

CAFÉ MURDER

A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery By Nathan Hartswick

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Drama Service, Inc.

For preview only

For Heather and Nancy...

CAFÉ MURDER

A Dinner Theatre Murder Mystery
By NATHAN HARTSWICK

CAST OF CHARACTERS

		<u># of lines</u>
MAÎTRE'D	host and manager of a restaurant	50
ROSEMARY	unbearable hypochondriac celebrating (and complaining through) her own birthday party	26
MARJORIE	Rosemary's sister; conservative banker	14
MELANIE	another; peace-loving hippie	12
VALERIE	another; ditz Valley girl	9
VOLLENY [VOLL-un-ee]	another; a rugged truck driver	13
CHEF	charming French chef	17
WAITER/WAITRESS	serving Rosemary's party	20
HARRIS	hyper, self-taught detective called in to investigate the murder	20
WAIT STAFF	non-acting wait staff serves audience refreshments throughout the show	n/a

SYNOPSIS

This evening at dinnertime in a small bistro.

SET

A simple, interior restaurant set. An EXIT LEFT leads to the kitchen, UP LEFT to the restrooms and RIGHT to a service area and the restaurant's entrance.

CAFÉ MURDER

1 LIGHTS UP: The AUDIENCE is seated at round tables on the same level as the ACTORS, as if they are all dining in the restaurant together. Make sure action at the head table is clearly visible from all points in the room. ROSEMARY sits at the head table with her four
5 SISTERS, ALL facing the AUDIENCE. On her LEFT sit MARJORIE and MELANIE, on her RIGHT, VALERIE and VOLLENY. A WAITER, wearing white gloves and traditional garb, serves them. (If AUDIENCE is served dinner prior to the beginning of the play, NON-ACTING WAIT STAFF now serves coffee and dessert. If AUDIENCE is not
10 served a meal beforehand, they are now served an array of snacks and beverages by the NON-ACTING WAIT STAFF. (NOTE: See PRODUCTION NOTES for suggestions on presenting this play in an auditorium rather than as dinner theatre.)

MAÎTRE'D: (*ENTERS RIGHT.*) Ladies and gentlemen, may I be the
15 first to welcome you to our fine restaurant this evening. You may have noticed the sign out front—you have indeed ventured into the notorious... (*Ominous.*) ...Café Muurderrr. (*SOUND EFFECT: FEMALE SCREAM, EVIL MALE LAUGH, BELL RINGING. This business will repeat itself every time the restaurant's name is mentioned.*) But not to fear! Did you know the word murder is
20 also the name for a group of crows? Our chef is world-famous for his succulent blackbird pie—vegetarian, of course. This was the simple origin of our humble eatery's menacing moniker, and so there is no reason whatsoever for you to feel uncomfortable here
25 at... (*Ominous.*) ...Café Muurderrr. (*SOUND EFFECT: FEMALE SCREAM, EVIL MALE LAUGH, BELL RINGING.*) Now, then! Enjoy your appetizers. I will be your maître'd for the evening, so please don't hesitate to let me know if there's anything—

ROSEMARY: (*To MAÎTRE'D.*) Hey!

30 **MAÎTRE'D:** (*Attempts to ignore her.*) Anything at all I might—

ROSEMARY: Hey, Paco!

MAÎTRE'D: (*Points to self.*) Paco?

ROSEMARY: Yeah, get over here.

MAÎTRE'D: What seems to be the problem, miss?

35 **ROSEMARY:** I asked for a smidgen of salt on my appetizer. This is quite clearly a pinch. I get gastrointestinal problems when I eat too much salt, you know.

MAÎTRE'D: I'm sorry to hear that, madam—

ROSEMARY: Don't I get problems, girls?

40 **VOLLENY:** Oh, you got problems all right.

- 1 **MARJORIE:** How long do you think this will take, Rosemary? I'm meeting someone at nine tonight.
- ROSEMARY:** It's my party! It'll go on as long as it has to!
- MELANIE:** Wow, you guys are real downers, you know that?
- 5 **VALERIE:** (*Smacks her cell phone against the table.*) My cell phone, like, totally doesn't work in here.
- MAÎTRE'D:** (*Takes ROSEMARY'S plate.*) Let me get you another plate. Is there anything else I can get for you or your friends?
- ROSEMARY:** They're not my friends—they're my sisters. I'm
- 10 Rosemary. This is Marjorie.
- MARJORIE:** Pleasure.
- ROSEMARY:** Melanie.
- MELANIE:** Peace.
- ROSEMARY:** Valerie.
- 15 **VALERIE:** Huh?
- ROSEMARY:** And Volleny.
- VOLLENY:** Hey.
- ROSEMARY:** We're here to celebrate my birthday.
- MAÎTRE'D:** Happy birthd—
- 20 **ROSEMARY:** Shut up. Now, listen carefully. I'm allergic to water, so tell your chef if he uses so much as a drop in my entrée, I could die.
- MAÎTRE'D:** (*Aside.*) That would be a shame.
- ROSEMARY:** What?
- 25 **MAÎTRE'D:** (*Clears throat.*) Nothing. Look, miss, I don't know if it's possible to be allergic to water. There is a condition that means "fear of water" called "hydrophobia," but I doubt you have that.
- ROSEMARY:** I want to speak to your chef.
- MAÎTRE'D:** Very well. (*Yells OFF LEFT.*) Franc! (*To ROSEMARY.*)
- 30 One moment, please. (*EXITS LEFT.*)
- ROSEMARY:** (*Shouts OFF LEFT.*) I can't wait around all night, you know!
- MARJORIE:** Rosemary, will you settle down? There are other people in the restaurant.
- 35 **ROSEMARY:** Yes, but I'm more important than they are.
- MELANIE:** Chill out, Ro. Open yourself up to the universe.
- VOLLENY:** Yeah. And shut your pie hole, while you're at it.
- ROSEMARY:** You're all heartless! This is how you treat your own sister on her birthday?

