENCE: We just drove in from New York. We're in Connecticut.

PRECIOUS: Connecticut? I wonder if that calls for an antacid or an aspirin.

PATIENCE: Neither! We're finally here. We made it! Little Polly's house.

PRECIOUS: Our baby sister has done all right for herself.

PATIENCE: Who'd have guessed she'd EVER amount to anything.

VERNA turns and rises.

VERNA: Precious? Patience?

PRECIOUS: Polly?

VERNA: What are YOU doing here?

PATIENCE: The mission board kicked us out of Africa for six months. They said we needed a rest.

PRECIOUS: New policy. They want us all to get back into the swing of things for a while. Hrumph! We swing enough on the vines over there, don't we, sis?

PATIENCE: Sure do. Looks like you're a real swinger here.

PRECIOUS: Saw sixteen books of yours in the bookstore at the airport, sister.

PATIENCE: Seventeen, Precious.

PRECIOUS: There were sixteen!

PATIENCE: You KNOW you need to have your eyes checked, Precious!

PRECIOUS: I can still count.

VERNA: Girls! Let's not argue about her eyesight.

PRECIOUS: We're not, we're arguing about how many books there were.

VERNA: Twenty-two. Counting the latest one on do-it-yourself poetry.

PATIENCE: Twenty-two. Gracious! You sure are a windbag.

VERNA: Now, Patience! You know I do right by you every month.

PRECIOUS: Oh, and we appreciate your generous donations, little sister.

PATIENCE: Still, there's something bothering me about this . . . this place of comforts.

MARTI enters left.

MARTI: Verna Mae? We need you upstairs. Polly's having fainting spells.

VERNA: Yes, Miss Truman.

MARTI: Oh, and I phoned the police and the Sheriff's on his way.

MARTI exits left.

PRECIOUS: Why did she call you Verna?

VERNA: She did?

PATIENCE: And you answered her!

VERNA: Well, now . . .

PRECIOUS: And she said Polly's upstairs fainting.

VERNA: Isn't that awful?

PATIENCE: YOU'RE Polly!

VERNA moves to craft table.

VERNA: Let me see. We've got homemade smelling salts somewhere here.

PRECIOUS: What's going on, little sister?

PATIENCE: We might be up in years, but we aren't so feeble-minded we can't smell a rat!

VERNA: I've got to run upstairs. Be back in a jiffy.

PRECIOUS/PATIENCE: Polly!

VERNA races off left.

PATIENCE: She hasn't changed since she was a kid.

PRECIOUS: Spoiled rotten!

PATIENCE: Got EVERYTHING she wanted, 'specially from Daddy.

PRECIOUS: Remember that ten speed bike. You ever get a ten speed?

PATIENCE: I most certainly did not. It would have been sinful!

PRECIOUS: But SHE did! And look at this place. A positive wealth of earthly pleasures.

PATIENCE: As far from home as she could possibly get.

PRECIOUS: (*PRECIOUS notices the body.*) Sister, dear. I think you'd better come here.

PATIENCE: Polly needs this, Polly got that. Polly cries for this, Polly got that.

PRECIOUS: Oh, Patience, my dear sister. I REALLY think you'd better come here.

PATIENCE: Do my eyes deceive me or is that a gentleman lying there on the floor.

PATIENCE: Gracious! It most certainly is.

PRECIOUS: It appears he has gone to his eternal reward.

PATIENCE: Amen!

PRECIOUS: Funny, little sister never mentioned him to us.

PATIENCE: Maybe she doesn't know.

PRECIOUS: That right there is a member of the dearly departed reclining behind her divan.

PATIENCE: Maybe he's a salesman or something who just . . . well . .

PRECIOUS: Who just what?

PATIENCE: Cashed in his chips.

PRECIOUS: Oh, Patience, you've been in civilization too long!

PATIENCE: We just got in this morning.

PRECIOUS: And that's too long for you!

VERNA enters left.

PRECIOUS: All right, Polly Dewett, do you mind explaining THIS? (*PRECIOUS points to NOAH with her foot and kicks him by mistake.*) I'm sorry.

VERNA: That's Mr. Lott.

PATIENCE: Didn't you write to us about Mr. Lott.

PRECIOUS: Yes . . . something about Noah Lott becoming Knewah Lott.

PATIENCE: That's right! You did! Something about how you'd like to kill him -

PRECIOUS: Oh dear, Polly! We thought you were prone to hyperbole. But apparently not.

PATIENCE: This could be murder, Polly!

VERNA: Poisoned.

PATIENCE: How could you?

VERNA: Me?! Of course I didn't kill him.

PRECIOUS: Then what's he doing on your floor?

VERNA: It's a long story . . . and the police will be here soon . . . and I'd probably better tell you the truth before they get here so we can keep all our lies straight.

PATIENCE: Oh my, girl. Talk sense.

VERNA: Mr. Lott was my publisher.

PRECIOUS: That's right. The fellow who brought out "Don't Trash It, Rehash It."

VERNA: That's right. And everything was perfectly fine until the networks wanted to put me on television.

PATIENCE: Television. Like the Brady Bunch or something?

VERNA: A home improvement show called "The Polly Dewett-My-Way Show." Every week I would show the viewers how to improve their homes using garbage.

PRECIOUS: Noble of you, dear.

PATIENCE: It's a stupid idea, Polly, but you don't kill people because they have stupid ideas!

VERNA: I didn't kill him!

PRECIOUS: Then why's he dead?

VERNA: Would you listen?

PATIENCE: We're all ears.

VERNA: Mr. Lott felt that I didn't project the image he wanted Polly Dewett to have.

PRECIOUS: But you ARE Polly Dewett.

VERNA: That's just it. I'm not any more. Mr. Lott promised me a great deal of money if I would let Kiki Ferango play Polly Dewett on television. I would be the housekeeper and thus keep an eye on things.

PATIENCE: Kiki Ferango?

PRECIOUS: It sounds like a drink that they serve in a pineapple.

PATIENCE: Sister! What would YOU know about drinks in pineapples?

VERNA: Will you listen? Anyway, that's the way it began and now five years later, that's the way it's going to stay.

PRECIOUS: But you're living a lie, Polly.

VERNA: So? You've done all right with that lie.

PATIENCE: You mean those checks you send every month are from Mr. Lott?

VERNA: Exactly.

PRECIOUS: Oh, you dear girl. You'll never know how many people you've helped with that money. Our hospital is in a village that had no medical facilities at all, and now we're building a school.

PATIENCE: And the water system has been vastly improved.

VERNA: And if you want things to keep going, you'll play along.

PRECIOUS: But Mr. Lott is dead.

VERNA: I know, I know. But until we find out what's going to happen, I've got to keep my identity a secret.

PATIENCE: Well, I want to meet this Kiki Ferango!

POLLY enters left.

POLLY: I can't face the police!

MARTI follows her on left.

MARTI: They'll be quick. You'll be charming.

POLLY: Like this? You're fired!

MARTI: Polly, you're acting like a child.

POLLY: And you're acting like an ex-employee. Get lost!

MARTI exits angrily.

POLLY: What are you staring at?

