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Cast of Characters

The Technical Staff

LILA, the director, a little uptight

SAMMY, the stage manager, superstitious

OBO, the playwright

ESTRELLA, the costume designer, foreign

MILLIE, the props person

The Actors

BRENDA, a little stressed out, playing VIRGINIA WATERMOOSE

MARVIN, in his very first show, playing WIMPLE VON HABERSTAM

JAKE, playing REGINALD, the butler

TRISTAN, playing OPIE MCGRAW, the Texan

TAYLOR (female), addicted to her phone, playing VERONICA STEELE

ARNOLD, not a very good actor, playing VITO MALATUCCI, having
an affair with Alana

STEVE, playing MILES BRADLEY, a politician

KAYLIE, playing ALANA MORGENSTERN, a wealthy widow

MASHA, playing SHERIFF TOOMBS

ELEANOR, a bit of a snob, playing BARBIE HAYDEN

Casting Notes

The role of Jake/Reginald may be played an actress. Change the character name to Jackie/Catherine. The roles of Obo and Sammy may be either male or female.

The part of Sheriff Toombs has been scripted as a male, played by a woman because they've run out of male actors. Masha will obviously be female, and is playing the part as male. She has a fake mustache.

Production Notes

Set

Act I is the set for the play *Nine Little Indians*, as seen from the audience in the theater during rehearsal. Act II is the backstage area, and also the same set from Act I, but as seen from reverse.

The set for *Nine Little Indians* should look like a fairly cheap version of a many-roomed mansion. There is a second floor which has three doors. On the back side of those doors, it is important that the center door has a small platform, not connected to the other two. The other two platforms have ladders down from them.

On Changing Costumes

There are a lot of costume changes in this play, in full view of the audience. For modesty, make sure the actors are wearing multiple layers—the humor will come from trying to get into and out of clothes as quickly and awkwardly as possible, not from seeing the actors in their underwear.

You may also elect to use backstage dressers, who will obviously be onstage during part of the action of Act II.

Mics

In Act II it is important to have your actors mic'd. When "onstage" (facing upstage) they won't be able to be heard unless their voices are aided in some way.

A Note on the Inspiration for This Play

Obviously, I am deeply indebted to Michael Frayn for his comedic masterpiece, *Noises Off*. I am likewise indebted to Agatha Christie for her brilliant play, *Ten Little Indians* (now known as *And Then There Were None*), which I am also spoofing. I mean this play as an homage to *Noises Off*, not a copy, and I have endeavored to make this show an original, modern take on the idea of a backstage comedy. If you like this play, please check out the original, which has endured for over thirty years as one of the funniest plays ever written.

NOSES OFF

by Don Zolidis

ACT I

(The set of the play Nine Little Indians.)

(Not onstage are LILA and OBO, who watch the action with increasing fury.)

(JAKE, playing the role of the butler, is center stage.)

JAKE. Soon my guests will arrive. And then my plan will be complete. If only they knew who my real employer is. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

(He starts overdoing the laugh.)

Ha-ha-ha-ha-hah! MOO-AH-ha-ha-ha! HEE-HEE-HEE!

LILA. *(From elsewhere:)* No no no! That's not how we're doing it!

JAKE. I was just trying to bring something to it.

LILA. It's a simple laugh. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

JAKE. It says malevolent chuckle in the stage direction. That wasn't really a malevolent chuckle. That was like a bemused snort. I wanna do it like "Moo-ah-HEE-HEEE-HOOO-HOO."

LILA. Just laugh the way I tell you to laugh.

JAKE. Am I doing anything during this? Like an action?

LILA. No.

JAKE. I'm just standing here, at the beginning of the play, like a statue, chuckling malevolently to myself? Ha-ha-ha-ha.

LILA. Jake. How about we get through one rehearsal without you messing things up?

JAKE. My character is like a robot that has no life whatsoever and stands around doing absolutely nothing with his time except chuckling?

OBO. Can we start the show please?

JAKE. How about I'm in the middle of like an exercise video?

LILA. You're preparing to murder nine people and you're doing an exercise video?

JAKE. Well apparently I just talk to myself before I murder people!

OBO. No!

JAKE. Just like— And one and two and three and four—

OBO. You are standing like a statue!

JAKE. Fine. I'll do that then.

LILA. All right, let's go. Whenever you're ready, Brenda.

JAKE. And go!

(JAKE stands completely frozen, arms outstretched, like a classical statue.)

Soon my guests will arrive. And then my plan will be complete. If only they knew who my real employer is. Ha-ha-ha-ha. Ha-ha-ha-ha!

*(BRENDA knocks.
JAKE does not move.)*

MOO-AH-HA-HA! HEE-HEE-HEE!

LILA. Jake!

JAKE. Oh I'm supposed to move—am I a human being now?

(He answers the door.)

Ah, Miss Watermoose, welcome to the Château Briand.

BRENDA. Spare me the pleasantries. I don't wish to be summoned like a carrier pigeon. Take my bags.

(She has no bags. She mimes handing bags to JAKE.)

Are we going to get props any time soon?

LILA. Keep going.

JAKE. May I show you to your room?

BRENDA. Do you have any idea what this is about?

JAKE. My employer will reveal that in time. For the moment, you may rest in your chamber.

BRENDA. I don't want to rest! I want to get to the bottom of this! I'm going to stand right here like a cow until I get what I want!

OBO. That's not the line.

BRENDA. It's not? I thought that was the line.

OBO. It's "like a statue." No one stands like a cow.

JAKE. Cows stand like cows.

LILA. No one wants to hear about cows, Jake! And is it too much to ask that WE HAVE PROPS FOR THE REHEARSAL?!

(MILLIE enters, harried.)

MILLIE. Okay, please don't get mad at me!

LILA. Where are the props?

MILLIE. They are coming. They are on their way. I hope. I mean I'm pretty sure. I don't have a great hold on everything right now, but I'm trying! If you don't mind I'm going to go back offstage and cry.

(She exits.)

BRENDA. So wait what is my line again?

OBO. "Statue"! Standing "like a statue"!

BRENDA. I am so sorry! I get stressed and then I get nervous and then I start freaking out.

OBO. It's okay, you're fine.

JAKE. Is it time for a break?

LILA. NO! NO no no no no! I am going bald, people! Do you understand?! This show is making me bald!

JAKE. Ooh. That's a bad look on a woman.

LILA. Where'd Millie go?

(MILLIE enters, in tears.)

MILLIE. I'm here and I just want to say that I really appreciate this opportunity and I'm so so sorry about everything!

LILA. What is the props situation?

MILLIE. I'M SO SORRY!

(She runs offstage.)

JAKE. That's not encouraging.

BRENDA. Should I be worried about that?

LILA. Absolutely not, no! We're gonna be fine! We're gonna be totally fine!

OBO. No we're not.

LILA. Let's go from the cow line.

OBO. Statue line.

LILA. Whatever.

BRENDA. (*With British accent:*) I don't want to rest! I want to get to the bottom of this! I'm going to stand right here like a statue until you tell me!

OBO. Hey, Brenda?

BRENDA. Oh no did I screw up!? I'm so sorry! I have problems at home, I'm under stress at work—

OBO. I'm just wondering why you have a British accent.

BRENDA. Do I? Oh my gosh I've always wanted to have a British accent. It makes me sound smarter.

OBO. Your character is not from England.

BRENDA. When I get stressed I start using accents. It helps calm me.

LILA. I don't care. Let's keep going.

OBO. In my vision she does not have a British accent.

LILA. In my vision we ARE ABLE TO GET THROUGH A REHEARSAL!

(*TRISTAN enters.*)

TRISTAN. You want a back rub, babe?

LILA. No.

TRISTAN. I've got strong fingers.

LILA. Honey? I'm directing right now.

TRISTAN. How about a light back rub?

LILA. Just go backstage and get ready for your entrance.

TRISTAN. Sure.

LILA. Tristan? You're my rock.

TRISTAN. And you're my star.

OBO. Eugh.

TRISTAN. Hey are you doing something different with your hair?

LILA. No. I mean—do you like it?

TRISTAN. Um . . . yeah . . . it's a lot uh . . . I'll be backstage.

JAKE. So am I still standing like a statue then?

LILA. Keep going.

JAKE. I'm afraid that standing like a statue is my job, madame. I'll need to show you to your room.

BRENDA. *(Irish now:)* Alrighty then.

JAKE. May I take your imaginary bag?

BRENDA. It's quite heavy, don'tcha know.

(JAKE pantomimes lugging a heavy bag up the steps.)

JAKE. Oh yes it's extraordinarily heavy. What do you have in here?

BRENDA. Not murder weapons of course. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.

JAKE. This way.

(JAKE lugs the imaginary luggage up to a set of doors.)

Which one?

LILA. Sammy!

(SAMMY enters, with headset and clipboard, munching on snacks.)

Which door does Brenda go in?

SAMMY. The one on the left. How do you not know this?!

(SAMMY exits.)

LILA. *(Shouting off:)* Thanks for your helpful attitude!

SAMMY. *(From offstage:)* This show is killing me!

LILA. Left door please.

BRENDA. Okay.

(She checks the door, then goes in the one on the left.

JAKE closes the door.)

LILA. That doorbell has got to be quick!

(No doorbell.)

Sammy!

SAMMY. *(Offstage:)* I'm busy!

LILA. GET ONSTAGE.

SAMMY. *(Offstage:)* NO ONE LOVES ME.

(SAMMY enters, munching on a different snack.)

LILA. Where are the lovebirds?

SAMMY. I have no idea and I don't care—I hate them.

LILA. I'll give you that they're a little sickening—

SAMMY. They're the worst couple in human history. You know how there's like tortoises that mate for life and then climb on each other and stay there even after they're dead?

OBO. I didn't know about that.

SAMMY. Arnold and Kaylie are worse than that.

LILA. Just find them please?

SAMMY. FINE! You know it wouldn't kill you to say please!

(SAMMY exits.)

LILA. I SAID PLEASE!

SAMMY. YOU DIDN'T MEAN IT!

JAKE. So I'll just go back into default statue mode then.

LILA. No just clean something.

OBO. I have a really good feeling about this play, by the way.

LILA. Really?

OBO. No.

(The doorbell rings.)

LILA. Thank you!

(JAKE opens the door; behind it are ARNOLD, playing Vito, and KAYLIE, playing Alana. They are giggling and in love, in real life, and onstage.)

JAKE. Ah. Mr. Vito Malatucci and Alana Morgenstern. How strange to see the two of you together.

KAYLIE. Ha-ha-ha. We're in love.

ARNOLD. We are. This right here. This lady is my special sugar.

KAYLIE. And you're my sugar bowl. Not all that sweet but still containing sweetness.

ARNOLD. I love it when you talk like that.

JAKE. I had prepared separate rooms for you—

ARNOLD. Not necessary. I can't bear to be apart from my love.

KAYLIE. After my husband died in a terrible fishing accident, Vito has been my North Star.

ARNOLD. And you've been like the best sandwich I've ever had in my life.

JAKE. Very well. If you will follow me. And I'll take your bags. Which I'm sure are very heavy.

ARNOLD. They are. Even though you can't see them.

LILA. Sammy can you please write down all the props we need? Sammy?

(SAMMY returns.)

SAMMY. Sure. Absolutely. It's not like I have nothing else to do. I'm just sitting around doing nothing, right? I have no reason to be wearing a headset or carrying a clipboard or under SO MUCH STRESS right now! I can do whatever you want even though you NEVER SAY PLEASE.

(She exits.)

OBO. I like her.

ARNOLD. Can I just say something?

LILA. Look, we're in the middle of this—can we please get through the run-through?

ARNOLD. I wanted to let you know that we are so thankful this play has brought us together.

KAYLIE. Like you and Tristan. We heart you so much.

ARNOLD. We totally heart you.

(They make a heart together.)

LILA. That's great—

ARNOLD. Who would have thought that a play with so much murder would have so many showmances?

KAYLIE. It's like, sometimes I think, the only way to stop murder is through love.

ARNOLD. OMG that is so deep.

KAYLIE. You inspired me. You inspired me so hard.

ARNOLD. OMG.

KAYLIE. This is why we've never had a fight. Because we appreciate each other.

ARNOLD. When you get bludgeoned to death I feel really sad.