1 **VALERIE:** (*Into cell phone.*) Hello? Ray's Pizza? Do you still deliver?

MAÎTRE'D: (*RE-ENTERS LEFT with CHEF, who has a French accent and is dressed in a frock and a chef's hat.*) Everyone, may

5 I introduce our chef, Franc.

SISTERS: (*Ad-lib.*) Hello, Franc. Pleased to meet you. Etc.

CHEF: A pleasure.

ROSEMARY: Yeah, hi. Tell him about my condition.

MAÎTRE'D: Franc, this is Rosemary. She can't have any water.

10 Understand?

CHEF: Oh, yes, I understand.

MAÎTRE'D: Can you make her something without it?

CHEF: Oh, yes, zere are many things one can make wizout rosemary.

15 **MAÎTRE'D:** No, no. This is Rosemary. No water for her.

CHEF: No water, no rosemary. Gotcha.

MAÎTRE'D: No, no water for Rosemary.

CHEF: Ah.

MAÎTRE'D: Understand?

20 **CHEF:** (*Nods "yes."*) No.

ROSEMARY: (*Shouts, deliberate.*) I—can't—have—any—water. Je le no drinkay le water. Capeesh? Comprendes?

WAITER: (*ENTERS RIGHT with a tray full of water glasses.*) Okay, water all around, folks!

25 **ROSEMARY:** Ahhhh! Get it away! Get it away! (*Swoons.*)

WAITER: (*Sets tray on the table.*) What's her problem?

CHEF: She is allergic to rosemary.

MAÎTRE'D: (*Attempts to help her.*) Okay, calm down, now, calm down.

30 **ROSEMARY:** (*Stands.*) Just get your hands off me, Paco, and tell me where the restroom is.

MAÎTRE'D: Yes, miss. Let me show you the way. The light... it takes too long to come on... so it's pitch black in there for a moment if it's not already on. We wouldn't want you to hurt yourself. (*To*

35 *AUDIENCE.*) Would we?

MARJORIE: Actually, with all this talk about water, I think I need to go, too.

MELANIE: I'm comin', too.

VOLLENY: Me, too. Valerie?

- 1 **VALERIE:** Huh? Oh, yeah, totally.
MAÎTRE'D: Right this way, Miss Rosemary...
WAITER: I can show them.
MAÎTRE'D: That's quite all right, I'll do it.
- 5 **CHEF:** No, no, I will lead ze way! Zis way to ze loo, everyone!
ROSEMARY: Whoop-dee-doo.
CHEF: Off we go, into ze wild loo yonder... *(The SISTERS chatter, the MAÎTRE'D and WAITER direct them, and ALL EXIT together UP LEFT, in a knot. SILENCE. A moment passes. A SCREAM pierces the air, followed by another pause. Then ALL except ROSEMARY RE-ENTER UP LEFT, single file, in this order: MAÎTRE'D, VOLLENY, VALERIE, WAITER [not wearing gloves], CHEF, MARJORIE, MELANIE. They are smirking. They line up behind the head table, turn to face the AUDIENCE and very*
- 10 *deliberately and simultaneously dust their hands.)*
MAÎTRE'D: *(Looks down the line.)* I say, we seem to be one short. Who's missing?
WAITER: *(Looks at the ceiling.)* Couldn't say.
VOLLENY: *(Plays with a fork on the table.)* Sure is quieter, though.
- 20 **CHEF:** Zis is true.
MARJORIE: *(Not surprised.)* Hey, whaddaya know? I think we're missing Rosemary.
VOLLENY: I ain't missin' her.
MARJORIE: I guess someone should call the cops, eh?
- 25 **MELANIE:** Valerie?
VALERIE: *(Tries to use her cell phone, but gets frustrated.)* The reception on this thing is hideous! *(Throws the phone into the wings.)* Piece of junk!
HARRIS'S VOICE: *(Makes a siren noise OFF RIGHT.)*
- 30 Weeeeeeooh, weeeeeeooh....
HARRIS: *(ENTERS RIGHT, urgently. He is a bit hyper, chews gum and wears a trench coat. Stops making the siren noise.)* How's my timing?
MAÎTRE'D: Excellent! How did you get here so quickly?
- 35 **HARRIS:** The poster said there was a mystery show here tonight.
WAITER: Sweet.
MAÎTRE'D: It's a good thing you're here, Detective...
HARRIS: Harris. Reginald Harris.
MAÎTRE'D: Harris. *(Notices the front table in the AUDIENCE. To*
- 40 *HARRIS.)* Would you excuse me a moment, Mr. Harris?