VERNA: Miss Dewett? These are my sisters, Patience and Precious.

POLLY: What are they doing here?

PATIENCE: We've just arrived from our mission in Africa.

PRECIOUS: We're on leave of absence for six months.

POLLY: Well, go be absent someplace else!

VERNA: Oh, now, Miss Dewett, they've come a long way and have no place to stay.

POLLY: Look, Verna, honey . . . this house is busting at the seams!

VERNA: They'll stay with me.

POLLY: I don't like it.

VERNA: I'm afraid Mr. Lott would have seen it my way.

POLLY: But, as you can see, he doesn't have a thing to say about it now!

VERNA: I guess the truth could be told to the police then.

POLLY: (*To PATIENCE and PRECIOUS.*) I do hope you enjoy your stay at Cozy Cottage. Remember that Polly Dewett is always here to make you feel at home.

VERNA: That takes care of that.

PRECIOUS: Polly, dear -

VERNA: You'd better call me Verna Mae.

PATIENCE: Where'd you ever get a name like Verna Mae?

VERNA: Mr. Lott.

PRECIOUS: Well, Verna Mae, what happened to Mr. Lott?

VERNA: I was afraid you were going to ask that.

PATIENCE: Well? Spill it, sister.

VERNA: Someone slipped him some pesticide and that was that.

PATIENCE: Murder!

SHERIFF LEGHORN enters right.

SHERIFF: Sheriff Leghorn. Got some trouble here?

VERNA: Oh, yes, Sheriff. Right over here.

SHERIFF: This way, Dibbs.

HE turns and sees no one is following him.

SHERIFF: DIBBS!

TYLER DIBBS hobbles on right.

SHERIFF: Get IN here!

DIBBS: Sorry, chief. I stepped in some gum out there -

SHERIFF: Crying out loud. All right, lady, what's going on?

VERNA: Mr. Lott has been poisoned.

SHERIFF: (*Bends over the corpse.*) How do you know?

VERNA: Well, Dr. Reynolds is here, and he said that from the appearance of the lips -

SHERIFF: Yeah, well, what does a doctor know about it, right? I mean how many poisonings does somebody like Dr. Reynolds get to see?

DIBBS: Gosh, chief, how many'd WE see this year?

SHERIFF: Shut up, Dibbs! Yup. Just as I suspected. Mr. Lott's been poisoned.

VERNA: Pesticide. Compound 269.

SHERIFF: You some kind of poison expert?

VERNA: Hardly.

PATIENCE: This is Verna Maaaaae -

VERNA: Broomall. Verna Mae Broomall.

VERNA: I'm the housekeeper.

SHERIFF: And who are you two dames?

PRECIOUS: We're not dames, Sheriff. I'm Precious.

SHERIFF: I'm sure you are!

PRECIOUS: And this is my sister Patience.

DIBBS: Ain't that nice, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Ducky. So what are you doing here?

PATIENCE: Verna Maaaaae -

VERNA: Broomall.

PATIENCE: Verna is our sister.

SHERIFF: How come you have so much trouble with her name?

PRECIOUS: We've been apart for six years, Sheriff!

SHERIFF: Sniff, sniff. So, Verna Mae Broomall, what do you know about all this?

VERNA: We were taping Polly Dewett's show, The Polly Dewett-My-Way Show" tonight.

DIBBS: My wife watches that all the time!

SHERIFF: So she doesn't have to look at you! So what about it?

VERNA: Well, we had a dinner for special guests since it was the fifth anniversary of the show. After dinner we came in here for coffee and the last little segment. Right after we went off the air, Mr. Lott dropped over, just like you see him.

SHERIFF: So, the big question is, how'd he get the poison.

DIBBS: That's a big question, Sheriff.

SHERIFF LEGHORN and DIBBS pace in opposite directions.

VERNA: Maybe you should ask Miss Dewett about the food. I'll go get her.

VERNA exits left.

DIBBS: Something real fishy about all this, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Glad you noticed, Dibbs!

PATIENCE: Be careful what people tell you.

PRECIOUS: I don't think any of them know what the truth is.

VERNA enters followed by POLLY, SHAG, and EDWINA.

DIBBS: Hey! Ain't you -

POLLY: Why, yes, I am!

DIBBS: I knew it. Kathie Lee Gifford! *(Use any well-known, popular television name.)*

POLLY: *(Disgusted.)* I'm Polly Dewett!

SHERIFF: And that's Dibbs. Deputy Dibbs. I'm Sheriff Leghorn.

EDWINA: Can we be brief and to the point, Sheriff. This has been a terrible strain on us all.

SHERIFF: Who are you?

EDWINA: Edwina Meddleton. Etiquette expert.

SHAG: And I'm Shag. Shag Berber. Carpenter.

SHERIFF: All right. So tell me about the dinner tonight.

POLLY: Well, for the fifth anniversary show, I thought we'd have a lovely pork roast. So I carefully selected one of the pigs that I raise.

DIBBS: You raise your own pigs?

POLLY: Of course. I raise EVERYTHING. I decided on Babe because she was the plumpiest. And along with her chops we had homegrown new potatoes, homegrown beans, biscuits made from flour I grind myself, jellies and jams I put up, and a salad made from our special breed of lettuce called Polyleaves.

SHERIFF: So how'd he get the pesticide?

SHAG: Well, Noah didn't eat the pork.

EDWINA: He was allergic to it.

DIBBS: So he ate pesticide instead.

SHERIFF: He was allergic to that, too, lunkhead! What did Noah eat?

POLLY: I fixed him a chicken breast.

SHERIFF: Fowl, hmmm?!

VERNA: Not just any fowl. Served in a light wine and mushroom sauce.

SHERIFF: With pesticide sprinkles. Sounds like foul play to me!

PRECIOUS: It does stand to reason.

SHERIFF: So, did you fix the food yourself, Miss Dewett?

POLLY: Well, yes, of course.

SHERIFF: Hmmm . . . any reason you'd want Mr. Lott dead?

POLLY: Well, of course . . . he was a man, BUT I didn't kill him. He made me what I am today.

SHERIFF: What's all this stuff over here?

POLLY: My craft supplies, my gardening things. We use them on the show.

SHERIFF: Spicy stuff.

POLLY: Everything is organic, Sheriff.

DIBBS: I didn't know we have volcanoes around here.

SHERIFF: Dibbs! Go on and round everybody up. I want to meet them in the other room somewhere. We've got to question everybody. Move! (*DIBBS salutes and exits left.*) Everybody into the other room.

EDWINA: Ladies first.

SHERIFF: I thought maybe we'd go in alphabetical order.

EDWINA exits in a huff.

PATIENCE: Surely you don't need to speak with us.

PRECIOUS: We just got here.

SHERIFF: Go on! You'll be first.

ALL but POLLY and VERNA have exited left.

POLLY: Go on, Verna Mae. I'll be along in a second.

VERNA: Perhaps somebody should stay with poor Mr. Lott.

SHERIFF: Why? He ain't goin' no-place!

VERNA exits left.

POLLY: Sheriff! You asked me if I cooked the food. Well, I didn't! I can't possibly do all the cooking for our show.