KAYLIE. And my heart breaks when you get stabbed with the shark.

JAKE. So I'm a statue through this whole thing then?!

LILA. Let's keep going!

ARNOLD. You know we've never had a fight?

LILA. What's the next line?

JAKE. This way please.

KAYLIE. Oh I can't wait to have some time with my Italian stud-muffin!

ARNOLD. You know it, baby.

JAKE. And here we are. With your bags. Which are . . . heavy?

LILA. They're heavy!

JAKE. You two lovebirds enjoy yourselves.

(Doorbell rings.)

LILA. Hold on—remember you have a costume change there!

BRENDA. Do I have a costume change?

LILA. Yes! Everyone is dressing for dinner!

JAKE. That doesn't really make any sense.

OBO. People dress for dinner! You want them to be naked?

JAKE. Why wouldn't they be in the clothes they came in?

OBO. Because they are dressing for dinner!

BRENDA. Okay.

LILA. Let's go from Marvin's entrance.

(JAKE rushes to get the door. Behind it is MARVIN, with monocle. He's a terribly nervous actor and has the entire play memorized. He has the habit of saying everyone else's lines with them very quietly.)

MARVIN. Hello my good sir.

JAKE and MARVIN. You must be Mr. Von Haberstam, the wealthy businessman.

MARVIN. I see my reputation precedes me. And I do not enjoy being called out of my very important meetings for a mysterious gathering here on this island.

JAKE and MARVIN. All will become clear in time, Mr. Von Haberstam.

JAKE. I'm sorry what are you doing?

MARVIN. What?

JAKE. You're saying my lines.

MARVIN. I'm sorry! This is just—this is my first show so I spent all week memorizing the play.

JAKE. You memorized the whole play?

OBO. That's so awesome!

MARVIN. Well some of the lines are terrible.

LILA. Okay—Marvin—only say your lines okay?

MARVIN. That's what I'm trying to do.

LILA. Good.

MARVIN. Unless someone forgets their line.

LILA. Only your lines.

MARVIN. Got it.

LILA. Let's go from—

MARVIN. "All will be made clear in time, Mr. Von Haberstam."

(From now on, MARVIN continues to say everyone's lines—he's just whispering them simultaneously though. It's really annoying.)

JAKE and MARVIN. All will be made clear in time, Mr. Von Haberstam.

MARVIN. Well I should hope so!

JAKE and MARVIN. May I show you to your room?

MARVIN. How dare you say that, sir? I will not be placated like a muffin.

LILA. That can't be right.

MARVIN. Some of these lines are bad.

OBO. Keep going! It's a metaphor!

JAKE and MARVIN. I wouldn't dream of placating you, sir, and you are certainly no muffin.

MARVIN. Ha! No muffin!

JAKE and MARVIN. Please, your room is this way.

MARVIN. Is it?

JAKE. If you'll just follow me— **MARVIN.** Follow me please.

MARVIN. Your line is "Follow me please."

JAKE. I said that.

MARVIN. No you said, “If you’ll just follow me,” which is not the right line.

(JAKE *struggles to contain his rage.*)

JAKE and MARVIN. Follow me please.

MARVIN. Is mine on the right?

JAKE and MARVIN. Yes on the right.

JAKE. Your bags sure are non-existent.

MARVIN. That’s not in the script.

LILA. And you’re off!

(MARVIN *exits.*)

JAKE. He dies soon right? Someone kills him early?

(MARVIN *enters again.*)

MARVIN. I’m the third to die. Voodoo. Um . . . is there a costume back here? There’s supposed to be a costume change?

LILA. Yes, do the costume change.

MARVIN. But there’s no costume. I’m supposed to change in like two minutes?

LILA. Obo, is there a reason he needs to change costumes, here?

OBO. I will not pervert my vision!

LILA. Okay then. And let’s keep going. Just pretend you’re changing.

MARVIN. Is it cool if I say everyone’s line backstage?

LILA. Sure, whatever. And . . . doorbell.

(*No doorbell.*)

MARVIN. Ding-dong.

LILA. I need the actual doorbell.

(*The doorbell rings. JAKE hurries to get it.*)

JAKE. Do I say something here?

OBO and MARVIN. No!

(*Upstage, we hear MARVIN saying the same lines quietly. STEVE is there, playing the role of Miles, a smiling politician.*)

STEVE. Hi there! Miles Bradley, State Senator.

JAKE. Greetings, Mr. Bradley—

STEVE. You have a wonderful home here. Just fantastic. You know, I'm in a tough primary fight right now, I could really use some help from some financial angels, if you know what I mean.

JAKE. I'm afraid I'm the butler, sir.

STEVE. Of course. But if you could let your employer know that if he puts together some campaign contributions—I can do something about the property taxes on this place, if you know what I mean? *(He laughs.)* I'm sure you do. You're a smart guy.

(His phone buzzes. He looks down, texts someone.)

JAKE. May I show you to your room, Senator?

STEVE. Of course you can.

(His phone buzzes again. He texts again.)

LILA. You can't text during the show!

STEVE. Nobody noticed!

(TAYLOR enters from backstage.)

TAYLOR. What did I tell you about texting during your performance?!

STEVE. You're the one texting me!

TAYLOR. Because you need to remember not to text!

STEVE. You can't text me saying not to text during the show!

LILA. Taylor. You're not on yet. So—just some ground rules . . . don't just walk onto the set. Okay? That causes Chaos and Confusion. Right? Chaos and Confusion.

TAYLOR. Sure, but—

LILA. Chaos. And Confusion.

TAYLOR. So you want me offstage?

LILA. *(As if to a small child:)* Yes.

TAYLOR. Sure in one second. Steve?

STEVE. What?

TAYLOR. Eye contact. Okay?

STEVE. With who?

TAYLOR. With me! When I'm talking to you. Stop texting.

STEVE. You stop texting!

TAYLOR. I'm not your mother!

(She exits.)

OBO. You guys are so good together, by the way.

STEVE. . . . Yeah. Yeah.

LILA. Moving on!

JAKE. May I show you to your room, Senator?

STEVE. Of course you can.

JAKE. You are located on the first floor. If you'll follow me with your . . . baggage.

*(STEVE's phone buzzes. He tries to ignore it.
It buzzes again.)*

LILA. Steve!

STEVE. Okay, fine!

(STEVE texts very fast.)

LILA. No I mean turn off your phone!

STEVE. Why would I do that?

LILA. So you're not distracted.

STEVE. But I wouldn't be able to get texts. For the entire time my phone would be off. You know that, don't you?

(TAYLOR enters.)

TAYLOR. You did it again!

STEVE. STOP HOUNDING ME!

TAYLOR. IT'S BECAUSE I LOVE YOU!

STEVE. You love me?

TAYLOR. I just texted you that!

*(STEVE checks his phone.
Texts back.
TAYLOR's phone buzzes.
She checks her phone.)*

You're thinking about it?!

LILA. CHAOS! AND CONFUSION!

TAYLOR. We're having a moment, all right? Chill.

(TAYLOR starts texting back.)

Oh and remember to check your props.

STEVE. Oh thanks.

JAKE. If you'll follow me with your . . . baggage.

(TAYLOR's phone buzzes as JAKE leads STEVE to a first floor room.)

LILA. Taylor?

TAYLOR. Hold on. Okay. What?

LILA. It's your entrance.

TAYLOR. Oh yeah!

(She runs off. The doorbell rings.)

JAKE. One moment!

(He answers the door. TAYLOR is standing there as Veronica, all attitude. She wears extremely high heels, but can't walk in them very well.)

Miss Veronica Steele, our party is nearly assembled.

TAYLOR. Who are you supposed to be?

JAKE. My name is Reginald. Thanks for asking. You're actually the first person to take an interest—

TAYLOR. I didn't take an interest. And I didn't ask for your name. Where is Peter Angelis?

JAKE. My employer is waiting for all the guests to arrive before making his appearance.

TAYLOR. You can let him know that I don't play games. I'm staying here for one hour and then I'm going to the press, you understand me? I don't care who or what he is. No one threatens Veronica Steele and lives to tell about it.

JAKE. You can save your death threats for him, Madame.

TAYLOR. I will, thank you. Now show me to my room.

JAKE. I'll take your bags.

TAYLOR. I'm sure there are many of them.

(JAKE heads in one direction—

TAYLOR wobbles after him. She's having a really hard time.)

JAKE. Oh I forgot something. Hold on.

(He heads in the opposite direction to pick up another imaginary bag.)

LILA. Her room is stage left!

JAKE. Whoops.

(He heads stage left. TAYLOR tries to follow.)

OBO. Actually I think she's stage right.

LILA. Oh that's right. Stage right!

(JAKE heads the opposite direction. TAYLOR tries to follow.)

OBO. Are you sure she isn't upstairs?

JAKE. Oh. Sorry.

TAYLOR. THESE SHOES ARE FROM THE DEVIL!

(She throws them offstage.)

(STEVE enters.)

STEVE. Honey? I need you to calm down now.

TAYLOR. Don't tell me what to do, Steve!

(STEVE gets out his phone.)

STEVE. I'm going to share with you a funny video about monkeys and kittens now.

TAYLOR. It won't work!

(Her phone buzzes. She looks at it.)

Ohhhh . . .

(It works.)

I need different shoes.

LILA. All right hold on. Sammy!

SAMMY. *(Offstage:)* THIS BETTER BE GOOD, I'M BUSY!

LILA. Can you get Estrella up here please?

(SAMMY enters, munching on snacks.)

SAMMY. Can I just point out that instead of shouting for me, you could've shouted for Estrella. You understand that, right?

LILA. You're the stage manager.

SAMMY. Yeah I know that.

LILA. So I ask you first.

SAMMY. ESTRELLA! See how that works?

LILA. Is she coming?

SAMMY. Do I know everything? I'M STANDING HERE WITH YOU! How do I know if she's coming or not? And listen—we're not

staying to midnight again! The crew is union, we're staying for thirty more minutes, then we're going home!

LILA. We'll never get through the show in thirty minutes!

SAMMY. I'm setting a timer. When it rings, we're going home.

(**ESTRELLA** enters.)

ESTRELLA. What?

LILA. Taylor needs new shoes.

ESTRELLA. Why is that my problem? She can go to store.

TAYLOR. I need new shoes, woman!

ESTRELLA. We all have needs. I want fluffy bunny.

LILA. You're the costume designer—

ESTRELLA. Oh am I? I didn't know because I am idiot. Of course I am costume designer!

SAMMY. Lila loves defining people's roles. That's all she does.

LILA. Taylor can't walk in those shoes.

TAYLOR. THEY'RE FROM THE DEVIL!

ESTRELLA. MY MOTHER MADE THOSE SHOES WITH BARE HANDS!

TAYLOR. Oh.

ESTRELLA. YOU WEAR THEM AND YOU LOVE THE BLISTERS THEY GIVE YOU!

TAYLOR. I'm sorry I didn't know—

ESTRELLA. Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha! I am kidding you are stupid.

TAYLOR. Your shoes are stupid!

ESTRELLA. My father made those shoes.

TAYLOR. Shut up!

ESTRELLA. In prison. After he killed a man who made fun of a pair of his shoes.

TAYLOR. Whatever. Is that true?

ESTRELLA. Ha-ha-ha-ha you are so dumb.

LILA. Estrella . . . please, if you could find it in your heart to get a new pair of shoes for Taylor that don't break her ankles, that would be awesome.

ESTRELLA. I will do something.

TAYLOR. Thank you!

(She exits.)

LILA. Tristan are you ready?!

(TRISTAN enters.)

TRISTAN. I wish you wouldn't call me like that. I'm not a dog.

LILA. No I just mean for your entrance. It's time for your entrance.

TRISTAN. I just feel like you're telling me what to do all the time.

LILA. I'm the director of the show.

TRISTAN. I know, and I like appreciate that you've taken on that role and everything, but as my lady, you need to chill.

LILA. Tristan, there are certain things you need to do.

TRISTAN. Whoa! I didn't think we were gonna be one of those couples where you gave me like a list of stuff to do, like—oh hey the children need feeding or whatever.

LILA. I'm just telling you to be ready for your entrance.

TRISTAN. See? That's a problem.

LILA. In the show.

TRISTAN. All right—babe—you can't change me. I'm like a wild lion, you know? Who knows what I'm going to do? Am I going to chase down a gazelle? Am I going to roll around and lick myself?