- 1 **HARRIS:** Certainly.
- MAÎTRE'D:** *(To WAITER.)* Why do these people not have any water?
- WAITER:** Oh... I must have missed that table.
- 5 **MAÎTRE'D:** They've got no flowers either. I want you to take care of this right away.
- WAITER:** Yes, boss.
- MAÎTRE'D:** *(To FRONT TABLE.)* I'm terribly sorry.
- MARJORIE:** Here, take ours.
- 10 **WAITER:** Thank you. *(Takes tray of water glasses and vase from head table [containing a pair of wet white gloves] and delivers it to the front table in the AUDIENCE. VOLLENY, VALERIE, MARJORIE and MELANIE sit, converse and eat their appetizers. CHEF lingers.)*
- 15 **MAÎTRE'D:** My apologies, Detective. Thank you for coming on such short notice.
- HARRIS:** Absolutely. So what's the problem?
- MAÎTRE'D:** Well, we seem to have lost a member of our party.
- HARRIS:** A code James Jeffords, eh? Well, I'll check it out. Where
- 20 was the person last seen?
- WAITER:** Try the john.
- HARRIS:** John who?
- MAÎTRE'D:** No, no, in the john.
- CHEF:** Ze loo, ze "w.c."
- 25 **HARRIS:** Ah, I see, the w.c.
- CHEF:** Oui, oui.
- HARRIS:** No thanks, I just went.
- CHEF:** *(French accent, as always.)* Pardon?
- HARRIS:** Wee-wee.
- 30 **CHEF:** Non, non, mon ami, ze "w.c.," you see...
- WAITER:** That's where the woman was last seen.
- MAÎTRE'D:** Or not seen, to be precise. The lights were out in the lavatory.
- HARRIS:** Oh, I see! Well, I'll have a look, then. *(Pulls a flashlight from his trench coat.)* Back in a flash! Ha, ha! *(EXITS UP LEFT. ALL wait in silence for an awkward moment.)*
- 35 **MAÎTRE'D:** So... how 'bout those Mets?
- HARRIS:** *(Runs back IN UP LEFT with a shirt just like ROSEMARY was wearing, but wet.)* Have a look at this!

- 1 **WAITER:** What is that?
MAÎTRE'D: Good Lord, she's naked somewhere!
HARRIS: No, no! I have determined the young lady was... murdered.
- 5 **ALL:** (*Except HARRIS.*) Murdered? (*ALL gasp.*)
HARRIS: Murdered. Right here in... (*Ominous.*) ...Café Muuurderrr. (*SOUND EFFECT: FEMALE SCREAM, EVIL MALE LAUGH, BELL RINGING.*) Ooh... nice touch.
- MAÎTRE'D:** Thank you. Have you found any clues, Detective Harris?
10 A murder weapon, perhaps?
HARRIS: (*Drops shirt.*) It appears she was done in with a few splashes of cold water. Never seen anything like it. The severe hydration caused some sort of chemical breakdown. She withered away right there on the bathroom floor.
- 15 **MARJORIE:** How disturbing!
WAITER: (*Kicks the shirt.*) So where's the pointy black hat?
HARRIS: I suspect, of course, that all of you had motives.
MELANIE: Why?
HARRIS: It just seems everyone in the room usually has a motive
20 when these things happen. Haven't you noticed?
MELANIE: No, actually, I haven't.
HARRIS: Plus, I think it might have said it on the poster.
WAITER: Sweet.
MAÎTRE'D: We'll cooperate in any way we can, Detective Harris.
- 25 **HARRIS:** Excellent. Bring me a pickle and pimento loaf sandwich and give me some room to work my magic.
WAITER: Pickle and what?
HARRIS: No, wait... questions! I need to question you all, right? Isn't that how it works? (*Abrupt.*) All right, hold it right there! Nobody
30 leaves this room.
MAÎTRE'D: Detective, have you... done this before?
HARRIS: Well, I just graduated, see.
MAÎTRE'D: Ah.
HARRIS: I took a correspondence course. I'm also trained in computer
35 programming and basic neurosurgery.
MAÎTRE'D: I see.
VOLLENY: So you became a detective through the mail?
HARRIS: Private investigator, actually. See, you can't become a detective until you— (*Goes to sit and catches himself.*) Hey, wait

1 a minute, I'll ask the questions around here! Now—(*Pulls out a notepad and pen.*) What was the young lady's name?