SHERIFF: So who whipped up the killer chicken, Colonel Sanders?

POLLY: Her! Verna Mae Broomall!

SHERIFF: The one who knew about the poison.

POLLY: Great minds think alike, Sheriff.

POLLY exits left. SHERIFF exits right. VINNIE and DAISY enter left.

VINNIE: We gotta get outta here, Daisy.

DAISY: You sure that's what we outta be doin', Vinnie?

VINNIE: This could be murder!

DAISY: It already is.

VINNIE: You know what I mean.

DAISY: Yeah, if they find out.

VINNIE: They don't have to. I got enough stashed away for a couple of tickets to Bermuda.

DAISY: That sounds sooo romantic!

VINNIE: Palm trees . . . sand . . . sun. Vavavavoom!

DAISY: Let's go!

SHERIFF enters right.

SHERIFF: The party's in the other room. You two want to join us?

VINNIE: C'mon! We didn't have nothin' to do with this.

DAISY: Yeah! You can trust us!

SHERIFF: Now where have I heard that before? This way guys.

THEY exit left as the curtain falls.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Two hours later. EDWINA, DAISY, MARTI, ART, SATYNNE, VINNIE, SADIE, BEULAH, TIGER, and REGGIE stand and sit here and there in the family room. NOAH'S body has been removed. POLLY enters with a plate of sandwiches.*

POLLY: I've whipped up a few sandwiches for those who are a bit hungry.

BEULAH: Sandwiches?

SADIE: *(Nervously.)* You made them?

POLLY: Well of COURSE I made them! Cucumber and tuna, apple and ham, egg salad.

SADIE: Then I'm sure they're safe.

POLLY: Of COURSE they're safe, Mrs. Switzer! Everything at Cozy Cottage is organic and safe.

SADIE takes a sandwich as MAXINE enters right.

MAXINE: Polly, darling!

POLLY: Maxine!

MAXINE: Dreadful news! DREADful! The tabloids have already been calling.

POLLY sets the tray down, starts fixing her hair.

POLLY: *(Thrilled.)* The press will be here before dawn!

MARTI: Excuse me! A murder has been committed here.

POLLY: Well, that police chief is handling everything.

REGGIE: He makes me think that Andy Griffith was a genius.

TIGER: I'd have more confidence in Barney Fife.

MAXINE: But it IS the buzz everywhere! It's front page news in every major city . . . Murder at Cozy Cottage! Will Polly Dewett solve the crime?

SATYNNE: *(Sarcastically.)* Hahahaha! Polly Dewett Detective.

ART: Do-it-yourself re-upholstering, do-it-yourself redecorating . . . now do-it-yourself murder!

EDWINA: Absolutely tacky!

POLLY: But I like it! Why can't I solve this murder? I can make chairs out of rolled up newspapers. I can turn broken glass into jewelry. Why can't I bring a killer to justice?

MAXINE: What a story! This will get YOU on the front pages, darling. You'll be able to do the Tonight Show, Letterman . . . maybe even a guest spot on Friends. (*Substitute any popular TV show/name desired.*)

SATYNNE: You'd better get a new outfit, then!

POLLY: (*Dramatically.*) I'll worry about that once this cold-blooded fiend is behind bars!

REGGIE: Well, let us know how it turns out because we're leaving.

POLLY: But you were invited to stay for the weekend.

REGGIE: One murder is enough, Miss Dewett . . . not that we didn't enjoy your hospitality.

REGGIE exits left.

SADIE: (*Follows him off left.*) It's been fun!

POLLY: But it's only the beginning.

VINNIE: Look, Polly, you can't top a murder. I've got to shove off now that the cops are done with us. Don't you have to get going too, Daisy?

DAISY: Sheriff Leghorn didn't say we had to stick around, did he?

SATYNNE: Nope, his deputy took all our addresses, so I'm sure we'll never hear from them again.

DAISY: Good! My lil old tulips need their mama. I'll just rustle up my things.

DAISY and VINNIE exit left.

BEULAH: An absolutely thrilling dinner! I'll never forget it as long as I live! Come on, Tiger, help me get my stuff.

TIGER: I didn't know this gal before we got here and now I'm her butler.

TIGER growls as he follows BEULAH off left.

ART: Well, I suppose if the party's breaking up, I might as well head back to New York. I've got a lot to plan for next week.

POLLY: But, Art, we can work on next week's show right here.

ART: I don't know . . . my creative juices seem a bit . . . sluggish in here right now. I need noise and smog to create!

SATYNNE: Can I catch a ride with you?

ART: Why not?

ART and SATYNNE exit left.

EDWINA: I above all people know when to make a discreet exit. If you'll excuse me, Polly, dear, I'll gather my things.

POLLY: YOU don't have anything to do, Edwina, do you?

EDWINA: Darling, I have a column to write! And now I've got to think of a whole new etiquette for a murder.

EDWINA exits left.

POLLY: So, aren't you going to go home, Shag?

SHAG: I dunno. I thought that maybe I'd stick around.

POLLY: What for?

SHAG: I dunno. I thought maybe you and me could talk shop.

POLLY: Shag, I'm really not in the mood for drill bits and two by fours.

SHAG: Yeah? Well, Polly, I know we could lay some real level footings together.

ART enters left.

ART: Shag . . . I need somebody big and strong to help me load my car.

SHAG exits left with ART.

MAXINE: Are you NUTS? You let the suspects get away. I mean, darling, we're looking at a TV movie here. Maybe if we play our cards right a theatrical release directed by Robert Redford. But you've got to keep these people here!

POLLY: That won't be hard.

SHE grabs a book off the shelf.

MAXINE: What are you going to do?

POLLY: Two hundred things you can fix on your car.

MAXINE: Excellent seller. One of your best.

POLLY: And if there are two hundred things you can fix, there's got to be two hundred things you can break!

MAXINE: I like the way your mind operates.

MAXINE and POLLY exit left as VERNA, PATIENCE, and PRECIOUS enter right.

PATIENCE: Did you hear that?

PRECIOUS: She'll have these people right where she wants them.

VERNA: But why?

PATIENCE: To make money!

VERNA: Everything's to make money. She doesn't care about poor Mr. Lott any more than she cares about her chickens and pigs outside.

PRECIOUS: And she has your name. Tsk. Tsk.

PATIENCE: If somebody had my name, I'd want it back.

VERNA: What can I do?

PRECIOUS: Polly, for crying out loud, you can tell the truth.

VERNA: But the mission will lose all that money.

PATIENCE: Mr. Lott is dead. Maybe the secret died with him.

VERNA: I never thought of that.

PRECIOUS: You know something . . . I don't trust this Kiki Ferango.

PATIENCE: I've got the same bad vibes, sister.

VERNA: She IS going to try to solve the crime.

PRECIOUS: (*Suspiciously.*) Is she?

VERNA: Why wouldn't she?

PATIENCE: Would she REALLY try to solve it?

VERNA: Oh, dear.

PRECIOUS: I think someone needs to jump in before the trail gets too cold.

VERNA: Who?

PATIENCE and PRECIOUS stare at VERNA.

