



**Sample Pages from
A Lighter Shade of Noir**

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A LIGHTER SHADE OF NOIR

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS BY
Patrick Derksen



A Lighter Shade of Noir

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Cast List

4M + 5W + 16 Any Gender

Detectives

TRENT TROWEL	Male. A tough, but somewhat incompetent, hard-boiled P.I.
TRACY DYCK	Female. A no-nonsense police detective who loathes private inspectors.
SHIRLEY HOLMES	Female. A confident and intelligent British detective.
JEAN-LOUIS-PHILIPPE EUSTACHE	Any Gender. A refined inspector from France.
MS. BEATRICE	Any Gender. An elderly lady who knows it all.

Sidekicks

DR. WATSON	Male. Holmes' long-suffering assistant.
MISS FLANNIGAN	Female. Trowel's long-suffering secretary.
MONSIEUR SILENCIEUX	Any Gender. Eustache's long-suffering butler.
JANE	Any Gender. Ms. Beatrice's long-suffering niece.
SERGEANT MALONEY	Any Gender. Dyck's long-suffering subordinate.

Arch Villains

BIG BILL	Male. A shadowy crime boss.
TONY	} Any Gender. Big Bill's henchmen.
VINNY	
CANDY	
MARIO	
MAUREEN ARTEE	Female. A cunning villain.
LE CAMBRIOLEUR	Any Gender. An infamous cat burglar.
ETHEL	Any Gender. Ms. Beatrice's good-for-nothing neighbor.

Other

MR. SMITH	Male. A hapless postman.
CLARICE LATRICHE	Female. A femme-fatale with mysterious motives.

MAYOR DEFEHR

Any Gender. A boisterous and personable politician.

MRS. BENEDICT

Any Gender. A wealthy socialite and hotel-owner.

BEVERLY STEWART

Any Gender. A very famous singer.

JANITOR 1

Any Gender. A grumpy hotel-worker.

JANITOR 2

Any Gender. A jaded hotel-worker

Names and pronouns for characters labeled “Any Gender” may be tweaked to match the gender of the performer.

Set Description

The stage is divided into two areas, the office and the ballroom. A third area (the street café) can be created with an spotlight.

1. **Trent Trowel's office:** It is somewhat run-down, with old wooden furniture, a dead plant, papers, photos, and letters stacked on every available surface. There is a window that looks out onto the brick wall of the neighboring building.
2. **Victoria Grand Hotel Ballroom:** It is lavishly decorated, with fancy art on the walls, tables with food, a chandelier, etc. There is a bench or set of chairs, and a table with a long cloth that reaches to the floor (under which is the imaginary trap door).
3. **Street Café:** A small table and chairs for two. There could be a façade of a restaurant in the background, or it can be isolated with a spotlight.

Props

These are only the essential ones that are referred to in the script.

Gigantic feather	Several flower bouquets
Egyptian mask	Newspaper
Painting of Beverly Stewart	Coffee cup
Stuffed toy dog	Mop and broom
Dog carrier (small)	Rotary phone
Pistol (toy)	Two invitations to Gala
English muffins	Fancy handkerchief
Love Letter (Snookie Wookums) and envelope filled with rose petals	Maps
	Palm-tree souvenir
	Notepad and pencil

Music

Jazz/Be-bop tunes set the mood nicely in between scenes and during the narrator's monologues. Beverly Stewart will need the same musical intro every time she is about to sing.

Director's note

Trent Trowel often speaks in (what he thinks are) monologue asides. These are depicted in Courier New font for the actor's benefit.

ACT I
Scene I

Fade in on TRENT TROWEL's office. MISS FLANNIGAN is on the phone behind an old desk. MR. SMITH sits off to the side, impatiently waiting for something.

FLANNIGAN: *(into the phone)* No, Mr. Trowel is not in right now so you'll have to leave a message with me. Yes, I realize it's urgent and you want answers, ma'am. Now if... Yes, he does sound like a no-good, cheating dirtbag – they usually are, honey. Yes, I'm sure we'll, I mean, Mr. Trowel, will figure it all out. Yes, ma'am, if your husband does have a secret girlfriend, we'll let you know right away. No, I'm sure you're a lovely lady, ma'am. Yes, you definitely deserve some gratitude for all you do – don't we all, honey.

Enter TRENT TROWEL. He often speaks in what seems to be monologue asides, but other characters can obviously hear him and react to what he's saying. He is oblivious to this fact.

SMITH: Mr. Trowel! Trent Trowel! I've got to talk to you right away... in private!

TROWEL: I walked into the office to the familiar sound of some fool with a problem...

SMITH: Pardon me?

TROWEL: Day after day, they came to me. That's the problem with being the best. You get to feel like a cake at a four-year-old's birthday party – everyone wants a piece of ya...

SMITH: Does he...Why is he talking like we're not even here?

FLANNIGAN: He does this all the time – you get used to it.