MARJORIE: Rosemary.

HARRIS: Rosemary? Not... Rosemary Saint-John?

5 **VOLLENY:** Yeah, why? Did you know her?

HARRIS: I'm afraid I did. I had a little run-in with her this morning. Actually, she had more of a run-in with me. I don't like to speak ill of the dead, but...

WAITER: No, please. Speak freely.

10 **MAÎTRE'D:** Looks like we have another suspect.

HARRIS: Suspect? Me? Ha! I'm the investigator!

MAÎTRE'D: Where were you five minutes ago?

HARRIS: I resent this! Where were you five minutes ago?

MAÎTRE'D: Trying to get the light on in a darkened bathroom with

15 Miss Rosemary and all the other suspects.

HARRIS: Can you prove you didn't kill her?

MAÎTRE'D: No. Can you prove I did?

HARRIS: No. Darn it!

MAÎTRE'D: Okay, then. I've got an idea. Since no one seems to be

20 impartial here, why don't we let the other guests attempt to solve the mystery. Everyone?

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) A stellar idea. Absolutely. Yes, indeed. Sounds good to me. Etc.

MAÎTRE'D: Okay, then. (*To AUDIENCE.*) Ladies and gentlemen, at

25 this time, I'd like each table to open the envelope marked "number one." Inside, you'll find a list of 12 questions. Together as a table, we'd like you to look the questions over. In a moment, the suspects—

VOLLENY: (*Interrupts.*) That includes you, too, buddy.

30 **MAÎTRE'D:** Ahem... including myself... will visit each table, and you will have a chance to ask each person— (*VOLLENY eyes him.*) —each of us... three questions from the list. You may ask the same question of more than one suspect if you wish, or you may ask different questions each time, but each suspect will answer

35 only three questions. Good luck! (*[OPTIONAL] MUSIC PLAYS. INTERVIEW PERIOD BEGINS. [See PRODUCTION NOTES. If you would like an alternative to audience participation, you can present this interview session as a confessional with an omniscient, offstage voice asking the questions. Simply have each character step forward or into a spotlight to respond.]* Going around to

40

1 each table, each *SUSPECT* answers three questions from the
AUDIENCE with the corresponding responses. [Questions and
answers can be found at the back of the script.] As the interview
5 period comes to a close, either the dishes are cleared and coffee
is replenished, etc. or snacks and beverages are cleared, and
dessert and coffee are served. One of the *NON-ACTING WAIT*
STAFF also adds four more chairs to the head table. *SUSPECTS*
except *MAÎTRE'D* return to the front of the room and line up side
10 by side. *MUSIC STOPS*.) And now, the moment you've been
waiting for. I will now ask you to open the envelope on your table
marked "number two." Inside, you will find a ballot with which
to cast your table's vote. Place an "X" next to the suspect you
think is responsible for tonight's crime at... (*Ominous*.) ...Café
15 Muurderrr. (*SOUND EFFECT: FEMALE SCREAM, EVIL MALE*
LAUGH, BELL RINGING.) You have 60 seconds to choose your
horse... (*Motions to SUSPECTS*.) ...and they begin right now.

VOLLENY: Wait a minute. You gotta get up here with the rest of us.

MAÎTRE'D: (*Sighs heavily and joins the SUSPECTS in line at the*
front of the room. Motions for the voting to begin. MUSIC PLAYS.
20 *As the AUDIENCE votes, one of the NON-ACTING WAIT STAFF*
and serves plates of "food" to the SUSPECTS. MUSIC STOPS.)
When your table is finished voting, please fold the ballot, take
the flowers out of the vase in front of you, deposit your ballot
in the vase and place the flowers back. Don't worry... there's
25 no water in the vases, so your ballot will remain completely dry.
(*As AUDIENCE MEMBER at the front table pulls out the flowers*
to cast their ballot.) Excuse me, sir/madam, what's that in your
vase? (*Steps over to the front table and removes a pair of wet,*
white gloves that are hanging off the stems of the flowers.) That's
30 peculiar. They're wet.

HARRIS: But the vases didn't have any water in them.

MAÎTRE'D: Is anyone missing a pair of gloves?

HARRIS: Not me.

CHEF: Not me.

35 **MARJORIE:** Not me.

MELANIE: Not me.

VALERIE: Not me.

VOLLENY: Not me. (*ALL turn and look at WAITER*.)

WAITER: (*After a beat, explodes*.) All right! I did it! Is that what you
40 want to hear? I did it! And I'm not ashamed of it! She was a terrible
woman, and I'm glad she's gone, gosh darn it all to heck! Mu-ha-
ha-ha-ha— (*Suddenly calm, addresses AUDIENCE*.) Now, then.