VERNA: Me? Why me?

PATIENCE: Because she's using you. Because you've got the ideas and know-how.

VERNA: I've never solved a thing in my life. I couldn't even do long division in grade school.

PRECIOUS: We'll help! We've got to keep your name clean, Polly. We've got to!

VERNA: Maybe you're right . . . but where do we start?

PATIENCE: I KNEW all those old Perry Mason mysteries the ladies auxiliaries sent would help us. The place to start is in the victim's room.

VERNA: But what if the police haven't been there yet.

PRECIOUS: Polly, they're out on a doughnut break. What does that tell you?

PATIENCE: Lead the way, Sherlock.

VERNA, PATIENCE, and PRECIOUS exit right. VINNIE enters left followed by SATYNNE.

SATYNNE: So, what' up, Vinnie? You're treating me like I don't exist. You said you loved me.

VINNIE: I did? Exactly when did I say this.

SATYNNE: You said we'd be together for the rest of our lives.

VINNIE: I exaggerated.

SATYNNE: Is this how you treat another human being?

VINNIE: What human being? You're a girl!

SATYNNE: If I ever see you again, I'll . . . I'll . . . thump you, Vinnie! I swear I will!

VINNIE: You know what I think, Satynne? You wanna know?

SATYNNE: Yeah.

VINNIE jeers SATYNNE with a funny face and runs off right.

SATYNNE: You bum! You no-good bum!

SHAG enters right.

SHAG: Hi, gorgeous.

SATYNNE: Oh, Shag. Is every man as cruel as Vinnie?

SHAG: What did he do to you?

SATYNNE: He dumped me.

SHAG: How could he dump such a lovely piece of fabric as yourself?

SATYNNE: Gosh, Shag. You really know how to make a girl feel good.

SHAG: All in a day's work.

SATYNNE exits left and bumps into ART, who is entering left.

ART: Oh, Shag! I've need of those nice big muscles again.

SATYNNE: Art! What century IS this? Fawning over a man's biceps and triceps.

ART: Flattery will get EVERY box moved, Satynne. You ought to try it.

SATYNNE exits left, followed by SHAG and ART, arm in arm. POLLY enters right holding a box. SHE and MAXINE are dirty. The box clinks and clunks as if there are machine parts inside.

POLLY: Quick! We've got to hide this junk!

MAXINE: How do you know which part belongs to each car?

POLLY: We'll cross that carburetor when we come to it!

POLLY hides the box behind the table under some fabric.

MAXINE: Shhhh! Someone's coming!

POLLY and MAXINE duck behind the table as SHAG enters carrying a box. ART follows.

SHAG: Gosh, Art, this ain't heavy at all.

ART: It's all that pounding you do, Shag. Right through the kitchen.

SHAG: Gonna whip up something special, huh?

ART: What?!

SHAG: Gonna whip up something special?

ART: (*Halts, frozen.*) Why, that's just what -

SHAG: Something wrong?

ART: (*Thinks.*) No . . . just take the box out to my car. I've got to decide what to do.

SHAG exits right. ART moves to the phone and dials.

ART: Hello? Is Sheriff Leghorn there? This is Art Kraft at Cozy Cottage. There's something I have to tell him. Hello? Hello? Who's on the line?

SADIE and TIGER enter carrying suitcases.

SADIE: Problems with the phone, dear?

ART: Someone was on the extension. Then I got cut off.

TIGER: Happens all the time. Try it again.

ART: It's dead!

SADIE: Oh, dear. First Mr. Lott, now the phone. We'd better get out of here.

VINNIE enters right.

VINNIE: You ain't goin' no-place.

TIGER: Now, see here, young man. My wife and I HAVE to get back to town.

VINNIE: You better walk, then.

SADIE: That's silly, our Mercedes is waiting outside.

VINNIE: Your Mercedes croaked.

SADIE: (*Crying, exiting left.*) Mercy! Mercy! Mr. Lott, the phone, now my Mercedes. Waaaaaaaa!

TIGER: Oh, dear, that Mercedes is the daughter we never had.

We hear a howl from SADIE, who returns followed by SHAG with the box.

SADIE: Her tires are all flat! Waaaa!

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ART: That's all right. I'll drop you at the nearest station.

SHAG: Art, somebody super-glued the locks on your doors.

ART: What?!

SADIE: You use super-glue all the time on the show. You must know a way to get it out.

ART: It's called super-glue for a reason, Mrs. Switzer.

SATYNNE enters with EDWINA right.

SATYNNE: Our cars are dead . . .

ART: So is the phone.

SADIE: So is Mr. Lott.

SHAG: If I didn't know better, I'd say somebody's up to something.

POLLY and MAXINE have risen from hiding now. POLLY grabs the tray of sandwiches and smiles.

POLLY: Sandwich anyone?

A scream is heard offstage.

SATYNNE: What's that?

SADIE: A scream of terror!

EDWINA: Like someone being -

SHAG: Here, carry your own box! I'm gettin' outta here!

SHAG gives the box to ART and runs off right. The curtain falls.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT RISE: *Later that night. SHERIFF LEGHORN stands at center. DIBBS sits at table scribbling notes. DAISY sits on couch between BEULAH and POLLY. PATIENCE and PRECIOUS stand up right. ART stands with SHAG by the fireplace. SATYNNE, VINNIE, EDWINA, SADIE, TIGER, and REGGIE stand here and there. MAXINE sits on a wood box.*

DAISY: It was horrible, Sheriff. I don't know when I've been more scared. Why, the goosebumps on my arm were big as basketballs.

SHERIFF: But what did you SEE, Miss Plant?

DAISY: Gracious, I don't know what to think about it, Sheriff.

BEULAH: But he can't help unless you describe what you saw.

VINNIE: Maybe I ought to hypnotize her. I'm a pretty hypnotic guy.

SHERIFF: Maybe she'd better tell us what she saw or I'll throw her in the clink.

SATYNNE: Dressed like that?

DAISY: All right. All right. Someone dressed in black.

SHAG: You saw a nun?

MAXINE: A nun on the loose? This is better than I thought.

DAISY: It wasn't a nun. It was just this black mass . . . with red eyes and green teeth. And in its hand it held a sword at least eight feet long.

SHERIFF: You sure you ain't been nippin' on some fertilizer?

DIBBS: (*Writes in his notebook.*) Green eyes. Red teeth.

DAISY: It was red eyes and green teeth.

SHERIFF: Don't worry about him. He's color-blind. So where'd you see this thing, Miss Plant?

DAISY: Coming out of Mr. Lott's room!

SHERIFF: What?!

BEULAH: We were all getting ready to leave when I heard a scream. I went into the hall, and there was poor Miss Plant, right across from Mr. Lott's room. And I saw the door of the room next to his close while she was screaming.

POLLY: (*With a laugh.*) This is all very easy, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: I'm glad YOU think so, Miss Know-It-All!

POLLY: Miss Plant must have seen somebody NOT in this room right now. And that person must be the killer.

MAXINE: Oh, Polly. A brilliant deduction!

SHERIFF: All right, so who's missing?

EDWINA: Marti. Our director is missing.