LILA. Ewww!

TRISTAN. That's what lions do! It's majestic.

LILA. Can you just get in places?

TRISTAN. You're not hearing me. I am untamed. I am man. I am a fierce warrior.

ESTRELLA. You still want the corset?

TRISTAN. Of course I want the corset.

LILA. How are the rest of the costumes coming?

ESTRELLA. Eh.

LILA. What does that mean?

ESTRELLA. It means eh. You'll have the costumes when I'm done with them.

LILA. When do you think that will be?

ESTRELLA. I can't see future. I don't know.

LILA. We need those costumes!

TRISTAN. This is what I'm dealing with. It's always about her needs.

(**ELEANOR** enters.)

ELEANOR. You know maybe this would be easier if we didn't have any costume changes.

LILA. I'm not asking you, Eleanor!

TRISTAN. See? You try dating this woman. It's a horror show. I want space!

OBO. We have to do the costume changes!

ELEANOR. Why?

OBO. Because it's in the script!

ELEANOR. NO ONE CHANGES CLOTHES TO GO TO DINNER!

OBO. THESE PEOPLE DO! Stella!

ESTRELLA. Estrella.

OBO. Whatever. You have a job. Do you understand that? Okay? Your job is to make the stupid costumes! DO YOUR JOB!

ESTRELLA. I don't appreciate your tone.

OBO. I DON'T APPRECIATE YOU NOT DOING YOUR JOB!

ESTRELLA. I curse you.

OBO. You can't curse me!

ESTRELLA. Too late I already did!

OBO. I reject your curse! Look at this, here's my curse shield!

ESTRELLA. Your curse shield is too late. My curse already went through. Look. Pop. There it is.

LILA. Obo—please—

ESTRELLA. Fine! I make costumes! But remember this: I am your enemy, and I will destroy you.

ELEANOR. Um . . . actually, for my costume? I have very specific needs.

(**ESTRELLA** stares at her for a moment.)

ESTRELLA. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

(*She leaves.*)

ELEANOR. That wasn't encouraging.

OBO. I think I hate her. I mean real hate. You know how sometimes you say you hate someone but you really only strongly dislike them? This isn't that.

ELEANOR. Can we please get to my entrance?! I'm *wilting* back here. How long is it going to take to introduce all the characters?!

(MASHA enters.)

MASHA. Absolutely. I feel like I haven't been onstage in forever.

LILA. We're running through all of Act One.

ELEANOR. *All of it?*! This play is like a million hours long!

OBO. It is not!

ELEANOR. Can't we have the last three people come on at the same time—how many times do we have to see the butler escort someone to their stupid room?! Look—this here's Opie McGraw, y'all—he's from Texas so he says, y'all—and this is Sheriff Toombs, who is a man.

MASHA. Can I be a woman? Do I have to wear the mustache?

OBO. You are a man! It's important for the love interests!

ELEANOR. Whatever. And my name's Barbie and I'm stupid! That's all you need to know about my character! I mean, we're all a bunch of stereotypes in this stupid play.

OBO. It's not stupid!

ELEANOR. Oh come on. *Nine Little Indians?*!

STEVE. I feel like it should be *Nine Little Native Americans*.

ELEANOR. You're just so clearly ripping off Agatha Christie! You change one word of a famous play and then package it as your own! Don't you have an original thought in your head?! Don't you have any talent!? I mean what self-respecting playwright would take a famous play, change one little word in the title, and then pass that work off as his own—I mean her own. That would have to be a pretty pathetically sad playwright with no ideas left at all and a mortgage to pay and some car payments to make.

OBO. I would cry now if I had any emotions left. But I don't.

LILA. Fine. We don't have much time here, guys! Let's move on to the dinner scene. All right—so—everyone has changed costumes.

ELEANOR. Everyone?

LILA. Yes. You have all dressed for dinner.

(The other actors begin to appear. BRENDA, MARVIN, STEVE, and TAYLOR enter.)

MARVIN. We're skipping pages 27 through 31?

LILA. Yes. Are we all here?

(Everyone looks around.)

Someone go get Arnold and Kaylie.

BRENDA. I'm not going back there. They're disgusting.

LILA. Brenda. You go.

BRENDA. I just said I wasn't going!

LILA. SAMMY!

(SAMMY enters with snacks.)

Let Arnold and Kaylie know they're needed onstage.

SAMMY. Yuck. ARNOLD! KAYLIE! GET ONSTAGE NOW!

(Fumbling upstairs.)

LILA. Aw, man. STOP MAKING OUT.

EVERYONE. STOP MAKING OUT WITH EACH OTHER.

(ARNOLD stumbles out of the upstairs room.)

ARNOLD. We were going over lines.

(KAYLIE enters a moment later, perhaps adjusting her clothing.)

(Everyone takes positions around a table of some kind.)

LILA. Make sure to cheat out, guys. I don't want to see anyone's back.

ELEANOR. So we're just going to sit here like it's *The Last Supper* or something?

LILA. Figure it out. Let's go from "Why don't you have a look at these folders?"

(They try to adjust themselves.)

JAKE stands in the center.)

JAKE and MARVIN. Why don't you have a look at these folders?

JAKE. Do we have folders?

LILA. Mime it!

JAKE and MARVIN. You'll find incriminating photos and evidence inside of each of these folders.

MARVIN. What is this?!

TAYLOR and MARVIN. How did you get these?

TRISTAN and MARVIN. You've even got a folder of my dog!

MASHA and MARVIN. I'm sure this is illegal.

MARVIN. This will never work!

(He looks at BRENDA.)

BRENDA. Is that my line?

TAYLOR. What is your name? Marvin? You need to stop before I kill you.

MARVIN. I'm not doing anything.

TAYLOR. I will enjoy watching you die.

BRENDA. Did I miss my line? Did I screw up again?! Oh no! Oh no!

MARVIN. Yes you did.

LILA. You're fine. You're fine. Just make up a line.

MARVIN. What? Her line is "This will never work."

BRENDA. I'll never remember that!

JAKE. Is it possible to get some props? At all? From anywhere? I mean how hard is it to get folders?

ELEANOR. Probably harder than coming up with an original idea for a play.

LILA. Where's the props guy? SAMMY!

(SAMMY returns with snacks.)

SAMMY. Okay, look, I'll answer your summons this time, but I just have to let you know that I'm really stressed out right now and dealing with a lot of stuff, okay?

LILA. Where's the props guy?

SAMMY. Millie? She's a girl.

LILA. I don't know these things!

(TAYLOR and STEVE start texting each other under the table.)

Just get her out here.

(MILLIE enters, hand-carving a gun.)

MILLIE. Oh my gosh what? What did I do?

LILA. We were wondering about—

MILLIE. I am really really really busy right now!

LILA. So we were wondering about folders.

MILLIE. What? Folders?! Nobody said anything about folders! How am I supposed to know this!

LILA. It's on the props list.

MILLIE. There's a props list?! Oh my gosh I've lost the props list! I'VE LOST THE PROPS LIST! Aaaaah!

LILA. Okay—look—don't worry about the list—just . . . are you hand-carving a gun?

MILLIE. Yes?

LILA. Why?

MILLIE. Do you know how hard it is to buy a real gun when you've got a criminal record?

OBO. Hold on . . .

LILA. You have a criminal record?

MILLIE. It was just a lot of different things. Just a lot of crimes. But I'm over it and I'm much much better than I was AS LONG AS I STAY CALM!

LILA. You keep doing what you're doing then.

MILLIE. Okay.

(She heads off.)

OBO. And remember the folders!

MILLIE. *(Offstage:)* Aaaaaah!

TAYLOR. OMG.

STEVE. I know.

ELEANOR. Stop that. *(To KAYLIE and ARNOLD:)* You too!

KAYLIE. We weren't doing anything!

ELEANOR. You were thinking about it.

JAKE. So um . . . we just need—luggage, letters, cell phones, and the murder weapons: gun, knife, poison spider, voodoo doll, noose, and shark.

ELEANOR. I still think it's a little stupid that someone gets killed with a shark.

OBO. Sharks are scary!

ELEANOR. I know that, but it's not like—you can't like, wield a shark, you know?

BRENDA. Robots can. Robots wield sharks all the time.

ELEANOR. What?

LILA. Eleanor, I know you have problems with the play—

(MILLIE returns.)

MILLIE. Okay so I made the voodoo doll already.

LILA. Oh. Great.

(MILLIE produces it. It looks just like LILA [wearing the same clothes she is, for example].)

It looks kind of like me.

MILLIE. I used your hair. It was inspiration.

LILA. Um . . . it's for Marvin.

MILLIE. Oh.

(MILLIE goes over to the cast.)

Which one of you is Marvin?

MARVIN. That's me! It's actually my first time being in a show and ow!

(MILLIE has yanked out a piece of his hair. She attaches it to her voodoo doll.)

There.

(She hands it to SAMMY and leaves.)

Okay? Is that okay? Because I don't know what's going to happen if it's not okay! I'm gonna look for the props list!

(She exits.)

JAKE. Hey, remember the folders.

MILLIE. *(Offstage:)* Aaaah!

SAMMY. This thing freaks me out.

JAKE. You think she's going to try to hand-carve a shark?

MILLIE. Does anyone have a truck so I can go to SeaWorld?

LILA. You know what—

MILLIE. Never mind.

(She exits again.)

BRENDA. You know what's also scary? Iguanas. What if we used an iguana?

LILA. I'm not taking suggestions! Let's go to the first murder please.

BRENDA. I don't remember how we get there.

MARVIN. We each say a few words, then the lights go out, and when we wake up, Masha is gone and Arnold is dead.

KAYLIE. I'll miss you.

ARNOLD. I'll miss you too.

LILA. All right let's go. Lights down. Ad-lib some stuff!

BRENDA. Aaaaah! Aaaaah! Aaaaah!

(MASHA runs off.)

JAKE. Blam!

ARNOLD. Noooooooooo!

LILA. No screaming when you die!

ARNOLD. Aarrhghghg.

LILA. That's still a scream!

ARNOLD. Splllloorrrch.

LILA. And lights up.

(EVERYONE begins talking at the same time. MARVIN repeats everyone's lines as fast as he can.)

MARVIN and EVERYONE. What's going on?! / What was that?! / Did you hear that noise?! / It sounded like someone got shot! / I wonder if they're going to have dessert soon!

ELEANOR and MARVIN. Aaaaah!

(ELEANOR stares daggers at MARVIN.)

ELEANOR. Aaaaah!

MARVIN. You only have one "Aaaaah" there. I know.

(ELEANOR goes up to MARVIN slowly.)

ELEANOR. No jury will convict me when I kill you. Stop. Saying. My. Lines.

(ELEANOR mimes a little lock and key and locks MARVIN's mouth.)

(TRISTAN rushes over to ARNOLD's body.)

(MARVIN *very secretly mouths everyone else's lines from now on.*)

TRISTAN. Well I'll be hornswoggled, y'all! He's dead!

KAYLIE. No! No!

STEVE. I can't be seen here! I was never here! No pictures!

ELEANOR. He's disgusting!

STEVE. Are you talking about me?

TRISTAN. And I know who killed him! His lady friend.

KAYLIE. Me?! How do you know he didn't die of natural causes?!

TRISTAN. If there's one thing that Texans know, it's guns. And I'm Texan and I know guns. And I heard a gun being fired just now. Yee-haw.

(TRISTAN *steps out.*)

I'm not sure he should say "yee-haw" right now. It doesn't sound like a proper usage of "yee-haw."

OBO. Um . . . yes it does. It's like the definition of "yee-haw."

LILA. Sweetheart? You're very pretty, but stop trying to like, think about things, okay?

TRISTAN. I am an uncaged lion!

LILA. You've got two choices. We can either spend all night arguing about "yee-haw" or whether your character is a total caricature, or we can finish rehearsal so we can go home.

TRISTAN. Yee-haw.

LILA. Thank you.

BRENDA. Look over here!

(*Everyone rushes over to BRENDA.*)

There used to be nine little Indian figurines, and now one of them . . . (*She holds up an imaginary figurine*) is broken.

KAYLIE. (*To JAKE:*) You did this!

JAKE. Madame. I am the butler. I most certainly did not do it. But I have been instructed to read you a poem now.