1 *(The other CHARACTERS, including MAÎTRE'D and CHEF, pivot*
on their heels, walk to the table, sit and begin eating as WAITER
performs the rest of the confession. One of the NON-ACTING WAIT
5 *STAFF collects the vases from AUDIENCE tables with the ballots*
in them.) Rosemary was a regular at a restaurant where I used to
work. As I said before, she was miserable. One day, while trying
to poison her waterless entrée, I was caught by the chef and fired.
I swore revenge. I found out Rosemary was having her birthday
party at... *(Ominous.)* ...Café Muurderrr. *(SOUND EFFECT:*
10 *FEMALE SCREAM, EVIL MALE LAUGH, BELL RINGING.)* How
apropos, I thought... I'll make it her death-day party instead. Ha,
ha! So I applied for a job here as a waiter. My intent was to spill
water on her at the table and make it look like an accident, but
that didn't quite work out. So I followed her into the restroom and
15 splashed water on her in the dark. Those of you with a keen eye
for detail may have noticed I was wearing gloves at the beginning
of the evening. When I came back from the bathroom, however,
I wasn't wearing any. That's because in the process of hydrating
Miss Rosemary, I got them wet. I hid the gloves in my pocket, and
20 then snuck them into the flower vase. It was the perfect crime! And
I would have gotten away with it, too... *(Indicates people at front*
table.) ...if it hadn't been for you meddling kids! Oh, well. I might
as well have a last meal. I'm famished. *(Walks to the head table,*
where ALL mime eating.)

25 **ALL:** *(Ad-lib. Shout to WAITER.)* Pull up a chair! Nice work! Etc.
(WAITER sits.)

MAÎTRE'D: *(Rises and addresses the AUDIENCE.)* I thank you from
the bottom of my heart for coming to our little restaurant and for
helping us to solve this mystery tonight. It is now time to find out
30 who among you guessed correctly. The ballots, please! *(One of*
the NON-ACTING WAIT STAFF ENTERS with the winning ballots.
MAÎTRE'D announces the winners and presents them with prizes,
if desired. [NOTE: This section is up to the director.] Excellent
work... we couldn't have done it without you. Now if you'll excuse
35 me, our guests tonight were kind enough to let Franc and me join
them, so I'm going to finish this delectable meal. *(Sits.)*

MELANIE: *(To WAITER.)* Oh, well. It could have worked. Nice try,
anyway.

40 **HARRIS:** Yeah, nice try. Of course, you know I've got to turn you over
to the police.

WAITER: Oh, of course. Maybe you'll get another job out of it. Your
first big case.

HARRIS: Ah, you're too kind.

- 1 **MARJORIE:** Pass the potatoes, Val?
VALERIE: Huh? Oh, sure, here you are. (*Passes serving dish.*)
MELANIE: Delicious meal.
WAITER: Yeah, this dinner is killer, chef.
- 5 **CHEF:** (*Jovial.*) Non, non, you're the killer! (*ALL laugh.*)
VOLLENY: Pass the green beans?
MAÎTRE'D: (*Passes serving dish.*) Here you are.
VOLLENY: Thanks.
HARRIS: (*Mimes eating.*) The chicken is terrific.
- 10 **MARJORIE:** Mm-hm.
ROSEMARY: (*Suddenly, stumbles IN UP LEFT, wearing a bathrobe. EVERYONE'S jaw drops. She gains her composure, walks over and sits down at the table.*) Is there an extra chair? I'm starving.
ALL: Rosemary!
- 15 **MAÎTRE'D:** What a... surprise...
ROSEMARY: You were right, I guess. There's no such thing as a water allergy. But there better not be more than a smidgen of salt on this baked potato.
WAITER: (*Stands.*) You're... you're not...
- 20 **ROSEMARY:** Uh, waiter! (*Hands him serving dish.*) Take back these beans, they're far too cold. (*WAITER is in shock.*) Well? Don't just stand there! Chop, chop! (*WAITER fumes silently, then lurches suddenly for ROSEMARY. The OTHERS hold WAITER back. ROSEMARY remains calm, cutting her dinner and singing to herself.*) Happy birthday to me, happy birthday to me, happy birthday, dear Rosie... happy birthday to me. (*LIGHTS FADE.*)
- 25

END OF PLAY

PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE: A long, rectangular dais style table with five chairs. Several round tables are placed throughout the space for AUDIENCE MEMBERS to have dinner or snacks. There are water glasses and vases with artificial flowers for each table except the FRONT TABLE, which will receive these items during the play. A pair of white gloves should be hidden in the head table's vase, identical to those worn by WAITER. On all AUDIENCE tables, there should be pencils and two envelopes: the one marked #1 contains the interview questions for the AUDIENCE, and #2 contains the voting ballot for each table.

BROUGHT ON:

Shirt identical to the one Rosemary wears, flashlight, notepad and pen (HARRIS)
Serving trays with plates of "food," serving dishes and utensils, etc. (NON-ACTING WAIT STAFF)
Tray with water glasses adhered to it (WAITER)
Cell phone, gum (VALERIE)
Bathrobe (ROSEMARY)

COSTUMES

MAÎTRE'D: Tuxedo or equivalent.