SMITH: But...

TROWEL: Lucky for me Miss Flannigan kept the place from falling apart. She had a thing for me, but I was married to the job. It was all I could do to fend her off, but I had to keep things professional.

MISS FLANNIGAN rolls her eyes and shakes her head, as she takes his coat, hat, and briefcase.

TROWEL: Some coffee and fried eggs were the first things on my mind - anything to keep me going, really. It had been a long day, and it would probably be a longer night.

SMITH: I'm kind of in a hurry here. Maybe if I...

FLANNIGAN: Best just to let him finish, hon.

MISS FLANNIGAN gives him his coffee and a newspaper.

TROWEL: Miss Flannigan had a knack for reading my mind. No sooner than I thought it, a cup of joe was in my hand. It was good to have an ally like her. These mean streets were no place for a private eye. But I've always been a glutton for punishment. Somebody had to stick up for the little guys, like the poor sap in my office today...

SMITH: Is that me? The poor sap? I'm standing right here!

FLANNIGAN: Sir, just have a seat and I'll let you know when he's ready. It'll save us all a lot of unnecessary stress.

TROWEL: Yeah, that was my life. I didn't ask for it, but it's the one I got. It was my job to clean up this town. It might have a shiny exterior, but its underbelly was as filthy as a two-legged turtle's. Your average Dick and Tom had no idea a ruthless gangster called all the shots here. One day, though... One day, I'd get the proof I needed to put away Big Bill and his gang. Until then, I'd take these dime-store jobs to get by.

TRENT TROWEL finally addresses the other characters.

TROWEL: Any messages while I was out, Miss Flannigan? *(he picks up a letter from a stack on her desk)* Who's Reggie? Why are there rose petals in here?

FLANNIGAN: Mr. Trowel, that's mine! *(she snatches the letter back)* I left YOUR messages on your desk. I put the most important one on top; remember the invitation for the International Private Detective Gala tonight?

TROWEL: Not interested. No time for glitzy frou-frou parties: I've got a city to look after.

FLANNIGAN: That's what I thought you'd say.

TROWEL: (*looking at MR. SMITH*) What did the cat drag in today, Miss Flannigan?

FLANNIGAN: Well, I thought he was just delivering the mail, but obviously he's got something else on his mind. He won't tell me what it's about. His name is Mr. Smith.

TROWEL: Obviously a fake name. What's the deal, mister? You one of Big Bill's new cronies?

SMITH: See here, Mr. Trowel. I've got something urgent to tell you, but I won't stand here and be insulted in this manner!

TROWEL: Spit it out then. I haven't got all day.

SMITH glances at MISS FLANNIGAN.

SMITH: It's of a rather sensitive nature. I'd rather discuss it in your private office, perhaps.

TROWEL: I bet you would, wouldn't you?

SMITH: ...Yes. Yes, that's why I suggested it.

TROWEL: Sure you did. What a great suggestion, huh?

SMITH: Um... yes – yes I think so. What I have to tell you is not for everyone to hear. So your office would be the ideal...

TROWEL: (*interrupts*) You like calling the shots, do you Mr. Smith?

SMITH: No, I... I'm not even sure what that means.

TROWEL: Fine! We'll do it your way! Let's see what's so important...

SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Trowel. I think you'll be very interested in what I have to say...

CLARICE enters.

SMITH: ... you aren't going to believe me, but I have proof...

CLARICE: Mr. Trowel, I presume?

TROWEL: My heart stopped in my chest. Into my office walked a woman that could make a blind man do a double-take. Even if there was no gravity on earth, I'd have still fallen for her. She must have been a dancer to have gams like that.

SMITH: Yes, she is quite lovely, but...

TROWEL: Hey, buddy! Show a little respect. You can't just blurt out stuff like that. There's no harassing women in my office.

CLARICE: You are most considerate, Mr. Trowel.

TROWEL: Her voice was as sweet as honey dripping off spun sugar. But I had to keep my head clear. Something told me this dame needed my help.

CLARICE: My name is Clarice LaTriche. My friend here said you could help me – and I need your help, Mr. Trowel.

TROWEL: I know. I knew the minute you walked in.

CLARICE: Why, Mr. Trowel. You're more skilled than I imagined! How could you have known I had a mystery for you to solve?

FLANNIGAN: (*aside*) That is generally why people come here...

TROWEL: So what's the problem?

CLARICE: I don't mean to interrupt, if you're already busy.

TROWEL: No ma'am. My schedule is wide open.

SMITH: Um, excuse me, but I was here first...

TROWEL: I've had just about enough of you, Smith! Haven't you ever heard of the expression "Ladies First?" Now dry up.

SMITH: But! Of all the! Why! (*he sits down in a huff*)

TROWEL: Now, what were you going to tell me, Clarice?

CLARICE: (*dramatically overacted*) Oh, it's simply terrible! How I got involved in this, I honestly can't say. But I must tell somebody!