KAYLIE. Don't do it! If there was one thing Vito couldn't stand, it was poetry.

JAKE. Well he's dead so he won't mind.

STEVE. I'll be leaving now. I was never here.

JAKE. I'm afraid no one is leaving, Senator. Which I will explain in rhyme. If you will all sit.

TRISTAN. Now wait just one darn tootin' minute! Yee-haw.

MARVIN. Here is fifty thousand dollars. I will be leaving.

JAKE. I'm not taking your money, Mr. Von Haberstam. Now, if you will excuse me . . .

Nine little Indians in a row
Nine little Indians in a show
One gets shot
In the dark
One gets eaten by a shark
You think you know the killer, do you?
Wait till one is killed by voodoo
 One gets stabbed
 One gets grabbed
 One feels poison inside her
 When she's bitten by a spider
 One gets trampled by a moose
 The last one dangles by a noose

Nine little Indians in a row
Nine little deaths in this show

ELEANOR. Aaaaaaaah! It's a prophecy!

STEVE. I don't believe in this!

TRISTAN. Wait a minute, y'all. Someone is missing. Yee . . .
hawwww.

MARVIN. Who's missing?

BRENDA. I'm not missing!

ELEANOR. I'm still here!

TAYLOR. Wait a minute! That cop! The manly cop! With the incredible mustache!

STEVE. You're right! He must be the killer! He shot Vito!

KAYLIE. Because he was in organized crime! It makes so much sense! Italians are often dirty criminals.

ELEANOR. So we're just adding racism now, is that it?

OBO. Nobody cares!

TRISTAN. Weren't you in love with him?

KAYLIE. That doesn't mean I approved of him.

STEVE. We need to find that manly officer with the magnificent mustache!

TAYLOR. You're darn right we do.

JAKE. Might I suggest splitting up into pairs and searching the house in the dark?

ELEANOR. Ooh! Good idea. *(Stepping out:)* Really?

LILA. Keep going!

ELEANOR. Ooh! Good idea. But who will go with me?

(The men raise their hands.)

JAKE. Under the circumstances, I will accompany Miss Barbie. You other people may divide as you wish.

(STEVE and TAYLOR link up, as do KAYLIE and TRISTAN.)

LILA. You're going the wrong way! Steve and Taylor, stage left! Kaylie and Tristan, take right!

TRISTAN. Why are you telling me what to do?!

LILA. Everyone off except Marvin and Brenda.

JAKE. Do I have lines during this?

OBO. No.

JAKE. So we all just leave silently then? This is our behavior?

LILA. Make something up!

BRENDA. I can't do that. When I start making stuff up I go crazy.

OBO. You are still onstage!

BRENDA. Really?

LILA. PEOPLE! WE HAVE ONLY KILLED ONE PERSON! ALL OF THE REST OF YOU NEED TO DIE SO LET'S HURRY UP!

(Everyone grumbles, goes offstage—ELEANOR and JAKE head upstairs.)

JAKE. *(Overlapping:)* Making stuff up making stuff up I'm not even human.

ELEANOR. *(Overlapping:)* I'm a stupid stereotype.

TAYLOR. *(Overlapping, to STEVE:)* Ow ow ow ow ow—Steve you need to walk straighter—

STEVE. (*Overlapping, to TAYLOR:*) I am trying, it's hard to walk sometimes—

KAYLIE. (*Overlapping, to TRISTAN:*) You shouldn't let her talk to you like that—Arnold would never disrespect me in front of my friends—

(MARVIN and BRENDA are left alone.)

MARVIN continues to mouth all of BRENDA's lines as well.)

MARVIN. Well, Miss Watermoose, we are alone.

BRENDA. Yes.

MARVIN. You are familiar with my work, are you not?

BRENDA. Mr. Von Haberstam, I have kept silent until now, but if you don't . . .

MARVIN. (*Whispering:*) If you don't reveal my secrets—

BRENDA. I know that, I'm just—you're throwing me off—

MARVIN. If you don't reveal my secrets—

BRENDA. I know my line.

MARVIN. You didn't say your line.

(BRENDA starts again, with a Scottish accent this time.)

BRENDA. If you dinna reveal my secrets—

MARVIN. Are you supposed to be Scottish?

BRENDA. If you dinna reveal my secrets I won't let everyone else know.

MARVIN. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

LILA. That's an actual laugh. You don't say "ha-ha-ha-ha."

MARVIN. It's written "Ha-ha-ha-ha" in the script.

LILA. It's supposed to be a laugh.

MARVIN. Fine. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

(BRENDA laughs and MARVIN says "ha-ha-ha-ha" at the same time.)

You're supposed to say "ha-ha-ha-ha" too.

BRENDA. I can't do this! I can't be onstage with him!

MARVIN. You don't even know your lines!

BRENDA. I know my lines, you're stressing me out!

LILA. Keep going!

BRENDA. Well I'm not goona stand 'round here and wait to be killed, let's go find that manly police officer.

MARVIN. Right behind you. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

(BRENDA stops.)

BRENDA. Did you hear that?

LILA. Make a noise backstage please!

ELEANOR. *(Offstage:)* Ah.

LILA. Louder please!

ELEANOR. *(Offstage:)* Ah I've been stabbed.

LILA. Don't say that!

BRENDA. Did you hear that?

ELEANOR. *(Offstage:)* Ah I've been stabbed.

BRENDA. It sounds like it came from here.

(She opens the wrong door.)

ELEANOR. *(Offstage:)* Wrong door.

BRENDA. It sounds like it came from here.

(She opens the middle door.

ELEANOR is there, pretending to be stabbed. She mimes spurting blood.)

ELEANOR. Ah I'm dead, I'm spurting blood. I'm a stereotype. I'm killed with blood all over me.

(She falls down.)

BRENDA. Aah.

MARVIN. Aaah.

LILA. Scream!

MARVIN. The script says "Aaah." Like a dentist.

LILA. Scream!

(MARVIN and BRENDA scream!)

BRENDA. I'll get help and leave you here alone!

ELEANOR. So, question—

LILA. YOU'RE DEAD SHUT UP!

(BRENDA runs off.)

MARVIN. Ha-ha-ha-ha. Oh, little Barbie, you couldn't make it through one night, could you? Now no one will ever learn of the connection between us. I'll just fix myself a little drink, then?

(He heads down the stage.)

Is this when I die?

LILA. When you get to the chair.

(He gets to the chair.)

MARVIN. So um . . .

LILA. There's a needle sticking out of your back. You put it in there from the closet.

MARVIN. Is it a real needle?

LILA. No. And remember to pick up the voodoo doll from the closet. Okay so you look at the voodoo doll with the needle in it, and slump over and die.

ELEANOR. So can I ask—

LILA. DEAD PEOPLE CAN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT THE SCRIPT!

MARVIN. Aaaaah.

(He slumps over the chair.)

LILA. More realistic please!

MARVIN. Aaah. Can I try that again? Aaaaah. No, I'm just, I have a time dying. Aaaaah. Aaaaaah? Aarggh.

LILA. JUST BE DEAD!

(MARVIN dies terribly.)

(STEVE and TAYLOR enter. TAYLOR has her terrible shoes on and is wobbling.)

STEVE. Well I'm glad we didn't find anyone, and remember you were with me the entire time.

TAYLOR. Senator, it will be our little secret. I'm on your team.

STEVE. Say, how about after this whole thing is over, we have dinner sometime?

TAYLOR. Aren't you married?

STEVE. She won't be coming with.

(TAYLOR tries to walk seductively over to STEVE, but can't really manage it in her high heels.)

TAYLOR. Well, then, Mr. Senator, I would love to spend more time with you. A nice candlelit dinner where we can . . . get acquainted. Romantically acquainted. Perhaps also in the hot tub.

STEVE. Wait a minute, what's that?

TAYLOR. It's Wimple Von Haberstam!

STEVE. Are you all right?

TAYLOR. He's silent. It's . . . oh no. He's dead!

STEVE. He's dead?!

LILA. Marvin, we can see you breathing. Can you stop looking like you're breathing please?

TAYLOR. Yes! Completely dead!

STEVE. I wasn't here! I didn't do it! Let's just leave him! No one saw us!

(TRISTAN enters.)

TRISTAN. I heard someone scream—

STEVE. Aaaaah!

TRISTAN. Yee-haw!

TAYLOR. We didn't do it!

STEVE. Call everyone back!

TRISTAN. All right, dogies! We got a darn tootin' problem here! Yee-haw!

(TAYLOR checks her phone while KAYLIE, MASHA, and BRENDA return.)

MASHA. What's going on?

TRISTAN. Get him!

ELEANOR. So what do we do here?

LILA. Get him!

ELEANOR. Oh.

(STEVE, KAYLIE, and BRENDA grab MASHA.)

STEVE. A crooked cop! You're under arrest for the murders of Wimple Von Haberstam and . . .

MARVIN. *(From the chair:)* Vito Malatucci.

STEVE. Vito Malatucci!

TRISTAN. Has anyone seen Barbie?

(TRISTAN is standing right next to ELEANOR.)

ELEANOR. Ah I'm dead and I'm still a stereotype.

TRISTAN. Horned Frogs and Biscuits! Here she is!

I feel like Horned Frogs and Biscuits is not really a Texan saying.

OBO. YES IT IS!

MASHA. What is going on here?! I was just using the bathroom!

STEVE. Tie him up!

TAYLOR. And we're tying him up with imaginary rope that we just have handy.

(She mimes tying him up.)

STEVE. So what killed this guy? A . . .

LILA. Voodoo doll!

STEVE. Voodoo doll.

KAYLIE. Wait a minute! Where's Reginald, the butler?!

BRENDA. Aaaaaah! He's dead!

MARVIN. That's not your line.

BRENDA. Aaaaaah! He's missing!

MARVIN. There you go.

KAYLIE. Okay. Let's split up and search for him.

(ELEANOR raises her hand from her position, where's she still dead.)

TRISTAN. Good idea! I'll pair up with you.

STEVE. I'll pair up with Miss Steele.

TAYLOR. Oh no. I'm staying here and keeping an eye on this man.

STEVE. All right then . . .

(He looks at BRENDA.)

BRENDA. Virginia Watermoose.

STEVE. Right. Um . . .

BRENDA. I guess you're with me!

STEVE. Yup.

(He texts on his phone as he exits.

TAYLOR's phone beeps. She checks her message.)

TRISTAN. I got a good feelin' about this way.

(*TRISTAN and KAYLIE exit opposite.*)

(*TAYLOR and MASHA are left onstage [with the dead bodies of MARVIN and ELEANOR].*)

TAYLOR. So um . . . this part makes me uncomfortable.

LILA. You're in character! You're playing a character!

(*STEVE appears at the side of the stage.*)

STEVE. I believe in you, sweetheart. Can I watch this part, by the way?

TAYLOR. No!

MASHA. So what's my motivation here?

LILA. And go!

(*TAYLOR tries to circle him seductively.*)

TAYLOR. Well, Mister Officer Man, it's just you and me . . .

MASHA. I didn't kill those people.

TAYLOR. I don't really care.

MASHA. If you'll let me call for backup we can—

TAYLOR. Oh really? Back . . . up? I'm afraid this is just gonna be one . . . on . . . one.

Steve, stop watching!

STEVE. What?

MASHA. Miss Steele, I think this is highly inappropriate.

TAYLOR. I love a man in uniform. (*She feels MASHA's arm.*) Ooh. You must work out.

MASHA. Part of the job is to be physically fit.

TAYLOR. I bet. So . . . (*She tosses her hair.*) Can we skip this part please?

ELEANOR. Please? I'm dying over here.

MARVIN. I think they should keep going.

TAYLOR. You say my lines then!

MARVIN. You can't resist me now, can you? Kiss. Kiss. What are you doing, Miss Steele? I'm doing what both of us want. Giving in to our animal urges. Kiss. Kiss. Is it getting hot in here? Oh yeah, baby. Kiss.

(At this point STEVE, TRISTAN, and ARNOLD [and all other male cast members] are watching.)

LILA. BACKSTAGE, ALL OF YOU!

STEVE. This is my entrance.

MARVIN. We shouldn't be doing this. "Shouldn't" isn't in my vocabulary, Officer. Kiss. Long kiss. It's getting super hot.