ROSEMARY: Plain, dressy shirt and pants. Bathrobe for last appearance.

MARJORIE: The power suit of a conservative career woman.

MELANIE: Tie-dyed shirt, jeans, other hippie touches.

VALERIE: Barbie-like. Cosmetic and artificial. Perhaps some hot pink clothing, fake nails.

VOLLENY: Utilitarian. Dirty jean jacket, trucker's hat, etc.

CHEF: Apron, white chef's hat.

WAITER: White shirt, black pants, bow tie, white gloves.

HARRIS: Trenchcoat, suit and tie.

WAIT STAFF: White shirts and black pants.

SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC

Combined sound effect of a female scream, an evil male laugh and a bell ringing; optional background music for interview session.

AUDITORIUM SETTING

Obviously, the show is written to be performed as dinner theatre. However, you may make modifications as required and eliminate the non-acting wait staff to adapt the play for your situation. The audience should still be addressed as though they are patrons at a restaurant. Think of each row of seats as a “table.” For the interview session, it would be ideal if audience members could get out of their seats and cluster in various parts of the auditorium to work as teams and conduct interviews out of earshot of other groups.

Without tables, the greatest challenge is to still find a way to plant—and later reveal—the pair of gloves. On page 5, substitute the following:

MAÎTRE'D: *(To WAITER.)* Why are there no flowers in our front lobby?

WAITER: Oh... I must have forgotten.

MAÎTRE'D: I want you to take care of this right away.

WAITER: Yes, boss.

MARJORIE: Here, take ours.

WAITER: Thank you. *(Takes vase from head table [containing pair of wet, white gloves] and sets it on a small table placed DOWN RIGHT. VOLLENY, VALERIE, MARJORIE and MELANIE sit, converse and eat their appetizers. CHEF lingers.)*

Continue play as written until it is time to collect the ballots. On page 8, modify MAÎTRE'D's line as follows:

MAÎTRE'D: *(Sighs heavily... MUSIC STOPS.)* As your group is finished voting, please fold the ballot. *(Reaches for vase of flowers DOWN RIGHT and takes flowers out of vase.)* I will come around with this vase to collect your ballots. Don't worry, there's no water in the vase, so your ballot will remain completely dry. *(Goes around and collects ballots, then returns to STAGE to start to pull out ballots.)* Wait a minute! What's this? *(Removes a pair of wet, white gloves.)* That's peculiar... they're wet.

ABOUT THE AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

The question and answer section of *Café Murder* is designed to give actors a feel for improvisation while still providing the safety net of a predetermined set of answers. Although actors may have all the possible answers memorized, they will still have to respond on their toes when a question is presented and be required to improvise small talk, in character, without revealing key details about the plot. For practice, once the answers have been memorized, the actors can play audience members to each performer so they can get used to this new feeling. Join the “audience” in this exercise, and gradually increase the level of difficulty by portraying an increasingly difficult patron (asking questions they’re not allowed to answer, jumping from question to question, calling the performers by their real names, etc.). The actors will have fun, learn the skill and be ready for anything on show night!

The performers should make pleasant conversation with the guests in character before and after the questions are asked/answered. Inquiries about how they are enjoying the show, comments on the weather, questions about the guests and thoughts about the food are all acceptable topics. The performers should not disclose any information about their character or the other suspects aside from what is contained in these answers. Performers should try to keep their conversation audible only to the table that posed the question. They are allowed to repeat their answer to a question once, should the guests require it.

Question #1 Was tonight the first time you had met the victim?

WAITER: No. I had the displeasure of meeting her before.

MAÎTRE'D: Indeed, I believe it was.

CHEF: Never before had I met ze woman, and never again do I wish to.

MARJORIE: What an odd question. I’ve known her for years... after all, I am her sister...

MELANIE: No. I’ve known the woman far too long, man.

VALERIE: No! Like, I’m her sister. What a weird question.

VOLLENY: I wish. I’ve spent a lifetime listening to that annoying broad.

HARRIS: As I mentioned, I encountered her this morning. That was the first time.

Question #2 Did you hear any peculiar noises, or did anyone speak in the restroom?

WAITER: I think maybe I muttered something disparaging. Other than that, no... I didn't hear anything.

MAÎTRE'D: I don't recall. I was busy tripping over the other suspects in the dark.

CHEF: I am a chef. My sense of smell is better zen my hearing. And I definitely smelled a rat in zat restroom.

MARJORIE: I heard a (woman's/man's) voice in the restroom, but I couldn't make out what was said.

MELANIE: Now that you mention it, I think I heard someone say, "You've had your last meal at Café Murder, Miss Rosemary."

VALERIE: You mean, like, a thud or something? I didn't notice anything like that. But people say I don't pay attention too well.