TROWEL: What? What is it?

CLARICE: I'm a good girl, Mr. Trowel, honestly I am. But somehow I always get mixed up with the wrong crowd. I want to do better. I want to come clean! You'll help me, won't you? Won't you?

FLANNIGAN: Alright, get to the point, sweetheart.

CLARICE: Something awful is going to happen at the International Private Detective Gala tonight! Something simply awful! Oh, so awful!

TROWEL: What? What's happening?

CLARICE: Uh... well I don't know exactly. But IT's going to happen, alright. I heard Big Bill telling his gang that IT was tonight.

TROWEL: Big Bill!

FLANNIGAN: Big Bill!

CLARICE: Yes – Big Bill!

There is a long pause.

SMITH: Who's Big Bill?

TROWEL: The vilest gangster this country's ever seen. He's planning something? Tonight? This could finally be the evidence I need to put him away for good. But Clarice, how do you know this?

CLARICE: Because...

TROWEL: Yes?

CLARICE: Because I...

SMITH: What is it?

CLARICE: Because I am...

FLANNIGAN: Oh, come on.

CLARICE: Because I am... his girlfriend!

TROWEL: Well I'll be a monkey's uncle! What's a tomato like you doing with a criminal like him? And now you're coming to me?

CLARICE: I told you – I want to change! I can't take this criminal life anymore. Will you help me, Mr. Trowel? Please! Will you go to the Gala and put a stop to them?

TROWEL: I'd love to, doll. But there's one small problem. You see, those high hats aren't going to just let me into their shindig.

FLANNIGAN: The invitation's still on your desk.

TROWEL: Hold on! I just remembered that I have an invitation on my desk!

CLARICE: So you'll be there? You'll put a stop to Big Bill's plan?

TROWEL: Seems like luck had finally changed for Trent Trowel. Like a fat kid who sees an ice-cream truck crash into a candy store, this was

the moment I'd been waiting for all my life. (to CLARICE) I wouldn't miss it for the world, baby.

FLANNIGAN: (*sarcastically*) But, Mr. Trowel. Shouldn't you call the police and let them handle this?

TROWEL: Good one, Miss Flannigan. No, this is a job only Trent Trowel can handle. Come on, Clarice. Let's go into my office so we can work out some of the finer details of our plan.

SMITH: I really need to just talk to you before you... it's about this Gala!

TROWEL: Can it, milquetoast.

TRENT TROWEL and CLARICE exit.

SMITH: Brilliant detective indeed.

FLANNIGAN: Leave the sarcastic remarks to me, hon.

Fade out.

Scene 2

The Victoria Grand Hotel's Ballroom. One table prominently displays an ancient Egyptian mask, a giant feather, and a portrait of BEVERLY STEWART. Beside this table sits a small dog carrier.

MAYOR DEFEHR, MRS. BENEDICT, EUSTACHE, and MONSIEUR SILENCIEUX stand to one side in conversation. As MS. BEATRICE and JANE peruse the artifacts, SERGEANT MALONEY stands guard by the table. LE CAMBRIOLEUR is hidden behind a set piece, barely visible.

EUSTACHE: So zen I say to heem "No: he had ze fish, I had ze asparagus!" (*laughs loudly*)

DEFEHR: Asparagus! Ha!

MRS. BENEDICT: (*joins in on the laugh*) Oh, Inspector, you are too funny!

DEFEHR: (*to MR. SILENCIEUX, who remains stoic*) Asparagus? Don't you get it? What's wrong with your buddy, Frenchie?

EUSTACHE: Please, do not call me zat.

DEFEHR: Sorry, Inspector Moustache.

EUSTACHE: Eustache! Eu-stache! Espèce d’Americain...

DEFEHR: Yeah, yeah, right. Anyway, thank you so much, Mrs. Benedict, for the use of your hotel’s fabulous ballroom. It’s the perfect place for the International Detective Gala.

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh, it is the Victoria Grand Hotel’s honor to host this event. But I’m a bit confused. What mystery or crime have they come to solve here?

DEFEHR: Oh no, Mrs. Benedict; you’ve got the wrong idea. The mysteries are already solved! We’re here to honor and celebrate the great detectives of our era. What you see on the table there represents their greatest cases.

MRS. BENEDICT: I can’t wait to meet all of the world’s most famous detectives. Oh, are they all here yet?

DEFEHR: Well, you’ve met mister...uh, mister...

EUSTACHE: Jean. Louis. Phillipe. Eu...Stache.

MRS. BENEDICT: Who is an absolute delight.

EUSTACHE: Enchanté, Madame.

MRS. BENEDICT: But I don’t see any other gentlemen that would fit the profile of “famous detective” in the room, however.

DEFEHR: Well, things are not always what they seem, Mrs. Benedict. You see, right over there is the renowned Ms. Beatrice.

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh my word – I would have never guessed that such a famous detective would be so...so...