(STEVE and BRENDA enter.)

STEVE. What is going on out here?!

TAYLOR. Oh. Mister Senator. I didn't see you there.

BRENDA. There was nothing that way.

MASHA. I'm innocent!

TAYLOR. You're not that innocent.

MASHA. Let me go. I can call for backup and we can get to the bottom of this.

TAYLOR. I'm not saying this line.

MARVIN. You can get to my bottom later, Officer.

BRENDA. I say we set him free.

STEVE. Fine.

(MASHA is freed.)

TAYLOR. All right then. Officer, if you'll follow me, we can get to that phone.

MASHA. Right.

(MASHA exits with TAYLOR.)

BRENDA. I'm so nervous, Senator. All these killings. I have no idea what is going on!

STEVE. Don't you? Miss Watermoose. Or should I say Mrs. Watermoose?

BRENDA. I have no idea what you're talking about.

STEVE. Don't you? I know who you are.

BRENDA. And I know who you are. And what you were. Virginia.

STEVE. Question: Is she referring to the state of Virginia or the fact that my name used to be Virginia?

ELEANOR. Maybe Virginia was your stage name in a drag queen show?

MARVIN. I think Virginia is your mother, who you murdered.

BRENDA. I'm pretty sure you killed the girl who asked about Santa Claus.

LILA. Can we keep going please? Tristan, I need you ready to get onstage!

(TRISTAN returns.)

TRISTAN. Again. We have an equal relationship. You are not the boss.

(He exits.)

STEVE. How do you know about Virginia?

BRENDA. I'm not the fool you think I am. My real name is—

LILA. And lights out!

(Nothing happens.)

BRENDA. Do I scream here?

LILA. After Tristan does his thing, Tristan!

TRISTAN. What?

LILA. Where is the poisonous spider?!

TRISTAN. Where are all the props?!

LILA. This is your cue to bring out the poisonous spider!

MARVIN. Can't we have a poisonous spider descend on a rope or something?

LILA. NO!

ELEANOR. How does the killer even use a spider—

LILA. JUST BRING THE SPIDER OUT!

TRISTAN. WHY ARE YOU YELLING AT ME?! YOU'RE KILLING MY LOVE FOR YOU!

LILA. IF YOU LOVED ME YOU'D BRING OUT A POISONOUS SPIDER!

TRISTAN. IF YOU LOVED ME YOU'D STOP ISSUING ORDERS!

STEVE. Guys. Maybe—

TRISTAN. FINE! Fine! I'll bring out the stupid spider! Here! Are you happy?! Here! Does this make you love me more?! MY HEART IS BREAKING!

(He runs out, slaps an imaginary spider on BRENDA.)

BRENDA. Aaaaah!

(BRENDA dies.)

That kills me, right?

LILA. YES! Lights up.

STEVE. Aaaaah! Why does this keep happening to me?!

(MASHA and TRISTAN enter quickly. TAYLOR enters as quickly as she can.)

TAYLOR. Ow ow ow ow ow—

TRISTAN. What did you do?!

STEVE. It was a poisonous spider I'm pretty sure!

MASHA. You're under arrest!

TAYLOR. I love it when you act all macho.

STEVE. You're under arrest! Citizen's arrest!

TRISTAN. Hold your horses, y'all! Something about this just don't smell right!

STEVE. Exactly!

TRISTAN. We still haven't found Reginald yet.

(JAKE enters from upstairs, with a noose around his neck.)

TAYLOR. Aaaaaaaah!

LILA. Yes! We have a prop!

STEVE. He's dead!

TAYLOR. Oh no!

STEVE. Run for it!

(STEVE runs off.)

MASHA. Hold on!

(She runs off after STEVE.)

TAYLOR. Oh come on.

LILA. You run off!

TAYLOR. Wait for me! Ow ow ow ow!

(She runs off after MASHA.)

TRISTAN. Well dang it!

(He shrugs and runs off after them.)

(JAKE waits a moment. Then removes the noose from around his neck.

He opens one of the doors upstage and looks inside.)

JAKE. Well, well, well. Our little plan is coming together quite nicely, isn't it, Virginia? You stay hidden just a little bit longer and I'll finish up for the final moments.

(He heads downstairs.)

One little, two little, three dead . . . Native Americans.

Four little, five little, six dead . . . Native Americans.

I'm sure you have a lot of questions, Miss Watermoose. Especially since I know you can hear me in there. You see the spider that poisoned you is a paralyzing spider—

ELEANOR. Is there a reason he's revealing everything at this point in the play?

OBO. YOU'RE DEAD!

ELEANOR. I KNOW THAT AND I'M REALLY GLAD I DON'T HAVE ANY MORE LINES! Also, I'm onstage dead here for like half an hour, does no one think to move my body anywhere? Oh hey look the pretty girl is dead let's just walk over her!

MARVIN. I also wouldn't mind being moved offstage.

BRENDA. Am I dead or just paralyzed?

LILA. Keep going to Tristan's entrance!

(TRISTAN enters, JAKE puts the noose around his neck and pretends to be dead, just standing there in the middle of the room.)

TRISTAN. There's no way out, y'all. All the bridges are washed out. The storm has prevented all of us from leaving. It's wetter than a muskrat sleeping in a banana peel! What?

OBO. That's a Texan saying!

TRISTAN. Are you sure it's not "slipping on a banana peel"? There's a muskrat sleeping inside a banana? Inside the banana? This is where muskrats sleep in Texas?

ELEANOR. This is what I'm saying. We need a new playwright.

LILA. We open in a week!

TRISTAN. You used to be fun when we were first going out, now it's all crazy yelling lady all the time—

LILA. Just say the line!

TRISTAN. “Say the line, Tristan! Do the thing, Tristan! Respect my feelings, Tristan!”

OBO. SAY THE LINE!

TRISTAN. IT’S WETTER THAN A MUSKRAT WHO IS APPARENTLY SLEEPING! INSIDE— THAT’S INSIDE! OF A BANANA PEEL BECAUSE THAT MAKES SO MUCH SENSE!

(STEVE enters.)

STEVE. Hey not to interrupt, but do we have the shark?

ELEANOR. How is someone killed with a shark, anyway? Someone picks up a shark like a baseball bat and slaps someone in the face?

OBO. It’s a stabbing!

ELEANOR. Stabbed with a shark? Have you ever seen a shark? Do you know what they look like?

LILA. Just mime the shark! Fake it! We don’t have time for—

TRISTAN. Fake it. Just fake it—like you’ve been faking your love for—

ELEANOR. How do you a mime a shark?

MARVIN. Maybe we could use a swordfish?

ELEANOR. No one murders anyone with fish!

(MILLIE enters.)

MILLIE. I don’t have good news about the shark. SeaWorld is not going to just let us take one.

TRISTAN. NO ONE IS LISTENING TO MY NEEDS!

(DING! The timer rings!

SAMMY enters with snacks.)

SAMMY. All right that’s it! See you tomorrow! Let’s go, crew!

LILA. Wait no! We only have two minutes of Act One left!

ESTRELLA. I’m union.

MILLIE. That’s it?! We’re done?!

SAMMY. Let’s go people! Shut ’er down!

MILLIE. But I don’t have everything done yet! I need to find a shark! And a gun! And other stuff! There’s a list! I DON’T HAVE THE LIST!

SAMMY. Let’s go, techies!

(Lights go dim.)

LILA. DON'T PANIC! NOBODY PANIC!

BRENDA. Are we supposed to be panicking?!

LILA. NO DON'T PANIC!

BRENDA. AAAH! AAAAH!

(The other actors have entered the stage now.)

LILA. Okay everybody calm down!

OBO. WE'RE DOOMED! YOU'RE ALL WRECKING MY CHANCE TO GET MY OWN HBO SERIES!

ELEANOR. They don't hand those out to hacks!

LILA. Guys! Guys! Stop it!

BRENDA. My life is flashing before my eyes.

KAYLIE. If we have to die here, I'm glad I'm with you.

ARNOLD. And I'm glad I'm with you.

TAYLOR. Why can't you be more affectionate like them?

STEVE. I am affectionate! Look at this video.

LILA. SHUT UP! Everything will be fine! We'll get this rehearsal down, and we'll be ready for the show. Right? Everyone believes that, right? If you're going to disagree shut up! The show will be great. I mean, what could possibly go wrong?

(A part of the set collapses.)

(Lights down.)

End of Act I

ACT II

(Opening night.)

(We now see the back of the set. A props table with a few props is center stage. There are costumes hung at two different spots, stage left and stage right.)

(The action in this act is continuous—while action is taking place backstage, there must be actors performing onstage.)

(You may wish to include audience noise at the top of Act II. It's not necessary, however.)

(During intermission, the crew members may start setting things up.)

SAMMY. No talking backstage! We're at ten minutes, people!

TRISTAN. Thank you ten!

SAMMY. Check your mics.

TRISTAN. Ready.

SAMMY. I'm freaking out!

(OBO and ELEANOR enter, in the middle of a discussion.)

ELEANOR. . . . But let's say I just change a few words here and there—

OBO. No. This is my vision!

ELEANOR. Right, and I respect your vision, it's totally derivative and stupid, but it's yours. I'm just saying—

OBO. I worked for years on this play.

ELEANOR. Really? Years? There was nothing better you could be doing with your time?

SAMMY. Obo, playwrights are not allowed backstage.

OBO. What?

ELEANOR. I'm only going to change the bad lines. Which is most of them.

SAMMY. Let's go, let's go! The artists are fragile!

(SAMMY escorts OBO offstage as TAYLOR enters, trying to finish getting dressed.)

TAYLOR. Anyone seen my shoes?

(JAKE enters.)

JAKE. You wanna hear something awesome?

TAYLOR. I don't really have time for—

JAKE. I don't care. I got a call from my agent—

TAYLOR. You have an agent?

JAKE. Of course I have an agent! There is going to be a talent scout for CBS in the audience tonight. And they are considering me, and probably only me, for a role on one of their hit comedies.

TAYLOR. They don't have hit comedies.

JAKE. One of their shows. Isn't that awesome?! Isn't that incredible?! My life is finally starting! I am going to get out of this horrible little show and I am on my way! I'll remember you. We just have to make sure the show goes great!

(SAMMY rushes in.)

SAMMY. Whoa whoa whoa—do you want the show to be a disaster? You say, “break a leg”! Okay? “Break a leg”! How do you not know this?

(MARVIN enters, in some pain.)

Are your props where you need them?

MARVIN. I don't know!

TAYLOR. Shoes! I have a crisis here! Shoes!

SAMMY. Check!

MARVIN. My stomach is killing me.

TAYLOR. Have you seen my shoes? Arrgh.

(TAYLOR exits.)

SAMMY. You're nervous. But the show goes on.

JAKE. The show goes on, Marvin. You're gonna be fine.

SAMMY. Don't tell him that! Tell him to break something!

MARVIN. I think I did already.

SAMMY. That's good. That's good.

MARVIN. Arrrghg.

JAKE. Use it! Use it for your character. Tonight I want you to be extra awesome, okay? And don't say my lines! Let's warm up!

MARVIN. Do you think appendicitis is fatal?

JAKE. Probably not.

(They exit as MASHA enters, in police officer costume, with fake mustache.)

MASHA. This thing itches.

TRISTAN. You look totally manly.

MASHA. Do I?

TRISTAN. Sure.

MASHA. Is anybody looking?

TRISTAN. I don't think so—

(She kisses him.)

I've never kissed someone with a mustache before.

MASHA. You like it?

TRISTAN. Oh yeah. Wait does that sound weird?

(SAMMY rushes back on.)

SAMMY. Five minutes till places! Five minutes! What are you guys doing?

MASHA. Going over lines.

SAMMY. Oh. Okay good! Check your props! Where are the props? Are the props all here? Has anyone seen the murder weapons?

(She rushes off in the other direction.)

TRISTAN. Now where were we?

MASHA. Don't you think it's a little bit dangerous to be kissing before the show?

TRISTAN. I'm all about danger, baby.

MASHA. Awesome.

TRISTAN. You don't see my girlfriend, do you?

MASHA. No.

TRISTAN. Okay, cool.

(ESTRELLA enters with a dress just before they can kiss again.)

ESTRELLA. You want costumes? I give you costumes! I give you mother costume!

MASHA. Hi.