VOLLENY: I noticed the silence when Rosemary stopped speaking. What a breath of fresh air.

HARRIS: Well, it was empty by the time I got in there, so I didn't hear anything.

Question #3 Did anyone else have access to the restroom?

WAITER: Everyone has access to it. That's why they call it a public restroom. Is that question really on there?

MAÎTRE'D: I suppose everyone has access to it. But I think it was empty when we all went in there.

CHEF: Sure. But I think ze crime was perpetrated by someone in zis room.

MARJORIE: I don't run the restaurant. I suppose anyone could have been in there.

MELANIE: Maybe. What are you asking me for? If you want my opinion, it was one of the other seven suspects.

VALERIE: Why, do you need a key, like in those mini-marts? I guess anyone who wanted to could get in, right?

VOLLENY: Sure, I guess it's possible. But was there really room for anyone else in there?

HARRIS: It's possible. But my suspicions lie with these seven suspects.

Question #4 Did you go into the restroom with the intention of doing Rosemary harm?

WAITER: Sure. Wouldn't you? I guess it's up to you to decide if I acted upon that intention, huh?

MAÎTRE'D: I can't say the thought didn't cross my mind.

CHEF: Alas, I cannot tell a lie. Ze idea had occurred to me.

MARJORIE: No more than the urge I have to do her harm every minute of every other day.

MELANIE: I try not to do harm to any living creature. Then again, nobody's perfect.

VALERIE: Well, like, I mostly went in to reapply my lipstick. But then it was dark in there, so then I thought about doing her in.

VOLLENY: I think about doing her harm every darn day, my friend.

HARRIS: Why are you asking me this question? It's pretty obvious I went in to check the status of the victim.

Question #5 What's the best defense you can make to convince us you're not the murderer?

WAITER: What's the best defense anyone in here can give? We all had motive and opportunity. I look innocent. Is that enough to convince you?

MAÎTRE'D: Well, I am your host. And I think it would be highly indecent of a host to lose his composure around his guests and commit such an act... however deserved it may have been.

CHEF: If I really wanted to kill her, I would have sprinkled some Evian bottled mineral water onto a nice light soufflé. It is a truly tasteful way to die, don't you think?

MARJORIE: You may think I'm a businesswoman who cares only about money, but there are more important things in life... like family. No matter how annoying that woman was or how much money she mooched off me, I couldn't have gone through with killing my own sister.

MELANIE: I think it's pretty clear that although I believed the world would be a more peaceful place without Rosemary, I was patient enough to wait for something else to get to her. I don't consider myself a killer.

VALERIE: I was talking to my friend Kiki about it, and she said I'm not smart enough to kill somebody and get away with it. But she also doesn't think (name of current male heartthrob) is cute, so, like, who's the idiot now?

VOLLENY: Sure, the woman whined and sputtered like a truck that needed a tune-up, but I ain't too keen on doin' any more jail time. Let someone else get rid of her. I just want to drive my rig.

HARRIS: Does the detective ever do it? C'mon, I'm the one trying to help. And I'm not even smart enough to do that right. Do you really think I'm clever enough to pretend I want to help so I can get away with killing her?

Question #6 How do you feel about what happened to Rosemary?

WAITER: I'm not exactly all broken up about it. Why? Should I be?

MAÎTRE'D: I know it's unprofessional to say it, but confidentially speaking, I'll do swimmingly well with one less rabble-rouser in my restaurant.

CHEF: What happened to ze rosemary? Have we run out of rosemary? Ha ha, I am kidding. I am delighted about what happened to her, of course. Is zat in bad taste?

MARJORIE: In business school, they teach you to know when to cut your losses. I gained so little out of my relationship with that woman. I think that from a managerial standpoint, whoever killed her made the right decision.

MELANIE: I feel like she's in a better place now. And, more importantly, so are we. What's not to like about that arrangement?

VALERIE: She was my sister. So, it's like, really sad, but then again my cell phone only has three speed dial slots, so now I'm totally set, y'know?

VOLLENY: Those long trips back and forth across the country alone are gonna be mighty quiet. Have I mentioned how much I like the quiet?

HARRIS: I'm trained to be objective. But if you said, "Detective Harris, would you say you're A) heartbroken beyond belief or B) absolutely elated at Rosemary's passing?" I think I'd have to choose B.

Question #7 Do you enjoy your job?

WAITER: I'm a little worried about losing my job, to tell you the truth. First I forget to put flowers on the table, and now I'm hoping my boss won't notice I've lost a piece of my uniform. But sure, I enjoy working here.

MAÎTRE'D: I'll enjoy it a lot more now that serving that ferocious man-eating beast is no longer part of my job description.

CHEF: If you enjoyed your food zis evening, zen I am happy. When others enjoy eating my food, indeed, I enjoy my job very much.

MARJORIE: I'm too conservative to enjoy anything. I gain a dull satisfaction from the adequate completion of my job.