SADIE: And where's the housekeeper?

VERNA enters left wearing a black veil over her head, holding a duster. DAISY screams and faints.

PATIENCE: Oh, dear, sister!

PRECIOUS: We told you not to wear your duster!

VERNA: (*Removes the veil.*) Gracious! I just didn't want to get all mussed up.

SHERIFF: All right, lady. What do you mean scarin' people like that?

VERNA: I don't know what you're talking about.

POLLY: You could have scared Miss Plant to death.

MAXINE: The housekeeper did it!

VERNA: Did what?

POLLY: (*Dramatically.*) Why, Verna, WHY?!!

VERNA: Oh, dear, sisters! What ARE they thinking?

PATIENCE: You'd better run, Verna!

PRECIOUS: We'll fill you in later.

VERNA: Gracious!

VERNA tips a chair over, and exits left at an old lady's run.

SHERIFF: Dibbs! After that woman!

DIBBS: But, chief! It don't seem right.

SHERIFF: Get a move on or you'll be back at the pet shop!

DIBBS: Charge!

DIBBS hurdles a chair and runs off left, followed by SHERIFF LEGHORN.

MAXINE: C'mon everybody! We've got to help!

SHAG: You, you, you, and you, come with me this way!

SHAG points off left. SATYNNE, DAISY, BEULAH, and TIGER follow him off.

POLLY: And the rest of us will go this way! We'll head 'em off at the pass.

POLLY points right. VINNIE, SADIE, MAXINE, REGGIE, and ART exit right after her.

PATIENCE: I tell you we could have got a whole lot more rest staying in Africa.

PRECIOUS: It's giving me indigestion. Do you have any Roloids?

PATIENCE: No, I don't. And quit thinking about your digestive system at a time like this. Poor Polly needs help.

PRECIOUS: She got herself into this mess prancing around, high-falootin' with these snooty show business types.

PATIENCE: She's still our baby sister and you know what the good book says.

PRECIOUS: What does the good book say?

PATIENCE: Find her a good place to hide.

PRECIOUS: How about in here?

PRECIOUS points to the wood box.

PATIENCE: It'll do in a pinch.

PRECIOUS opens the box.

PRECIOUS: Oh, dear! I'm sorry to disturb you!

PATIENCE: Who're you talking to?

PRECIOUS: There's a lady sleeping in the box.

PATIENCE: Oh.

PATIENCE and PRECIOUS take a moment to ponder this, look at each other, then:

PATIENCE: She must be **really** tired.

PRECIOUS: Yeah.

PATIENCE cautiously opens the box.

PATIENCE: Oh, dear, sister, I'm afraid she's gone to her eternal reward.

PRECIOUS: The Lord sure is handing out a lot of rewards at this house.

PATIENCE: Who **IS** she?

PRECIOUS: She looks like that lady director.

PATIENCE: Gracious! They're going to think Polly did this, too.

PRECIOUS: What'll we do?

VERNA enters through up right secret panel. SHE holds a feather duster.

VERNA: Psssst!

PATIENCE: Oh, sister, dear! We've got terrible news.

PRECIOUS: There's been another accident.

VERNA: What?!

PATIENCE: Isn't this that nice director lady?

VERNA moves to wood box.

VERNA: Poor Miss Truman. What could have happened?

VERNA places duster in wood box and checks MARTI'S pulse.

PRECIOUS: Look . . . she's got something in her hand . . .

PATIENCE: It could be important!

VERNA closes her eyes and pulls it from MARTI'S hand.

PRECIOUS: Oh, Polly, you're so brave!

VERNA: It looks like a part of a note.

PRECIOUS: What does it say?

VERNA: Meet me . . . craft table . . . ten o'clock.

PATIENCE: Signed who?

VERNA: Nobody.

PRECIOUS: Honestly, do you think the killer would sign his name for crying out loud.

PATIENCE: Well, she didn't know if it was from the killer, did she?

PRECIOUS: Don't yell at me! I've got heartburn.

VERNA: Girls! I hear someone coming! Quick!

VERNA moves up to secret panel.

PATIENCE: Where are we going?

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VERNA: This house was built during the Underground Railroad days.

It's got a secret passageway.

PRECIOUS: Doesn't your namesake know about it?

VERNA: No! Now come on!

PATIENCE and PRECIOUS exit through the panel. VERNA exits and closes it just as EDWINA and DAISY enter left.

EDWINA: This is not at ALL the way a weekend trip should be conducted.

DAISY: I'm scared.

EDWINA: I'd like to find a place to hide.

DAISY: That's a darn good idea. How 'bout this window box?

DAISY throws open the window box.

DAISY: Oh, pardon me, Miss Tru . . . Miss Tru . . . Miss Tru -

DAISY lets out a bloodcurdling scream.

EDWINA: What's wrong?

DAISY points to the wood box. EDWINA slowly approaches it as SHAG, VINNIE, BEULAH, TIGER, SATYNNE, SADIE, MAXINE, POLLY, and ART enter from different directions.

BEULAH: C'mon, Shag.

SHAG: That was one ferocious scream.

ART: They might need somebody big and strong.

SHAG: I'm small and weak today.

TIGER: Me, too.

BEULAH: What happened?

POLLY: What's wrong?

EDWINA: I'm afraid there's been another - another -

DAISY: MURDER!

VINNIE: Who's the lucky corpse?

EDWINA: Really, Mr. Romano, your choice of words is most inappropriate.

VINNIE: So who got stiffed?

DAISY: Marti.

MAXINE: Well, she was out at the end of the season anyway.

POLLY: Maxine! How can you SAY that! She was our director! The heart of "The Polly Dewett-My-Way Show."

SATYNNE: What happened to her?

REGGIE: Let me have a look.

REGGIE moves to the wood box and begins examination.

TIGER: Did anybody find the housekeeper?

ART: No! And where are her sisters?

SATYNNE: They're all gone.

DAISY: Shucks! Maybe it's a sister act!

SHAG: Nuns on the run!

SADIE: What if their car works and they got away?

VINNIE looks out the window.

VINNIE: Did they come in a '68 Ford Fairlane?

POLLY: I think so . . .

VINNIE: Still here!

POLLY: But where are they hiding?

EDWINA: We mustn't throw accusations around without proof!

REGGIE lifts the feather duster.

REGGIE: Is this enough proof?

ALL gasp as SHERIFF enters left. DIBBS follows him with gun drawn. DIBBS focuses left until he enters the room, then points his gun at the entire group. Immediately, their hands all go up at the same time.

SHERIFF: All right, Dibbs! All right!

DIBBS drops the gun.

DIBBS: Can't be too careful, chief.

POLLY: There's been another murder, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Who is it THIS time?

MAXINE: Marti Truman, the director of our show.

SHERIFF: What happened to her?

REGGIE: Strangled.

SHERIFF: With what?

REGGIE holds up a tie-dye shirt. EVERYBODY mutters "Ohhhhh" at the same time.

SATYNNE: Tie-dye's are in everywhere!

POLLY: (To ART.) Isn't that the one you made just yesterday?

ART: Yeah, we're demonstrating tie-dying on next week's show.