ESTRELLA. What.

MASHA. I wasn't doing anything. Just hanging.

TRISTAN. Just hanging.

(TAYLOR enters from the opposite side of the stage.)

TAYLOR. Oh there you are! I was looking for my second costume—

ESTRELLA. Here.

(ESTRELLA hands the dress to TAYLOR.

TAYLOR holds it up. It's the most hideous thing imaginable. In the wrong size.)

TAYLOR. What is this?

ESTRELLA. Costume.

TAYLOR. It's disgusting. And it's forty sizes too big.

ESTRELLA. I know. Ha-ha-ha-ha. I am no-talent hack am I? I am liar, let's see how you like costume now! Ha-ha-ha.

TAYLOR. You can't do this!

ESTRELLA. I QUIT. Also, kiss it. Mic drop.

(She drops something.)

Boom. Suckers.

(She walks off, laughing.)

(TAYLOR chases after her.)

TAYLOR. No no no no no no—

MASHA. Why did Lila hire her?

TRISTAN. She's a really poor judge of character. That's why she's dating me.

MASHA. Oh right.

(They start kissing again.)

(JAKE enters with a water gun made to look like a real gun.)

JAKE. All right so— No. No!

(He squirts MASHA.)

MASHA. Ah!

JAKE. What are you doing?!

TRISTAN. Hey man—I'm a virile red-blooded man—

MASHA. And I'm playing a virile red-blooded man—

TRISTAN. I'm in the prime of my life, all right? I'm not going to keep myself to just one woman—

JAKE. If Lila sees you she's going to freak out!

TRISTAN. I am through being afraid of that woman. Just 'cause we're dating.

JAKE. Listen to me: The show has to be great, okay? Great. Nothing can go wrong.

(KAYLIE tears across the stage, smashing a bouquet of flowers on the floor along the way.

ARNOLD is chasing after her.)

ARNOLD. I'M NOT SORRY! I'M NOT EVEN CLOSE TO SORRY!

JAKE. Whoa! Whoa— Shhhh!

(KAYLIE spins on ARNOLD and throws what remains of her flowers at him.)

KAYLIE. THIS IS OVER! WHAT WE HAD IS DEAD!

ARNOLD. GOOD! I'M DANCING ON ITS GRAVE!

(ARNOLD tap dances on the remains of the flowers.)

AND THOSE ARE BETTER MOVES THAN YOU'LL EVER HAVE!

KAYLIE. DON'T YOU DARE INSULT MY DANCING!

ARNOLD. YOU CALL THAT DANCING?! YOU LOOK LIKE A HIPPOPOTAMUS WITH EPILEPSY!

KAYLIE. I HATE YOU! I WANT YOU DEAD!

ARNOLD. ME TOO! THAT WAY I WON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT YOU ANYMORE!

JAKE. Whoa—hey guys—

(SAMMY rushes in.)

SAMMY. Two minutes! Two minutes!

KAYLIE. It's called deodorant, loser! Learn to use some!

(JAKE tries to get in between them unsuccessfully.)

ARNOLD. Your face reminds me of a garbage can!

(KAYLIE produces every present ARNOLD has ever given her.)

KAYLIE. I hate everything you ever gave me! I hate these! And these! And what is this?

(She produces a stuffed animal panda.)

ARNOLD. It's a good-luck panda for the show!

JAKE. *(Overlapping:)* Don't hurt the good-luck panda because—

KAYLIE. I'M NOT SEVEN YEARS OLD!

(She rips apart the good-luck panda.)

JAKE. Aaah!

(JAKE drops to the ground to rescue the panda.)

ARNOLD. I spent twelve dollars on that! You know what, fine?! You got me this lucky good-show man bracelet!

(He throws down his man bracelet.)

JAKE. *(Overlapping:)* Whoa! Guys!

(ARNOLD stomps on the good-luck man bracelet.)

ARNOLD. I don't even like men's jewelry!

KAYLIE. You're not a man! You're a crustacean with aftershave!

ARNOLD. I'm more of a man than you'll ever be!

JAKE. Arnold.

ARNOLD. You know what I mean!

KAYLIE. I'm gonna make out with every man in the cast tonight!

(She runs off the other direction.)

ARNOLD. So am I!

(JAKE looks at him.)

What?

(ARNOLD gets it, then shouts after KAYLIE.)

I mean girl! I'm making out with every girl!

JAKE. Yeah that'll probably happen.

ARNOLD. What did I ever see in her?!

TRISTAN. So is she single now?

(JAKE squirts TRISTAN.)

JAKE. No! Bad Tristan!

ARNOLD. What am I doing?! She was my life! She was my life!

(ARNOLD breaks down. JAKE rushes to him.)

JAKE. Hey. No. No. You know what? You're better off without her.

ARNOLD. I feel so alone!

JAKE. No—this is a good thing and you're going to give a great performance tonight.

ARNOLD. I can't even think about acting!

JAKE. Yes you can. Yes you can. You are so much better off without her.

ARNOLD. I am?

JAKE. Yes, you've got all these amazing qualities.

ARNOLD. Like what?

JAKE. I don't know, but they're there and someone else can tell you.

ARNOLD. Am I handsome?

JAKE. Probably.

ARNOLD. Do I have a killer bod?

JAKE. I don't care. You don't need her.

ARNOLD. You're right.

JAKE. I'm right?

(STEVE enters.)

ARNOLD. Yeah. Who needs women?

JAKE. That's right!

ARNOLD. I don't need her!

JAKE. So right!

ARNOLD. I'm a free man! YOU HEAR THAT, KAYLIE?! I'M A FREE MAN!

(SAMMY darts in.)

SAMMY. Hey, guys. We can hear you onstage, okay? Maybe let's cut the screaming down to a minimum?

ARNOLD. Sorry.

SAMMY. Let's go to places!

STEVE. Hey man sorry to hear about Kaylie.

ARNOLD. I'm not. She's a demon beast.

SAMMY. Guys? Places!

(BRENDA darts in.)

BRENDA. Oh my gosh, guys, I think I'm going to be sick! It's psychological though! I'm going to be over it.

(She starts hyperventilating—JAKE goes over to her.)

(Elsewhere on the stage, ARNOLD and STEVE are quietly talking.)

JAKE. All right. Take a deep breath.

BRENDA. *(Cockney:)* All right, guv'nor.

JAKE. No no—you're not British. You're an American. Land of the free. Oh say can you see . . .

BRENDA. Aye aye, Cap'n!

JAKE. You're gonna be fine! You're gonna be fine! Deep breath. And one two three. One two three.

(BRENDA takes a deep breath.)

(We hear STEVE for the first time.)

STEVE. You're right, I should break up with Taylor right now!

JAKE. What?

STEVE. I'll text her.

(JAKE sprints over to STEVE.)

JAKE. Are you insane?! Wait until after the show!

ARNOLD. Rip off the Band-Aid, dude.

JAKE. No no no no—

(TRISTAN and MASHA enter opposite.)

TRISTAN. We can be alone here.

JAKE. What?

(TRISTAN starts canoodling with MASHA just as LILA enters.)

LILA. Okay, guys—

(JAKE leaps in between LILA and TRISTAN.)

JAKE. Shouldn't you be in the booth?!

LILA. One last moment before the show. Let's all hold hands.

(They hold hands. JAKE slaps TRISTAN and MASHA's hands off each other and gets in between them.)

Close your eyes . . .

(JAKE looks around like a hawk.)

Take a deep breath . . .

(TRISTAN makes a move towards MASHA.

JAKE squirts him in the face.)

Visualize having a great show . . .

(STEVE is writing out a text.
JAKE squirts him.)

And open your eyes. Feel the love.

(KAYLIE enters, stares at ARNOLD.)

KAYLIE. . . . Die.

(She exits.)

LILA. Break a leg!

(She exits.)

SAMMY. Places, everyone! And lights down.

(JAKE takes a moment, makes sure no one is kissing, then darts onto the stage just as the lights come up.)

(*From this moment on, everything that is happening onstage is in the right column, everything that is happening backstage is in the left column.)

(TRISTAN and MASHA look around, then start kissing again.

LILA returns and spots TRISTAN and MASHA.)

LILA. What are you doing?!

TRISTAN. This is not what it looks like! She needed help putting her mustache back on!

LILA. With your tongue!?

MASHA. We weren't even doing tongue yet!

LILA. I can't believe this!

(BRENDA leaps in between them.)

BRENDA. I'm sure there's a logical explanation for this.

LILA. What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be onstage?

(JAKE stumbles onto the stage.)

JAKE. And then my plan will be complete. If only they knew who my real employer is. Ha-ha-ha-ha.

(Short pause.)

JAKE. Moo-ah-ha-ha-ha-ha. Hee-hee-he! Hoo-Hoo-Hoo!

(Short pause.)

JAKE. Ha. Ha-ha.

Well then I guess it's time for my daily calisthenics. Yes, exercise is important in keeping my evil plans afloat. And one and two and three and four and one and two—

I wonder what is keeping my guests.

(JAKE saunters over to the front door.)

BRENDA. What?

JAKE. (*Fierce whisper.*) Get on the stage!

BRENDA. Where is my suitcase?!

SAMMY. I don't know! Just fake it!

(*SAMMY rings the doorbell and BRENDA flings open the door, miming a suitcase.*)

(*TRISTAN escapes. LILA chases after him.*)

SAMMY. Places for Kaylie and Arnold!

(*MILLIE enters with one suitcase.*)

What is this?

MILLIE. It's a suitcase.

SAMMY. I need nine suitcases!

MILLIE. Who has nine suitcases?!

SAMMY. Nine different people do!

(*SAMMY opens the door and throws the suitcase onto the stage.*)

Where are the rest of the props?!

MILLIE. I'm working on them!

SAMMY. The show is on now!

MILLIE. That's not my fault!

SAMMY. Yes it is!

MILLIE. Tough!

(*MILLIE storms off.*)

(*ARNOLD enters.*)

JAKE. I'll just look out the door then.

(*JAKE opens the door. Looks for BRENDA. He closes the door.*)

JAKE. Well no one there. Which is too bad. Ha-ha-ha.

Oh just come in!

Ah Miss Watermoose. Welcome to the Château Briand.

(*BRENDA has a very thick British accent.*)

BRENDA. Spare me the pleasantries. I do not wish to be summoned like a carrier pigeon. Take my bags. Or bag. Or whichever I have in my hand. I seem to have forgotten my bag, haven't I? No matter. No matter at all. Everything is going just fine, isn't it? No reason to panic.

JAKE. Perhaps I can show you to your room?

BRENDA. Oh my bag has arrived. I had thought it lost. Luckily I had hired birds.

JAKE. What?

BRENDA. I'm sorry, what?

JAKE. Yes.

BRENDA. What?

JAKE. Excuse me?

BRENDA. I don't know where we are.

JAKE. My employer will reveal that in time, what all this is about since that was your question.

ARNOLD. Okay, I'm ready for my—

*(KAYLIE enters opposite
Leaves immediately.)*

SAMMY goes after her.

*SAMMY tries to push KAYLIE
back onstage, who is protesting
and pointing at ARNOLD like
he's the devil.)*

SAMMY. Act like you love him!

ARNOLD. Like you did for our entire relationship!

*(KAYLIE finds her remaining
flowers and starts pelting AR-
NOLD with them.)*

(BRENDA enters upstage.)

*(The door closes behind her.
She realizes she's in the wrong
room, freaks out.)*

*(SAMMY gesticulates for BRE-
NDA to throw her suitcase.
BRENDA is freaking out.)*

BRENDA. I'm in the wrong room!

SAMMY. Suitcase!

*(BRENDA throws the suitcase
down. It hits KAYLIE.)*

*(ARNOLD laughs at her.
KAYLIE grabs the suitcase
and swings it at ARNOLD,
hitting him with it.)*

*(SAMMY rings the doorbell.
She chases after KAYLIE as
JAKE opens the door.)*

*SAMMY shoves KAYLIE and
ARNOLD at the door.)*

(SAMMY takes a breath.)

*(BRENDA is hyperventilating
up above.)*

JAKE. For the moment you may rest in your chamber.

BRENDA. I don't want to rest in my chamber! I'm going to stand here like a cow until I get what I want. I have botched it. It is over.