MS. BEATRICE picks up the priceless Egyptian mask and bites it to see if the gold is real.

EUSTACHE: Old and senile?

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh, Inspector, you’re wicked. Surely she must still have all her wits about her.

MS. BEATRICE: Jane, who is this hussy in the painting?

JANE: Are you kidding, Aunt Beatrice? That’s Beverly Stewart; she’s only the most famous singer in the country right now.

MS. BEATRICE: Country singer, huh?

JANE: No, Aunt B. I said “in the country...”

MS. BEATRICE: Never cared for country music. No wonder I don't know her...

JANE: She's not... ugh, never mind.

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh dear.

DEFEHR: Well, one cannot deny Ms. Beatrice's accomplishments, anyway.

EUSTACHE: Hmm...

Enter TRACY DYCK.

DEFEHR: Ah! And here is our stalwart female police detective, Tracy Dyck.

DYCK: You know, you don't always need to preface my title with "female." Just "detective" will do, thank you.

DEFEHR: I wasn't sure you'd join us tonight!

DYCK: Well, unlike these self-employed jokers, some of us have actual work to do.

EUSTACHE: Isn't she ze charming one...

DYCK: In fact, I wouldn't be here at all if you hadn't asked me to do security detail.

MALONEY: Yeah, I couldn't get her to come no matter how much I twisted her arm. I mean, uh, who solves more cases than Dyck? All of us officers have to admit that even though she's a dame, she's good at what she does. Real good. Ha. Makes the rest of us look bad, you know? Ha. Well, I'm glad you used your, uh, mayoral clout to get her here, Mr. Mayor.

DEFEHR: If assigning the esteemed Tracy Dyck to do security was the only way to get you here, then so be it. You have just as much of a right to be at the Gala as any of our other esteemed guests.

DYCK: More so, actually. But please, don't put me in the same league as these hacks.

EUSTACHE: Excusé-moi, Madame. I resent you talking about me in such a fashion. Private eenspectors like myself have solved many cases zat ze police simply could not. Take ze mask of the Pharaoh Tikamun ze First zat I found – (to MR. SILENCIEUX) aller chercher le masque. (MR. SILENCIEUX looks confused) Go get ze mask! (MR. SILENCIEUX retrieves the mask) Eet ees worth millions of dollars!

Do you suggest zis ees ze work of an amateur? And where is your item in ze display, ein? Ah, zat is right – you do not ‘ave one.

DYCK: That’s because actual police work doesn’t involve searching for goofy trophies.

EUSTACHE: Qu’est-ce que c’est, “goofy”? What do you mean?

DEFEHR: Well, if all is secure, perhaps we can bring in our guest of honor?

DYCK: All of the entrances to the hotel are guarded by police officers, Mayor. Still, I think it’s awfully risky to have all of these precious items in one spot.

DEFEHR: Oh, come now. Who would dare to try any mischief, what with all of the world’s greatest detectives here?

DYCK: Alright. Go and get her, Maloney.

MALONEY exits. MS. BEATRICE approaches TRACY DYCK.

MS. BEATRICE: Excuse me? Are you the head waiter? I asked this bozo for an English muffin over an hour ago, and it’s still not here!

JANE: Aunt Beatrice – that’s a police officer!

MS. BEATRICE: Is that so? Well, officer, I’m glad you’re here – I’d like to report a crime!

DYCK: What – really? What’s wrong ma’am?

MS. BEATRICE: It happened about an hour ago.

TRACY DYCK takes out a pad and a pencil and jots notes.

DYCK: Okay.

MS. BEATRICE: There was someone pretending to be someone else... in disguise, if you follow me.

DYCK: Right. What leads you to believe that?

MS. BEATRICE: Well, I ordered an English muffin from someone I thought was a waiter, but...

DYCK: *(suddenly annoyed)* O...kay.

MS. BEATRICE: I STILL haven’t gotten my English muffin!

DYCK: Alright. I'll see what I can do.

MS. BEATRICE: Lightly buttered. Lightly!

MALONEY and BEVERLY STEWART enter.

JANE: Oh wow! It's her! She's here! Beverly Stewart's here!

STEWART: Hello, one and all! I'm sure I am as pleased to be here as you are to have me! I've taken time out of my busy touring schedule to be here at your mayor's special request.

MALONEY: Gosh, Miss Stewart, I'm your biggest fan. I don't suppose you'd sing us a song, wouldja?

STEWART: I'd be delighted. Get ready for the show, darlings! Hit it boys!

Music swells, and BEVERLY STEWART starts to dance. She takes a deep breath to sing, but is pushed aside and interrupted by TRENT TROWEL and CLARICE entering, arm in arm. The music stops abruptly.

CLARICE: Here we are, Mr. Trowel. Oh, isn't it lovely?

DYCK: Oh, could this evening get any worse?