MELANIE: I enjoy being an activist, yes. It's incredibly rewarding to touch people's lives in a meaningful way. Thanks for asking.

VALERIE: Gosh, I don't really have a job. I do a lot of shopping, I get a lot of joy out of that. Does shopping count?

VOLLENY: I love the open road. There ain't nuthin' like takin' a rig cross country on your own with the window rolled down and yer arm hangin' out.

HARRIS: I enjoy it quite a bit, even though I'm kind of new at it. I hope I can solve a case or something soon, otherwise I'll have to fall back on my career as a rocket scientist. I got that degree through the mail, too.

Question #8 Do you think the murderer had help?

WAITER: Maybe. Even with her water allergy, that woman had all sorts of dumb luck... she'd have to, to live to that age without getting rubbed out.

MAÎTRE'D: I suppose it's possible. But I'm operating on the assumption that only one person in the restroom committed the deed.

CHEF: Nah. Too many cooks in ze kitchen spoils ze soup du jour. Zere is only one true murderer.

MARJORIE: Possibly. Though I don't know why the murderer would need help, I'm sure there were plenty of volunteers.

MELANIE: Cooperation is the essence of all deeds, good and evil. So I guess there could have been an accessory to Rosemary's murder.

VALERIE: No. Why would you need help? The water like, shriveled her up like a prune. Which is so gross, if you ask me.

VOLLENY: I don't think the murderer needed help. How hard is it to splash water on someone?

HARRIS: It's always one person, isn't it? The only problem here is, there isn't a butler.

Question #9 When did you first become aware of Rosemary's water allergy?

WAITER: About a month ago, as a matter of fact.

MAÎTRE'D: This evening, of course. What a strange condition. Who would have thought it actually existed?

CHEF: About five minutes after ze maître'd told me about it. I was a little confused.

MARJORIE: I think she developed it at about age five, to get out of taking a bath. She always got what she wanted. It was completely unfair.

MELANIE: Oh, it was 25 years ago, at least. Wow, time flies.

VALERIE: Like, forever ago. She won't let that one drop. It's so weird. Who ever heard of being allergic to water? What a loser.

VOLLENY: She's always had that complex. What a hypochondriac.

HARRIS: This morning she mentioned something about it when it was starting to rain, but I learned the whole truth here tonight.

Question #10 How long have you worked in your current job?

WAITER: This is my second day. How am I doing?

MAÎTRE'D: Fourteen years. Every year somebody drops dead in the dining room. At least Rosemary was classy enough to take it into the restroom.

CHEF: Twelve years. I have invented over a thousand recipes. None of zem, strangely enough, are truly waterless.

MARJORIE: About five years now. People don't realize it, but filing documents and revising budgets can be very exciting.

MELANIE: I've been protesting ever since I was eleven. It's a lifelong ambition.

VALERIE: Job? Who works? I have more important things to do.

VOLLENY: Goin' on 20 years. That's a lotta miles, my friends.

HARRIS: About 4 days now. How am I doing?

Question #11 Is this your first time at this restaurant?

WAITER: No. I haven't worked here long though, so it sometimes seems it.

MAÎTRE'D: Perhaps you didn't notice. I own the restaurant. Next question!

CHEF: How? I have been cooking here for 12 years.

MARJORIE: I think it is, yes. Lovely decor. Rosemary had good taste... in restaurants, at least.

MELANIE: Yeah, man, I think so. Not really my scene, but it's good to see how the fat cats live once in awhile.

VALERIE: I think I was here with my friend's mom once. She was this nasty woman with frosted blonde hair. She was so gross. Anyway, yeah, once before, maybe.

VOLLENY: Do I look like the kind of person who frequents a place like this? Give me a burger at a biker bar or a truck stop any day.

HARRIS: I may have eaten here once or twice a few years ago. Nice place. The murder thing killed my appetite tonight, though.

Question #12 Are you the murderer?

WAITER: Maybe.

MAÎTRE'D: Maybe.

CHEF: Maybe.

MARJORIE: Maybe.

MELANIE: Maybe.

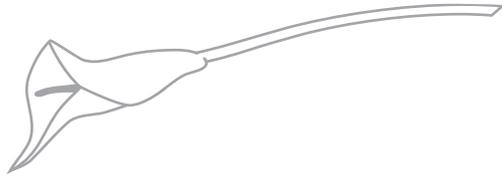
VALERIE: Maybe.

VOLLENY: Maybe.

HARRIS: Maybe.

VOTING BALLOT

On the next page, you'll find a voting ballot for audience members to fill out after the interview session. Please feel free to copy it directly or make up your own ballot.



**Which of the suspects threw
the water on Miss Rosemary?
(choose only one)**

- The Maître'd
- The Waiter/Waitress
- The Chef (Franc)
- Marjorie the Banker
- Melanie the Hippie
- Valerie the Valley Girl
- Volleny the Truck Driver
- Detective Harris

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