JAKE. I'm afraid standing like a cow is my job, Madame. May I show you to your room?

BRENDA. You're doing an excellent job, by the way.

(JAKE leads BRENDA up the stairs.)

JAKE. And here we are.

*(BRENDA enters the wrong
door, with her suitcase. She re-
alizes the mistake immediately.)*

JAKE. Well now. I'll just wait for the next person to arrive.

Just waiting.

Well then.

In preparation for the other guests, I will now practice a dramatic monologue. King Lear. Which I remember because I am an extraordinarily good actor.

*(JAKE hears the doorbell and
rushes to the door.)*

JAKE. Hello? Hello there?

*(KAYLIE and ARNOLD burst
onto the stage.)*

BRENDA. I'm in the wrong room!

(BRENDA tries to move behind the middle door, can't manage it.)

(MARVIN enters, clutching his stomach and moaning softly.)

(BRENDA is trying to get to the next platform. SAMMY is waving at her to stop.)

(MARVIN collapses face down on the props table.)

(SAMMY runs back, props him up, puts a hat on him, then runs back to stop BRENDA.)

MARVIN. Aarrhghgh!

(SAMMY covers MARVIN's mouth.)

MARVIN. I think I have appendicitis.

SAMMY. That's okay. Appendicitis won't kill you.

(MARVIN gets out his phone.)

MARVIN. Let me check WebMD.

(SAMMY snatches the phone out of his hand and throws it offstage.)

SAMMY. No phones!

(TRISTAN crosses the stage, looking behind him. He feints one way, then waits for a second.)

LILA enters. TRISTAN runs the opposite direction.)

LILA. Everything going good back here?

JAKE. Ah. Mr. Vito Malatucci and Alana Morgenstern. How strange to see the two of you together.

KAYLIE. *(Sarcastic:)* Ha-ha-ha. We're in love.

ARNOLD. We are. This thing right here. This thing is my special sugar.

KAYLIE. That's so nice of you to say that, Vito. Since you are a terrible lover.

ARNOLD. She's all sweet, this one. Like a glazed ham.

JAKE. I had prepared separate rooms for you—

KAYLIE. Excuse yourself, Vito. He makes terrible noises sometimes.

ARNOLD. I can't bear to be apart from my love. It's painful to be with her, but even more painful to be apart.

JAKE. Very well. If you will follow me. And I'll take your bags. Bag. Your one bag.

KAYLIE. We share a suitcase. And clothes.

ARNOLD. Alana has a very manly build. She hides it well with a girdle.

KAYLIE. Vito is joking since he wears his own girdle.

Oh I can't wait to have some time with my Italian stud-muffin!

ARNOLD. You know it, baby.

MARVIN. Arrrrhrhrhrhg.

(LILA puts her hand over MARVIN's mouth. She gives a thumbs up, then chases after TRISTAN.)

SAMMY. Marvin! Get ready!

(MARVIN stands up, then topples over, clutching his side. SAMMY props him up again. He falls over again. She hits him in the face with something to wake him up.)

(MARVIN stands up a bit, a little unsure of where he is.)

(She catches the suitcase, shoves it in MARVIN's arms, and rings the doorbell.)

(Above, KAYLIE and ARNOLD are now trapped on the tiny platform together. They stare at each other with hate.)

(BRENDA enters on the stage left door.)

(SAMMY gets their attention.)

SAMMY. Costume change!

BRENDA. What? Oh.

(KAYLIE and ARNOLD find their costumes hanging there. KAYLIE has a dress, ARNOLD has a weird dinner jacket and pants thing.

KAYLIE motions for ARNOLD to turn around.

He won't do it.

She starts slapping him.

He throws up his hands. Fine!

He takes off his shirt—elbows her in the back.

She turns around and slaps him again.)

ARNOLD. Excuse me again. When I look at you, my stomach does flips. As if I wanted to vomit.

JAKE. And here we are. With your bag. Which is heavy. You two lovebirds enjoy yourselves.

(He opens the door, revealing BRENDA standing there.)

BRENDA. Cheers.

KAYLIE. Oh so who's this woman?!

BRENDA. Wrong room, actually, wrong room. Terribly sorry.

(JAKE throws the suitcase to SAMMY.)

(BRENDA exits, goes to the other door.)

JAKE. Oh the door! Another of our guests is here!

(JAKE rushes down and opens the door to reveal MARVIN, doubled over in pain.)

MARVIN. Hello my good sir . . . Arrghg . . .

JAKE and MARVIN. You must be Mr. Von Haberstam, the wealthy businessman.

MARVIN. I see my reputation precedes me.

(MARVIN grits his teeth and tries to say the line:)

And I do not enjoy . . . this . . .

JAKE. *(With MARVIN mouthing along:)* All will become clear in time, Mr. Von Haberstam.

MARVIN. Grrarrghghg . . .

(BRENDA is *freaking out*. She can't figure out how to get her dress on.

SAMMY raises a curtain for her.)

(KAYLIE is *trying to change behind a curtain*, she's having a huge problem.

The costumes are deliberately, comically, the wrong sizes.

ARNOLD's coat is two sizes too small, his pants are five sizes too big. He has to hold them up with his hand.

BRENDA's dress is an enormous muumuu thing.

KAYLIE's dress is horribly mis-sized as well. Way too small.

ARNOLD laughs at her.

She slaps him—he can't move his arms very well to defend himself.

They look at SAMMY— *what is this?* SAMMY doesn't know.)

(ESTRELLA enters, points at them, and flips them off [or another colorful gesture that they can't understand].)

ESTRELLA. Ha-ha-ha.

(ARNOLD scrambles down from the platform to attack her, losing most of his pants.

ESTRELLA runs off as TRISTAN sneaks back in. He looks around—where is Lila? No one knows. TRISTAN hides.)

(JAKE steps backstage and closes the door.)

JAKE. If you keep mouthing my lines I will make you hurt worse than you are right now.

SAMMY. Who's onstage?

JAKE. (With MARVIN mouthing along:) May I show you to your room?

MARVIN. How dare you say that . . . sir? I will . . . not be placated like . . . a muffin.

JAKE. (With MARVIN mouthing along:) I wouldn't dream of placating you, sir, and you are certainly no muffin.

MARVIN. Ha! No muffin! Arr-rhgh.

JAKE. (With MARVIN mouthing along:) Please, your room is this way.

MARVIN. Is . . . it?

JAKE. (With MARVIN mouthing along:) If you'll just follow me—

MARVIN. Follow me please.

Is mine on the . . . ughhhh . . .

JAKE. (With MARVIN mouthing along:) Yes on the right. Your bag sure is heavy.

(JAKE opens the stage right door, MARVIN stumbles backstage.)

JAKE. Let me check your room for a moment.

JAKE. Steve!

(SAMMY looks around. No Steve. She signals to everyone. Where is Steve?)

(JAKE leaves.)

(Frantic, crazy search for Steve. SAMMY forces everyone else to look for him. BRENDA exits.)

(MILLIE enters with STEVE, mid-text.

SAMMY snatches the phone out of his hand, slams it on the prop table.

MARVIN throws the suitcase to him.

SAMMY rings the doorbell and shoves STEVE to the door.

SAMMY looks at the phone.)

SAMMY. He's breaking up with Taylor!

KAYLIE. What!

ARNOLD. I told him to.

(KAYLIE kicks him.)

(SAMMY rushes up to MARVIN, who's passed out a bit. Change your costume!

MARVIN, delirious with pain, picks up his costume, which looks like a leisure suit from the 70s.

The sight of it hurts MARVIN more. SAMMY helps him into it.)

(MASHA enters, adjusting her mustache.

LILA enters from the opposite side of the stage.

They stare at each other.

MASHA backs away. LILA stalks her.)

(JAKE enters.)

JAKE. Well that room was fine. Yes. Yes it was. Now I am alone, waiting for my next victim. It's been a long road for me, growing up as a homeless child in Orlando, waiting, always waiting, for Mickey Mouse. Waiting so much—with little ears on my head like a rodent—I ate cheese a lot.

(Doorbell.)

Oh thank goodness.

(JAKE answers it.)

STEVE. Hi there! Miles Bradley, State Senator.

JAKE. Greetings, Mr. Bradley—

STEVE. You have a wonderful home here. Just fantastic. You know, I'm in a tough primary fight right now, I could really use some help from some financial angels, if you know what I mean.

JAKE. I'm afraid I'm the butler, sir.

STEVE. Of course. But if you could let your employer know that if he puts together some campaign contributions—I can do something about the property taxes on this place, if you know what I mean?

(TAYLOR enters, struggling with even worse shoes than before.

She spots Steve's phone on the prop table.

ARNOLD leaps from where he's standing, rips the phone out of her hand.

STEVE throws the suitcase across the stage to TAYLOR.

TAYLOR knocks on the door.

STEVE sees ARNOLD with his phone.)

STEVE. I need my phone!

ARNOLD. Are you sending this?

STEVE. No! I changed my mind. I love being controlled.

ARNOLD. Freedom, man. Rip off the Band-Aid!

(KAYLIE cries.)

Send it!

(SAMMY gestures no!)

STEVE. No, I—

(The message is sent.)

SAMMY. She doesn't have her phone on, does she?

(SILENCE.)

(They wait.)

(BOOP.)

(They wait. She wouldn't check her phone onstage, would she?

ARNOLD backs away from STEVE.

STEVE stands there, scared. What to do?

(He laughs.)

STEVE. I'm sure you do. You're a smart guy.

JAKE. May I show you to your room, Senator?

STEVE. Of course you can.

JAKE. You are located on the first floor. If you'll follow me with your baggage.

(JAKE rushes to get the door.)

JAKE. Miss Veronica Steele, our party is nearly assembled.

TAYLOR. Who are you supposed to be?

JAKE. My name is Reginald. Thanks for asking. You're actually the first person to take an interest—

TAYLOR. I didn't take an interest. And I didn't ask for your name. Where is Peter Angelis?

JAKE. My employer is waiting for all the guests to arrive before making his appearance.

TAYLOR. You can let him know that I don't play games. I'm staying here for one hour and then I'm going to the press, you understand me? I don't care who or what he is. No one threatens Veronica Steele and lives to tell about it.

(BOOP.)

JAKE. You can save your death threats for him, madame.

(TAYLOR checks her phone.)

TAYLOR. (Wail of despair:) Aug-hghghghghghg!

He runs in one direction, looking for a hiding spot.

TRISTAN *is there—he shoves STEVE out of his hiding spot. Cornered, STEVE throws part of his costume over his head and stands still, pretending to be a lamp.*)

(TAYLOR comes backstage, moaning and sobbing. LILA enters, gives her a hug, then exits.

TRISTAN *waits until her back is turned, streaks out from his hiding spot, snatches the suitcase from TAYLOR, and runs onstage.)*

(KAYLIE, still trapped on the upstairs platform, lifts the costume off of STEVE, revealing him.

TAYLOR *points at him, shaking.*

STEVE *gets out his phone, tries to send her a cat video.*

TAYLOR *turns off her phone. STEVE freaks out in fear.)*

(ELEANOR enters, ready for her entrance, annoyed at everything.)

(SAMMY gestures to STEVE and TAYLOR to change clothes. She points to ARNOLD to help STEVE.

SAMMY *helps the sobbing TAYLOR change—ARNOLD helps STEVE—STEVE shoves off ARNOLD. Dude, what are you doing?)*

(TAYLOR's costume is supremely awful. Huge, pink, puffy. She looks at herself in horror and wails again.)

JAKE. I'll take your bag.

TAYLOR. *(Continuous wail of despair:)* Arrururugughhghgh!

JAKE. This way.

(TAYLOR is following, still wailing.)

Yes, I hate the décor here as well.

TRISTAN. Yee-haw!

JAKE. Oh. I didn't hear you knock, sir.

TRISTAN. I'm not much for knocking. I'm from Texas, we don't respect doors there. Or boundaries.

JAKE. Of course. You must be Opie McGraw the wealthy Texas oilman.

TRISTAN. You got that right, pardner. Yee-haw.

JAKE. May I show you to your room? Dinner will be served promptly at eight.

TRISTAN. Now wait a gol'darned tootin' minute there, son. Just what in the Sam Heck is all this about?

JAKE. My employer will make that clear at dinner. Now if you will just follow me.