TROWEL: Well, the place was elegant, I gave it that much. Which meant that ol' Trent Trowel was going to stick out like a sore thumb. It felt nice having a classy dame like Clarice on my arm, though. But I was glad she was with me for other reasons besides eye candy. It was a safe bet that one of the people in this room was working for Big Bill, and Clarice was the only one who could put the finger on him. Until I knew, I'd have to be careful - for both of us.

DYCK: For the love of Pete. Mr. Mayor, I refuse to be in the same room as this guy.

DEFEHR: Oh, don't be such a sourpuss.

MRS. BENEDICT: Who is this man, Mr. Mayor?

DEFEHR: That, my good woman, is Trent Trowel! And not to offend any of you other detectives, but this guy's the best there is. He rescued my little George from that vile gangster, Big Bill!

DYCK: That was pure fluke. It's the one case he's ever actually solved! And I'm not even convinced this 'Big Bill' actually exists.

TROWEL: It was no secret that I didn't get along with the local P.D. But Tracy Dyck had a whole other level of dislike for me. I wasn't sure why she got so worked up whenever we met.

DYCK: It's because you're an idiot!

TROWEL: My best guess was that she had a crush on me, but didn't want others to know. She seemed especially ticked off tonight though; probably jealous that I was at the party with a dish like Clarice. It wasn't my fault that ladies found me irresistible.

CLARICE: Mr. Trowel, I do believe that I should go freshen up in the ladies' room.

TROWEL: Smart girl; she was probably thinking we could cover more ground if we split up.

CLARICE exits.

DYCK: Trowel, I knew this convention was a joke, but until you showed up I didn't realize how big a joke it was.

TROWEL: Well, if it isn't Tracy Dyck. Managed to tear yourself away from the donut store, did you?

DYCK: Is that the best police insult you could come up with? Your comebacks are as flimsy as your detective skills.

DEFEHR: Detectives! Please, this is supposed to be a festive occasion. Miss Stewart, perhaps a song would lighten the mood...

STEWART: It would be my pleasure. I love what I do: bring people together with music. Hit it boys!

The music swells. BEVERLY STEWART dances and gets ready to sing.

DEFEHR: We're celebrating your greatest accomplishments!

DYCK: (*pushes BEVERLY STEWART aside*) Accomplishments? You want accomplishments?

Once again, the music stops before BEVERLY STEWART can sing.

DYCK: Right! Let's go through them, shall we?

TROWEL: Nah, we don't need to do that.

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh, I'd love to know the stories behind the greatest mysteries of our age.

DYCK: Why don't you go first, Trowel? What's your proudest moment?

TROWEL: You know, bragging is not my thing.

EUSTACHE: Zen allow me to commence. Zis is ze mask of ze twentieth dynasty pharaoh, Tutenmose ze Second. Eet was en route to ze museum in Paris when eet was stolen by zat most devious of t'ieves, Le Cambrioleur! 'e thought hees plan was perfect, but 'e did not realize zat Jean Louis Philippe Eustache was on hees trail. Le Cambrioleur, he dresses all in black so he can blend wit' ze night. N'est-ce pas, Monsieur Silencieux?

MR. SILENCIEUX nods.

EUSTACHE: I found a single thread from hees deesguise, and deescoverd zere was only one factory in Lyons zat made such thread. Sure enough, hees hideout was underneath zis establishment, and ze mask...was recovered.

The crowd applauds.

MRS. BENEDICT: What about Le Cambrioleur, Inspector? Did you catch him?

EUSTACHE: Alas, he ees still at large, Madame.

DEFEHR: I'm sure you'll get him soon, Inspector.

DYCK: Okay, that was mildly impressive, I'll admit. But I'm dying to hear about Trowel's biggest case. Come on, Trowel.

TROWEL: I don't know if I'm up to telling that story right now...
Actually, I uh, I think I'm feeling a bit under the weather...

MS. BEATRICE: Feather!?! So you want to hear about how I found this feather?

JANE: No, Aunt B, he just said...

MS. BEATRICE: *(interrupts)* It all started back in the summer of '33. Now, back in those days, feathers cost 4 pennies a bushel. But this feather was different. You see, Henry – that's Hershel's boy – had the notion to travel to some island in the south Pacific. This was before the war, mind you. Now I said to Ginny – that's Hershel's wife – that no good would come of it. But as usual, she didn't listen to me. You know, it's funny how many people don't

listen to me. I've been warning everyone for years about my neighbor Ethel, and how her leaves keep blowing onto my yard!

JANE: Henry's trip, Aunt B.

MS. BEATRICE: So off he goes and we see neither head nor tail of Henry – that's Hershel's boy – for three years. Not a letter, telegram, nothing. And Ginny – that's Hershel's wife – well, she's worried sick. Some people are just so inconsiderate – like that no good Ethel, whose dog keeps digging up my petunias!

JANE: So Henry comes back...