REGGIE: Regardless whose shirt it is, Miss Truman died when she was tied.

BEULAH: Show the sheriff what else you found in the box.

EDWINA: (Waves the duster.) THIS! The housekeeper's duster.

SHERIFF: Give me that!

The duster gets passed from one person to another until it reaches the SHERIFF.

SHERIFF: Check it for prints, Dibbs!

DIBBS: Right away, chief.

HE salutes, gun in hand. It goes off, frightening EVERYONE. The entire group takes over, ad lib, etc.

SHERIFF: It's all right. Calm down, folks. It was just lug head being himself.

DIBBS: Sorry, folks. Just makin' sure everyone was payin' attention.

SHERIFF: The prints, Dibbs?

DIBBS: I'm on it, chief.

DIBBS runs off left leaving the duster on the floor.

SHERIFF: DIBBS!

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DIBBS runs back in left.

DIBBS: Yes, chief?

SHERIFF points to the duster.

DIBBS: Right. I'm on it, chief.

DIBBS grabs duster and races off left.

MAXINE: Do you really think the housekeeper could be the killer?

SHERIFF: Well, ma'am . . . on your suggestion I checked her room.
We found something very interesting. A bottle of Compound 269
bug killer.

Gasps from the crowd.

SHAG: That's the stuff that killed Noah.

VINNIE: Boy, she's not very good at coverin' her tracks.

POLLY: She's probably one of those pathological killers who really
wants to get caught. What do we do now, Sheriff?

DAISY: I know what I'm gonna do! I'm walkin' to town 'n hitchin' a
ride to anywhere but here.

SHAG: Can I go, too, Daisy?

SHERIFF: Hold yer horses. You ain't goin' nowhere. None of you!

EDWINA: You can't be serious.

SATYNNE: You can't keep us all here like prisoners. I look horrible in
black and white stripes.

POLLY: Are they horizontal or vertical stripes?

SHERIFF: I can and I will. Everybody's stayin' put. Dibbs and I have
a lot of questions for you folks.

MAXINE: But it's clear we're bein' killed one by one.

SHERIFF: Dibbs 'n me are stayin' here so you don't have anything to
worry about.

SATYNNE: Why don't I feel any safer?

SHERIFF: You all need to get a good night's sleep.

DAISY: With that crazy woman runnin' around?

SHERIFF: Dibbs 'n me'll find her 'fore mornin'. I'll stake my reputation on it.

SATYNNE: In that case I'd better make sure my life insurance is paid up.

POLLY: Well, there's nothing to do now, folks, but show you to your rooms. I know Verna's got them all ready.

TIGER: That's what we're afraid of.

SHERIFF: Just lock your doors. And don't let nobody in.

Silently, all exit left, following POLLY. SHERIFF moves to wood box and checks the body. The secret panel door opens and a hand appears holding a paper airplane. The hand sails the airplane to SHERIFF.

SHERIFF: Hey! Who did that?! (*SHERIFF holds the airplane and races off right, exiting.*) What's going on here?

ART enters left with SHAG.

ART: It's okay, Shag, I really don't need anybody protecting me.

SHAG: Who said anything about you? I'm scared to death.

ART: Go on upstairs and lock your door. Nobody's going to hurt you

SHAG: What if I know something?

ART: Then it's another story.

SHAG: That's why I'm stickin' to you.

ART: Look, Shag, I've really got to talk to the sheriff alone.

SHAG: How come?

ART: Just something somebody said that's bothering me.

SHAG: You don't think it's the housekeeper, hmmm??

ART: You just go on upstairs and I'll work on next week's projects until the sheriff gets back. You'll be okay, lock the doors.

SHAG: Don't worry.

SHAG exits left. ART places doll on table and plugs in glue gun. SHERIFF LEGHORN enters right.

SHERIFF: Hey! What are you doin' here?

ART: I wanted to talk to you.

SHERIFF: What's all that stuff?

ART: I have to waste time, so I want to work on this project while we're talking.

SHERIFF: What are you makin'?

ART: Homemade voodoo dolls. Everything made out of scraps.

SHERIFF: Voodoo, hmm?

ART: Joke dolls, Sheriff. Who believes in voodoo?

SHERIFF: I don't know. There might be something to it.

ART: Black cats? Broken mirrors? You small-town guys really kill me.

ART presses the glue gun button and suddenly the lights flash, optional strobe light might be effective. HE falls flat on the table, arms out-stretched, still wiggling.

SHERIFF: Boy, that's not the only thing that kills you.

The curtain falls quickly.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1

AT RISE: *The following morning. SHAG works at the outlet behind the table. ART has been removed. EDWINA enters left.*

EDWINA: SHAG! What are you doing?

SHAG: Checking this outlet.

EDWINA: Shouldn't the police be doing that?

SHAG: Polly said they were done. 'Sides, there's nothing wrong with it.

EDWINA: But poor Arti -

SHAG: It must have been the glue gun switch.

EDWINA: You're sure of that?

SHAG: You've got any other ideas, Miss Meddlesome.

EDWINA: Meddleton.

EDWINA has moved close to SHAG.

EDWINA: Shag, has anybody told you how strong and handsome you are?

SHAG: Satynne Lining, Art right before you know . . . and Polly, just a bit ago.

EDWINA: In the last five minutes?

SHAG: I've been alone.

EDWINA: It's my turn now. Every week on this show, and every week I grow weaker and weaker.

SHAG: You should try Geritol or something.

EDWINA: It's not me, silly. It's YOU!

SHAG: All right, I'll take Geritol.

EDWINA: You don't need artificial supplements! You're a hundred percent natural hunk. And I'm tired of following my own rules! Oh, Shag, Shag, Shag!

SHAG: That's my name . . . don't wear it out.

EDWINA: Take me away.

SHAG: You need to see a doctor or something?

EDWINA: Yes, I'm probably crazy . . . but I don't care!

EDWINA grabs SHAG just as VERNA opens the secret panel and looks in, unseen by EDWINA or SHAG.

SHAG: Get your hands off me, Miss Meddlesome.

EDWINA: NO! Now that I've got you, I'll never let you go!

SHAG: I'd sooner be a two by four on a burn pile than have anything to do with the likes of you.

EDWINA: I'm afraid you don't have any choice, Shag, darling.

SHAG: I've got a choice. This is America!

EDWINA: Not quite, sweetheart.

SHAG: Connecticut's part of America!

EDWINA: I know why you killed Noah Lott. And Marti. And Art.

SHAG: What?!

EDWINA: I overheard him telling you he was going to replace you!
He wanted someone with brains as well as your obvious assets!

SHAG: You're lying!

EDWINA: I heard him and I'm telling the sheriff . . . and then he'll arrest you and they'll try you . . . and then they'll fry you.

SHAG: No! No! You wouldn't dare!

EDWINA: Take me away, Shag! Take me away from all this!

SHAG bolts and runs off left. VERNA closes the door.

EDWINA: You'll be sorry, Shag Berber. You'll be sorry!

DAISY enters left.

DAISY: What's all the hubub?

EDWINA: I caught him playing with this socket. The one that killed Art.