TRISTAN. I'm not going nowhere. Yee-haw.

(STEVE is wearing a suit that is three sizes too small for him. He can't move his arms. He gets LILA's attention. What is going on?!)

(MASHA enters, ready for her entrance, adjusting her moustache. LILA spots her.

MASHA grabs the suitcase, races past ELEANOR and makes her entrance.

ELEANOR is angry. She protests to LILA. LILA throws up her hands—what can I do about it?

ELEANOR throws open the door and enters anyway.)

(SAMMY checks everyone backstage. Everyone is dressed in their new costume, none of which fits or looks good.)

(MARVIN is slumped over in his spot.)

MARVIN. Water . . .

SAMMY. Feeling better?

MARVIN. Water . . .

LILA. I got it.

(LILA exits to get a glass of water.)

MARVIN. Arrrrhrhghghh . . . Ambulance—

SAMMY. You're fine.

(TRISTAN comes backstage just as LILA returns with the glass of water. She throws it on him. She exits to get another glass of water.)

JAKE. I'll just take your bag then.

(JAKE opens the front door and throws it out.)

MASHA. HELLO. I am here now!

JAKE. Sherrif Toombs. I didn't expect to see you so soon.

MASHA. Welp, the law is ready.

ELEANOR. Am I the last one?!

JAKE. Oh. Hello. Hi. Barbie Taylor, the socialite.

ELEANOR. Ha-ha-ha-ha you're right! I see you found my bag!

MASHA. This is my bag.

ELEANOR. IT'S MY BAG. I KNOW ONE THING AND ONE THING ONLY—THAT IS MY BAG.

TRISTAN. I'll just show myself to my room.

(TRISTAN exits.)

JAKE. Ladies, I'm sure that—

ELEANOR. I WILL NOW GO TO MY ROOM AND CHANGE MY CLOTHES FOR NO REASON AT ALL.

SAMMY. Change clothes! Everyone, change clothes, you've got thirty seconds!

(ELEANOR and MASHA come backstage, angry at each other.)

LILA returns with another glass of water, dumps it on MASHA.

LILA exits to get another glass of water.

MASHA and ELEANOR struggle to change clothes as fast as they can. JAKE rushes backstage—he dodges a water glass and snatches the folders from the props table.

LILA returns with another glass of water. KAYLIE takes it from her, dumps it on ARNOLD. TAYLOR raises her hand for the next glass of water. LILA nods and goes off to get the next one.)

(Lights up onstage.)

SAMMY. Go go go go!

(EVERYONE [except MARVIN] goes onstage.)

(SAMMY takes a deep breath and sits.)

LILA enters and sits next to her.)

(A weak moan from MARVIN, who has collapsed upstairs again.)

SAMMY freaks out, rushes up the stairs.

LILA—oh the water! She rushes off to get the water again. She returns with the water just as OBO enters, angry.

MASHA. I will as well.

JAKE. Okay then.

Well, we're all here. All of us . . . except one.

Moo-ah-ha-ha-ha.

Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha!

(Lights down.)

(SCENE CHANGE. The TECHIES bring out the dining table and set up chairs.)

(TECHIES pour glasses of water for everyone at the table.)

(Lights up.)

(The actors [except MARVIN] rush in and sit.)

JAKE. You'll find incriminating photos and evidence inside of each of these folders.

(Pause.)

Yes. You will. And if Mr. Von Haberstam were here he would say "what is this?!"

TAYLOR. How did you get these?

TRISTAN. You've even got a folder of my dog!

MASHA. I'm sure this is illegal.

OBO—*thanks! Takes the water from LILA.*

LILA *takes it back. Hands it up to SAMMY.*

SAMMY *gives it to MARVIN.*

MARVIN *staggers to his feet, moans.)*

SAMMY. You're fine. You're totally fine. The show must go on.

(MARVIN exits.)

(Now SAMMY relaxes.)

(OBO is protesting to LILA. They're ruining my play!)

(MILLIE enters with murder weapons. She starts setting them on the table.)

(They stop. They listen to MARVIN saying everyone's lines.

OBO—*Stop him! He's destroying the play!)*

(LILA runs to get another glass of water.

She comes back on with it.

SAMMY and LILA *relax.)*

(OBO—They're destroying my play! I'm going to kill them!

She picks up the knife from the props table.

SAMMY and LILA *try to stop her.*

SAMMY *takes the knife away.*

OBO *storms off.)*

BRENDA. *(British:)* This will never work!

ELEANOR. Oh I'm looking at it upside down because I'm really really stupid!

ARNOLD. Hey look. Maybe we can come to an arrangement—I know some people.

JAKE. Our arrangement will be—

(MARVIN enters.)

MARVIN. What is this?!

JAKE. Ah, Mr. Von—

MARVIN. How did you get these?

You've even got a folder of my dog! I'm sure this is illegal! Oh wait I was looking at mine upside down! Hey look. Maybe we can come to an arrangement—I know some people. Our arrangement will be revealed in time, Vito.

(SPLASH.)

JAKE. Or sorry my water slipped. Have a seat Mr. Von Haberstam.

(SPLASH.)

KAYLIE. Aaah!

ARNOLD. My water slipped too.

(SPLASH! SPLASH! SPLASH!)

JAKE. STOP!

(JAKE barely controls himself.)

STOP. SPILLING. THE. WATER.

Now if I may continue . . .

(Pause.)

(SAMMY runs to the headset.)

SAMMY. Lights down!

(Lights down.)

(MASHA enters, sees LILA, stands like a deer in the headlights.)

LILA picks up the knife from the table. SAMMY takes it out of her hands.

LILA picks up the gun.

SAMMY takes it out of her hands.

SAMMY rushes to the headset.)

SAMMY. Oh shoot lights up!

(LILA now has a hammer in her hands.)

MASHA—calm down. Calm down.)

LILA. I saw you kissing Tristan!

MASHA. Are you sure?

LILA. Yes!

MASHA. Okay yes it was probably me! But I can explain!

LILA. Go ahead.

(LILA picks up the knife again as MASHA tries to explain.)

MASHA. He's a total loser!

LILA. That's why you kissed him?!

MASHA. Yes! Out of pity! He's pathetic.

LILA. He is pathetic.

MASHA. You could do so much better. I was trying to show you that you could do better.

LILA. Really?

(Lights down.)

ARNOLD. Aaaaaaah!

(Gunshot.)

ARNOLD. Aaaaaaaaah!

(Gunshot.)

ARNOLD. Aaaaah!

(Gunshot again as lights up.)

(EVERYONE begins talking at the same time. MARVIN repeats everyone's lines as fast as he can.)

MARVIN. What's going on?! What was that?! Did you hear that noise?! It sounded like someone got shot! I wonder if they're going to have dessert soon! Aaaaah!

(TRISTAN rushes over to ARNOLD's body.)

TRISTAN. Well I'll be hornswoggled, y'all! He's dead!

KAYLIE. No! No!

STEVE. I can't be seen here! I was never here! No pictures!

ELEANOR. He's disgusting!

STEVE. Are you talking about me?

TRISTAN. And I know who killed him! His lady friend.

MASHA. Yes I was thinking about you the whole time I was kissing him!

LILA. That's weird.

MASHA. To save you from him! Don't you see? You could do better!

SAMMY. That's true.

MILLIE. (*Entering:*) Definitely. That guy was a loser.

LILA. But he gives me the feelings.

(*LILA sits in the middle of the girls.*)

MASHA. No no you are a strong woman.

SAMMY. You're a goddess.

MILLIE. He's like snail slime. Like worse than snail slime.

LILA. You think?

MASHA. Yes! I was thinking that the whole time I was making out with him. I almost puked.

SAMMY. Me too.

MASHA. You kissed him too?!

SAMMY. He's a total slut.

(**This line can be changed to "I'm not proud of it."*)

MILLIE. Yeah and I totally regret kissing him too.

MASHA. Look. There are so many better guys out there. Check this out.

KAYLIE. Me! How do you know he didn't die of natural causes?!

TRISTAN. If there's one thing that Texans know, it's guns. And I'm Texan and I know guns. And I heard a gun being fired just now. Three times. Yee-haw.

BRENDA. Look over here!

(*Everyone rushes over to BRENDA.*)

There used to be nine little Indian figurines, and now one of them . . . (*She holds up an imaginary figurine:*) is broken.

KAYLIE. (*To JAKE:*) You did this!

JAKE. Madame. I am the butler. I most certainly did not do it. But I have been instructed to read you a poem now.

KAYLIE. Don't do it! If there was one thing Vito couldn't stand, it was poetry.

JAKE. Well he's dead so he won't mind.

STEVE. I'll be leaving now. I was never here.

JAKE. I'm afraid no one is leaving, Senator. Which I will explain in rhyme. If you will all sit.

TRISTAN. Now wait just one darn tootin' minute! Yee-haw.

MARVIN. Here is fifty thousand dollars. I will be leaving.

JAKE. I'm not taking your money, Mr. Von Haberstam. Now, if you will excuse me . . .

(MASHA hands LILA her phone.)

MASHA. You just swipe to the right on a guy you like. It's so easy.

LILA. Oh.

(They start going through pictures.)

MILLIE. He's cute.

(LILA shakes her head.)

I love neck tattoos.

(Swipe.

Swipe.

Swipe.

Swipe.

Swipe.)

ALL FOUR. Aw yeah. Heck yes. That's the one.

(OBO enters.)

OBO. What are you doing?

(LILA shows her the phone.)

Oh wow.

LILA. Yeah.

OBO. Shouldn't you be getting the murder weapons ready?

SAMMY. Oh shoot!

(They separate and rush around—SAMMY tosses the knife upstairs.)

(LILA puts the voodoo doll upstairs left.)

JAKE.

Nine little Indians in a row

Nine little Indians in a show

One gets shot

In the dark

One gets eaten by a shark

You think you know the killer, do you?

Wait till one is killed by voodoo

One gets stabbed

One gets grabbed

One feels poison inside her

When she's bitten by a spider

One gets trampled by a moose

The last one dangles by a noose

Nine little Indians in a row

Nine little deaths in this show

ELEANOR. Aaaaaaaah! It's a prophecy!

STEVE. I don't believe in this!

TRISTAN. Wait a minute, y'all. Someone is missing. Yee . . . hawwww.

MARVIN. Who's missing?

BRENDA. I'm not missing!

ELEANOR. I'm still here!

TAYLOR. Wait a minute! That cop! The manly cop! With the mustache! Who I'm secretly attracted to.

STEVE. You're right! He must be the killer! He shot Vito!

KAYLIE. Because he was in organized crime! It makes so much sense! Italians are often dirty criminals.

ELEANOR. I find your racism refreshing because I'm stupid!

TRISTAN. Weren't you in love with him?

(MASHA reattaches her mustache.)

(MILLIE puts the noose upstairs right.)

(LILA—wrong! The noose and the voodoo doll are in the wrong spot. She tosses the voodoo doll to MILLIE. MILLIE throws the noose to LILA.)

(MILLIE and OBO exit.)

(ELEANOR and JAKE appear in the upstairs center platform.)

(STEVE and TAYLOR enter on the right.)

(TRISTAN and KAYLIE enter on the left.)

(ARNOLD enters on the right. Everyone has had water dumped on them.)

(JAKE tries to get down off the platform as ELEANOR looks for blood.)

ELEANOR. Where's my blood?! I need blood!

(JAKE hands her blood.)

(TAYLOR looks at STEVE. Her lips quivers. She's about to lose it.

SAMMY puts her hand over TAYLOR's mouth as she wails. STEVE backs away.

TAYLOR waves SAMMY off—I'm okay.

KAYLIE. That doesn't mean I approved of him.

STEVE. We need to find that manly officer!

TAYLOR. You're darn right we do.

JAKE. Might I suggest splitting up into pairs and searching the house in the dark?

ELEANOR. Good idea! But who will come with me since I have no brain?

JAKE. Under the circumstances, I will accompany Miss Barbie. You other people may divide as you wish.

MARVIN. Well Miss Water-moose . . . arrrrrrrhgh.

BRENDA. What?

MARVIN. We arrrrghghgh . . . alone.

BRENDA. I don't understand what you said.

(MARVIN starts taking her lines.)

MARVIN. Mr. Von Haberstam, if you don't reveal my secrets . . . I won't reveal yours.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!



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