MS. BEATRICE: So then Henry does come back, and he's filthy rich. He buys the big mansion at the end of the street, gets himself a fancy car, the whole nine yards. But his prized possession is this feather – says some witch doctor charmed it with good luck. That's how he got so rich, so Ginny says anyway. Now one day Henry – that's Hershel's boy – leaves it at home, and when he comes back, the feather is gone!

EUSTACHE: Are we getting to ze end of zis story, soon?

MS. BEATRICE: So they look high and low for this feather, but no one can find it. No one except for me; I knew all along who the no good culprit was. Only one person could be so dastardly! Guess who it was!

DEFEHR: Ethel?

MS. BEATRICE: Nah, it was the butler. Go figure.

DYCK: Anyway, looks like we're back to you, Trowel.

MRS. BENEDICT: Well, we've heard about the mask and the feather. That leaves... (*gasps*). Are you the one who rescued Beverly Stewart when she was kidnapped?

TROWEL: Ummm... not exactly.

STEWART: No, no. It was a British detective who saved me from that awful criminal. My international hit song, "I've Been 'Napped, and I'm Not Kidding" is about that little adventure.

MRS. BENEDICT: So what have you done, Mr. Trowel?

DEFEHR: I can see you're not one to boast, Trowel, so allow me. Now feathers and ancient masks are fine and all, but Detective Trowel is a true hero. He saved someone's life!

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh my!

TROWEL: Alright, let's just leave it at that, Mr. Mayor. A gumshoe's got to maintain some confidentiality, after all.

DEFEHR: Nonsense, good man. You saved the life of someone incredibly precious to me, and I want the world to know about it. You see, my George had wandered off, and the poor boy got completely lost in the worst parts of our city. Some of Big Bill's thugs found him and were holding him for ransom. But Detective Trowel risked life and limb to get him back safe and sound.

MRS. BENEDICT: Well, you should have brought George here tonight!

DEFEHR: I did!

MAYOR DEFEHR reaches into the doggy carrier, and pulls out a tiny dog.

DEFEHR: Here's my little Georgie! Who's a good wittle boy – you are. Yes, you are.

EUSTACHE: A dog?

DYCK: Yes, the great Trent Trowel's greatest, most dangerous case was finding... a puppy. And while he maintains that he wrested the creature from a gang of violent thugs, my investigation shows that the dog was at the local pound – picked up by a dog-catcher when it ran away.

TROWEL: Yeah, ran away from Bill and his gangsters when I busted in on their hideout! Look, I had bigger problems trying to stop those thugs than chasing the dog at that moment.

DYCK: And yet you still didn't manage to capture a single one of them.

TROWEL: Look, copper. I don't go messing around in your business twenty-four seven. What's your beef with me anyway?

DEFEHR: Alright, alright. The important thing is that George was rescued safe and sound. I don't want this bad blood to ruin our evening of celebration. Now: shake hands and let's be done with it.

TROWEL and DYCK shake hands, each one squeezing to make the other show pain.

MRS. BENEDICT: Well, those are some amazing stories. But what about Beverly Stewart? Who is responsible for her rescue when she was kidnapped last year?

We hear HOLMES from offstage.

HOLMES: I'm glad someone has finally asked!

Enter WATSON.

DEFEHR: Aha! You must be the famous British detective – Miss Stewart's noble hero, who thwarted the kidnappers.

SHIRLEY HOLMES speaks her lines from offstage.

HOLMES: No, no! That's just Watson, my assistant! Miss Stewart's liberation is due to the work of someone with far more intelligence.

WATSON: *(sighs)* Allow me to present...

TROWEL: What the blazes?

EUSTACHE: C'est qui, ça? Who ees zat?

MRS. BENEDICT: I don't know – they're shouting from the hallway.

DEFEHR: Why wouldn't they just come in – why talk from out there?

HOLMES: Because a proper introduction is in order. Don't you Americans do anything with propriety?

WATSON: Allow me to present...

DYCK: I thought we had this place locked down. There shouldn't be people sneaking around out there.

MALONEY: Are you saying we've got a security breach?

HOLMES: Confound it all – won't you all just be silent so that Watson can make the introduction? Miss Stewart, perhaps a song to create the proper ambience.

STEWART: A grand idea! Hit it, boys!

The music swells, and BEVERLY STEWART gets ready to sing.

WATSON: Allow me to present...

The room goes completely dark. The music cuts off. There are yelps and thuds, and other commotion. When the lights turn on, all of the trophy objects and BEVERLY STEWART are gone.

MALONEY: The mask has been stolen! And the feather!

JANE: She's gone! Beverly Stewart's gone!

DEFEHR: George!

TROWEL: Ah, someone beat the tar out 'a me...

WATSON: Allow me to present Miss Shirley Holmes!

HOLMES enters.

HOLMES: Oh dear.

Fade out.

Scene 3

Fade in on ballroom. MRS. BENEDICT is seated and looking faint, with JANE fanning her. SHIRLEY HOLMES and WATSON are quietly conferring to one side, and EUSTACHE and MR. SILENCIEUX are looking around the room together. TROWEL takes turns watching everyone else. MS. BEATRICE is happily eating an English muffin.