DAISY: (*Abruptly.*) Poor Art.

EDWINA: You don't seem too broken up about it.

DAISY: Well, once the sun's up, a body feels a whole lot more secure. 'Specially if a body remembers a couple 'o things.

EDWINA: What are you talking about?

DAISY: Just about the way I saw you lookin' at Noah last night.

EDWINA: And how was I lookin' at Mr. Lott?

DAISY: All dog-eyed, like you were gettin' real weepy.

EDWINA: I had something in my eye, that's all.

DAISY: Yeah, Noah Lott. That look made me remember that right when the show went on the air five years ago, you and him were a hot item. And I mean T.H.T.T.

EDWINA: T.H.T.T.?

DAISY: Too hot to touch!

EDWINA: That's ridiculous!

DAISY: How'd an old hag like you get a spot on the show?

EDWINA: Old hag?! Why I ought to -

DAISY: Kill me? Just like you did Noah and Marti and Art?

DIBBS enters left, hands pointed like a gun.

DIBBS: Hands up!

EDWINA and DAISY hold their hands up as DIBBS realizes he doesn't have a gun and searches his pockets for his gun, finds it, and then points gun at them. Searches the room in an overly-professional manner.

DIBBS: All right. You're clean.

EDWINA and DAISY drop their hands.

EDWINA: Any luck finding the housekeeper?

DIBBS: Nope, but we're looking.

DIBBS exits right. TIGER enters left, followed by REGGIE.

TIGER: I don't care WHAT you say! We got on the show fair and square.

REGGIE: I don't believe it.

TIGER: *(Notices the ladies.)* Oh. Just a friendly disagreement.

REGGIE: There were only four spots. How did you land two of them?

TIGER: Lucky.

DAISY: That's the kind of luck I'd like to have someday.

DAISY exits left.

EDWINA: The four places were to be drawn in a raffle.

REGGIE: That's what I mean. There's no way he and his wife BOTH could have been drawn.

TIGER: *(Gives in.)* All right! All right, we knew Mr. Lott.

REGGIE: I thought so. You invested in that land deal he was promoting a few years back, weren't you?

TIGER: So what if we did?

REGGIE: How much did you lose?

SADIE enters.

SADIE: Twenty-four thousand dollars! And yes, we wanted to make sure we got on this show because it was the only way we could see Lott and try to get our money back.

TIGER: He wouldn't see us, answer our calls, or even our letters. He wanted to believe we didn't exist.

SADIE: But we showed him.

EDWINA: By killing him?

SADIE: Oh, no! We'd never have done that.

TIGER: We'll never get a cent now that he's dead, the ole coot.

SADIE and TIGER exit left as POLLY enters right holding a soufflé dish.

POLLY: Oh, I'm ruined!

MAXINE and BEULAH follow her on right.

MAXINE: You're just having a bad soufflé day, dear.

BEULAH: That's about as bad as a soufflé gets.

POLLY: Oh, shut up!

EDWINA: Is that any way to talk to a fan, Polly?

POLLY: All right. I'm sorry. You'll just have to go eat some doughnuts for breakfast. Find the sheriff and you'll find the doughnuts.

SHERIFF enters eating a doughnut.

SHERIFF: Sorry, Dibbs 'n I ate the last of 'em.

POLLY: Any progress, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: Got Dibbs lookin' around right now.

EDWINA: So we saw.

POLLY: Well, Sheriff Leghorn, maybe my soufflé didn't rise, but I did find THIS in Verna Mae's personnel records this morning.

POLLY draws a paper from her apron.

REGGIE: What is it, Sheriff?

SHERIFF: A Xerox copy of a magazine article.

POLLY: Right from my magazine "Recycled Living."

SHERIFF: Ten dangers in rewiring your own house and how to avoid them.

EDWINA: So . . . the housekeeper could have rigged the outlet.

SHERIFF: Nope. She didn't do that.

POLLY: Well, what DID she do? I mean, poor Art is dead, and she had to have something to do with it.

SHERIFF: She rigged the glue gun so when she pressed the trigger, it connected both lines of electricity.

POLLY: Well, with all this time we're wasting, Verna Mae and her sisters could be in Mexico by now.

SHERIFF: But why would she want to kill Mr. Lott?

MAXINE: I'm sure none of US would know, Sheriff.

BEULAH: Maybe she's a nut!

REGGIE: Maybe they had a thing going.

EDWINA: I heard he had enough of those.

SHERIFF: It doesn't stand to reason, though.

POLLY: All right, Sheriff, we'll FIND a reason why she killed him. I mean . . . there must be something else in her files or in her room.

SHERIFF: Lemme check the files. Where are they?

POLLY: In my office, tenth door on the right down that hall.

POLLY points off right. SHERIFF LEGHORN exits right. BEULAH and REGGIE follow.

BEULAH: (*Exiting.*) Can we watch, Sheriff? We've never seen anybody investigate before!

EDWINA: Is the phone fixed yet, Polly?

POLLY: I spent so much time trying to get this soufflé done, I never checked.

EDWINA: So unlike you, dear. Soufflé is your specialty.

POLLY and MAXINE glance at one another as EDWINA picks up the phone.

EDWINA: Drat! It's still dead. I'm going out for a walk. I've got to think some things through.

POLLY: Go right ahead, Edwina, dear.

EDWINA exits left.

POLLY: (*Stage whisper to herself.*) I can't go on. How am I going to pull together a dinner for this crew when I can't even boil water.

MAXINE: Maybe we shouldn't have put that stuff in your housekeeper's room.

POLLY: Well, it was just out in the garbage. It seemed like a good idea until everybody got hungry.

MAXINE: Maybe you can use one of your cookbooks.

POLLY: Maybe we'd just better find her! How else am I going to get the publicity I want.

MAXINE: How?!

POLLY: She's got to be hiding around here someplace.

MAXINE: Good thinking, Sherlock.

POLLY: You know something? I seem to remember - way back - that one of the guests we had on the show said he thought this house was old enough to have, like, secret panels.

MAXINE: (*Laughing.*) Secret panels?

POLLY: Don't laugh. He said there might be secret passageways all through this house from the old days . . . of the . . . Underground Bus Line or something.

MAXINE: You mean the Underground Railroad?

POLLY: Yes, it had something to do with public transportation.

MAXINE: Do you have the original blueprints?

POLLY: They're somewhere in the basement. Come on!

As MAXINE and POLLY move right, DIBBS enters right, his gun drawn.

DIBBS: Hold it! Hands up!

MAXINE and POLLY put their hands up, bored. DIBBS makes his professional search, moves to left, then lowers his weapon.

DIBBS: You're clean!

DIBBS exits left.

MAXINE: Is it just me or is that guy nuts?

POLLY exits right, as does MAXINE. A moment later, VINNIE enters, followed by SATYNNE.

VINNIE: Thought they'd never leave!

SATYNNE: Do you think we should?

VINNIE: What? You're just gonna let 'em find out?

SATYNNE: But isn't it . . . evidence?

VINNIE: Look, Satynne, this ain't the kind of evidence you want anybody to know about!

SATYNNE: You won't say anything about it, will you?