TROWEL: Well, it had happened. Just like Clarice said it would. And even though I was there, I didn't stop it. I felt about as useless as an ashtray on a motorcycle.

EUSTACHE: For everyising to deesapear like zat... Ah, eet has to be 'ere somewhere.

MRS. BENEDICT: Good heavens. How could this have happened? And at my hotel? Those objects were entrusted to me by their owners; I'm responsible for them! I'm ruined. And there's the mayor's dog and, oh! And poor Miss Beverly Stewart – oh I dread thinking about what's happened to her. Kidnapped a second time?

JANE: It's alright Mrs. Benedict. Just rest up. Everything will be okay.

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh, you're a sweet girl. And you know what, you are probably right. After all, we have the best detectives in the world right here, now don't we?

HOLMES: One is all you shall need, my good woman. I, Shirley Holmes, am on the case. There is no criminal that can outwit me. Now Mrs. Benedict, it is quite late – or early, if you like. You would do well get to Frederick, since he will need bread for his bakery.

MRS. BENEDICT: What? How do you... how did you know that?

WATSON: Here we go...

HOLMES: Your hands, Mrs. Benedict, while admirably cleaned for this soirée, show slight calluses in a pattern seen on bakers who knead dough by hand. Now, seeing as though you are the proprietor of this hotel, and you yourself are not likely to own a bakery, it is only logical that Frederick is the baker, and you assist him.

MRS. BENEDICT: What? But how do you...

HOLMES: Know Frederick?

MRS. BENEDICT: Yes!

HOLMES: I don't.

MRS. BENEDICT: Then how?

HOLMES: The handkerchief you are using to dry your tears, Madam, has the name Frederick monogrammed onto it. I deduced that he is your beloved husband, since you are willing to bake for his shop just to spend time with him. And since the majority of the baking is done at night to be ready for morning customers, you are likely needed at this very moment.

MRS. BENEDICT: Miss Holmes...I'm amazed.

MS. BEATRICE: Psh. Any dummy could have told you all that.

HOLMES: Indeed; it's all very elementary.

MRS. BENEDICT: You are right, though. I should go help my Frederick. Gentlemen, oh, and uh, ladies, I leave with confidence that you will get to the bottom of this case and rescue all that was taken.

MRS. BENEDICT exits.

TROWEL: Nice party trick, cutie-pie. But now it's time for the real detective work to start.

Enter TRACY DYCK, SERGEANT MALONEY, and MAYOR DEFEHR.

DYCK: My thoughts exactly. So clear out, the lot of you! This is a crime scene.

EUSTACHE: I must respectfully decline. My expertise will be of use to you, non?

DYCK: No dice, inspector. Maybe they let you civilians traipse around wherever you want in France, but not here.

TROWEL: Which is why you need Trent Trowel. I know we haven't always gotten along, but face it, Dyck, no one knows this city better than this guy.

DYCK: Yeah, no. Not in your wildest dreams would I work with you.

MS. BEATRICE: Now listen here, missy. Have some respect for us! Do you know how many cases I've solved? Seventeen! How many have you solved, eh?

DYCK: Two-hundred and sixty eight.

MS. BEATRICE: Whoa, nelly.

DYCK: What about you, Shirley Holmes? You may as well get your protest in, too.

HOLMES: Oh no, that's perfectly fine. If you'd like me to leave, then I shall do so.

DYCK: Well you can take your objection and... wait, you're actually leaving?

HOLMES: Indeed. No need to ruffle feathers.

DYCK: Huh... well alright then. It's hard to believe one of you at least has some common sense.

HOLMES: Yes, there's nothing to be gained from loitering about. I quite believe I've seen all I need to here to solve the case.

DYCK: And there it is. (*she sighs*) I'm about to bring a forensics squad in here for a three day crime scene investigation, and you glibly state that you've "seen all you need to" and it's "solved."

HOLMES: Yes. In all probability.

WATSON: You would do well not to doubt Shirley Holmes, Detective.

MALONEY: But what could she possibly have seen in a few minutes?

WATSON: No, don't ask that! Ugh, we're going to be here all night now...

HOLMES: I see everything, Detective. You see, unlike all of you, details do not escape me. I've noticed there are 28 light bulbs in the room – one burnt out. I've noticed that the mayor was late for the party tonight because he nicked himself shaving, indicating he was in a hurry. I've noticed Ms. Beatrice has already eaten one English muffin previous to this one because of the butter stain on the table where she set down her current one down. I've noticed

the scuff marks on the floor under the table, indicating a trap door of some sort, not that it has any bearing on this case, mind you, since it's not been opened since yesterday. I've noticed...

EUSTACHE: Aha – zere it is. I knew zere was a trap door! 'Ow else could everysing have deesappeared like zat. Zere ees always a trap door.