VINNIE: What, that you were so hotsy totsy with Lott that he left you eight memos that he wanted to dump the Polly Dewett show and have you create something better?

SATYNNE: We just had a couple of drinks together.

VINNIE: Yeah, sure.

SATYNNE: Honest! Goat's milk. He was nuts about it.

VINNIE: The goat's milk or you? I get jealous just thinkin' about it. You 'n him in some candlelit corner of some fancy hideaway.

SATYNNE: He took me to Perkins.

VINNIE: All right! The guy was a creep. So let's burn these and get outta here and find a candlelit corner in some fancy little retreat.

SATYNNE: You mean it, Vinnie?

VINNIE: Oh, baby, you melt the mozzarella on my pizza.

VINNIE and SATYNNE are about to kiss when DAISY enters left.

DAISY: Well, shucky darn, ain't this a little cozy twosome.

VINNIE hides the letters behind his back.

VINNIE: Daisy!

SATYNNE: You took the word right out of my mouth, Vinnie.

DAISY: What're you hiding behind your back, Vinnie?

VINNIE: Nothin'.

SATYNNE: You must be hallucinating. Too much organic gardening.

DAISY: Now you cain't fool us l'il ole Texas gals like that. I know you're hidin' somethin'. Lemme see! Lemme see!

DAISY backs VINNIE and SATYNNE around the room. DIBBS enters left with gun drawn.

DIBBS: Hold it! Hands up!

DAISY, VINNIE, and SATYNNE hold their hands up, the letters in plain view. DIBBS makes his professional rounds, moves right.

DIBBS: You're clean! You can drop 'em now.

DIBBS exits. VINNIE, SATYNNE, and DAISY drop their hands.

DAISY: Whose letters are those?

VINNIE: What letters?

SATYNNE: I didn't see any letters.

SATYNNE looks out the window.

SATYNNE: Oh, my gosh!

DAISY: What is it?!

SATYNNE: It's Edwina. She's getting away. And Shag's in the car.

DAISY: What?! She's goin' off with Shag!? That witch. I'll bury her.

DAISY runs off left.

VINNIE: Let's burn them.

SATYNNE: I'm convinced.

VINNIE puts the letters in the fireplace . . . behind fake logs.

VINNIE: Whoa! That's hot!

SATYNNE: Not half as hot as the electric chair. Let's get out of here!

VINNIE and SATYNNE run off right. The moment they do, VERNA, PATIENCE, and PRECIOUS enter from secret panel up right.

VERNA: Oh, dear! I hope they're not all gone!

VERNA reaches into fire.

PATIENCE: Be careful!

PRECIOUS: Don't burn yourself.

VERNA plucks charred letters from behind the fire (have a second package of letters with burned edges hiding.)

VERNA: There! A bit damaged, but still good evidence.

PATIENCE: Somehow they don't seem the type to kill three people.

PRECIOUS: They're so . . . so . . . googally eyed over each other.

VERNA: We know what you mean. But we've got to find out what's really in these letters.

PATIENCE: Don't we have enough evidence already? I mean, we've been through every room.

PATIENCE: We know what size underwear every guest wears.

VERNA has moved to the bookshelf and is looking for a particular volume.

PATIENCE: Polly, we really don't have time to read anything.

VERNA: I'm looking for one of my books -

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PRECIOUS: Do you have one on solving a murder?

VERNA: No. That's next. Here it is! Let's throw a party!

PATIENCE: Polly, I think you've lost your mind.

VERNA: It'll be something of a "coming out" party!

PATIENCE: Whose coming out party?

VERNA: The killers!

DIBBS enters right with gun drawn.

DIBBS: Hold it! Hands up!

VERNA, PATIENCE, and PRECIOUS hold up their hands. DIBBS makes his rounds, moves left.

DIBBS: You're clean! Drop 'em!

VERNA, PATIENCE, and PRECIOUS drop their hands. DIBBS exits left.

PATIENCE: He's seen us.

VERNA: It's all right. It won't sink in for at least another 30 seconds.

VERNA grabs paper, glue and other supplies from the shelf.

PRECIOUS: What are you doing?

VERNA: What's a party without invitations? And favors! We've got to have party favors!

PATIENCE: Oh, and let's not forget the music!

VERNA: Grab that tape right there.

PATIENCE: I was kidding.

VERNA: I'm not. The one that says "Eat your Way to a Slimmer Body."

PRECIOUS: You wrote that?

VERNA: A very big seller.

PATIENCE: The lies you tell girl! It's gonna catch up to you!

DIBBS: (*From offstage.*) SHERIFF! SHERIFF! I seen 'em!

VERNA, PATIENCE, and PRECIOUS exit through the secret panel up right. A moment later, DIBBS and SHERIFF LEGHORN enter left.

DIBBS: They're right in . . . *(HE sees they're gone.)* here.

SHERIFF: Where, you idiot?

DIBBS: They were right there!

SHERIFF: Why didn't you arrest 'em?

DIBBS: Well, I didn't rightly recognize 'em.

SHERIFF: They must have gone off this way! C'mon!

SHERIFF and DIBBS exit right. DIBBS already has his gun drawn as before. POLLY and MAXINE enter left. POLLY holds a roll of blueprints.

POLLY: Here we are!

MAXINE: What are we looking for?

POLLY spreads the blueprints on the table.

POLLY: I'm not exactly sure. But there has to be someplace they're hiding. Look at this. Here's the room we're in. See how thick the walls are?

MAXINE: But the blueprints don't show anything -

POLLY looks on the floor and notices ashes.

POLLY: Somebody's been playing with the fire.

MAXINE: Why would anybody play in the fire? Don't they know what happens when -

POLLY: Look! Paper fragments! Somebody's been burning papers.

MAXINE: Why?

POLLY is rummaging in the fire.

POLLY: "What" is more the question!

MAXINE: Don't burn yourself.

POLLY: Oh, my gosh!

MAXINE: What is it?

POLLY: There's only a bit left, but it says . . . "hate Polly. I wish . . . dead. Kill . . . Polly!"

MAXINE: Maybe . . . oh, oh, this is too much! Maybe the poison was meant for you.

POLLY: I did tell Verna I thought I'd like the chicken, too.

MAXINE: And maybe she thought Art was you and strangled the wrong person.

POLLY: And how did she know Art would use the glue gun before me?!

MAXINE: I've got to call the Enquirer. You're the target!

MAXINE picks up the phone.

MAXINE: Too bad it's dead.

POLLY: And you know something else? Supplies are missing. Paper . . . glue . . .

MAXINE: What's going on here?

POLLY: Either Verna Mae's getting ready for a craft fair or she's going to paste somebody to death.

MAXINE: What'll we do?

POLLY: Get her before she gets ME!

The curtain falls.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *That evening. The stage is empty. PATIENCE and PRECIOUS suddenly race on left, each holding an envelope. They drop the envelopes on the table and exit up right through the secret panel. POLLY and MAXINE enter right.*

POLLY: They came this way!

MAXINE: I know it!

POLLY: What is going on? What are those things?

MAXINE: They look like invitations.

POLLY: I don't have anything to wear.



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