HOLMES: Yes, but as I've said, it hasn't been used since at least yesterday, and is not important to this case.

EUSTACHE: 'Ow can you be so certain?

HOLMES: (*exasperated*) Because, the sheen and lack of dust on the floor shows that it was waxed just before the party, which formed a seal. If the trap door had been used during the robbery, the seal would be broken. My goodness, do you people observe anything at all?

TROWEL: I had to admit, this kitten had some brains. I had my own ideas about what went down there that night, but I was willing to give her opinion a fair shake. Normally I worked alone, but I had a feeling me and her would get along just fine. It didn't hurt that she was quite a looker.

HOLMES: Excuse me?

DYCK: Okay, well, thank you Shirley Holmes for the intel about light bulbs and an old lady's eating habits. But now it's time to leave it to the professionals.

The detectives protest.

DEFEHR: Now wait a minute, wait a minute! Officer, I think you need to let these private investigators help you. They're the best!

DYCK: There is no way I'm compromising my integrity to work with these jokers, Mr. Mayor.

DEFEHR: I'd say your integrity has already been compromised in letting this crime happen while you were supposed to be providing security.

MALONEY: Ooh, he's got us there, boss.

DEFEHR: And now my George has been...dognapped again!

DYCK: Look, just because we messed up with security doesn't make them any more qualified to do the investigation.

DEFEHR: Well in case you've forgotten, I'm mayor here, not you. And that means I'm in charge. And I say they get a chance to prove their worth.

DYCK: Oh, you've got to be kidding... Fine – you want to give them a chance? Sure. But I'm not using my police force to help them out just so they get all the credit. I'll give them twenty-four hours to solve it, then I move in and clean up the mess. You all got that? Twenty-four hours.

DEFEHR: Fair enough. Good luck, detectives!

MALONEY: Yeah, all the best!

MAYOR DEFEHR, TRACY DYCK, and SERGEANT MALONEY exit.

HOLMES: Very well, Watson. The game is afoot – let us be on our way.

EUSTACHE: Pardonnez-moi, but I must inseest zat you remain one moment. You see, I am not convinced zat you know what you think you know...

HOLMES: Is that so?

MS. BEATRICE: Yeah, I've got a good idea myself as to who the culprit is.

TROWEL: So do I.

HOLMES: I can assure all of you that the matter is well in hand.

EUSTACHE: Yes, you are confident, I can tell. But you said before, Miss Shirley Holmes, zat no criminal can outwit you. But I know somesing of your history, and zere was one criminal at least who could match you...

HOLMES: Artee...

TROWEL: Who?

WATSON: Maureen Artee, criminal mastermind and Miss Holmes' supreme nemesis.

HOLMES: And more than a match for any of you. I see, Monsieur Eustache, that I've underestimated you. You are wise to suspect her. If she is involved, and it my belief that she is, then I must

handle this alone, for there is no one more devious and cunning than she.

EUSTACHE: Except perhaps Le Cambrioleur. I know for a fact that ze man is more zan capable of a robbery such as zis.

TROWEL: But in this town, where there's crime, there's Big Bill. It's got his stink all over it. He's obviously the felon here. Big Bill wouldn't allow any others in to threaten his criminal empire.

MS. BEATRICE: Haha... you young whippersnappers think you know everything. You've got it all wrong.

EUSTACHE: Oh really? Who do you think deed eet?

MS. BEATRICE: My next-door neighbor, Ethel, of course!

JANE: Oh, Aunt Beatrice.

EUSTACHE: What?

TROWEL: That doesn't make any sense.

HOLMES: There is no evidence to support that claim.

MS. BEATRICE: That's just what Ethel wants you think.

JANE: Okay everyone. Obviously you can't all be right. Why don't you each explain what you think happened, and we'll be able to decide where to go from here?

MS. BEATRICE: Oh, dearie, you're a sweet girl, but just let the adults talk, okay? Hey, I know what let's do! Why don't we all explain what we think happened, and decide where to go from there?

The detectives all mumble in agreement. JANE shakes her head, bemused.

EUSTACHE: I shall begin.

Technical notes: Each character's version of the events is a recorded narration, played by the sound crew. The actors will pantomime the actions onstage. To make it more obvious that these are past events, the lights will shift to a different color when showing each character's explanation of the robbery/kidnapping event.

The actors take their places from the end of Scene 2. This includes offstage actors TRACY DYCK, SERGEANT MALONEY, MAYOR DEFEHR, MRS.

BENEDICT, and BEVERLY STEWART. This set-up will be repeated for each of the detective's versions of events. In this version, LE CAMBRIOLEUR is on stage, hidden behind/or under a set piece.

EUSTACHE: *(in recorded sound bite)* Le Cambrioleur was hiding in ze room ze whole time, you see, just wating for a chance to recover what I had taken from heem. Miss Shirley Holmes' pretentious call for attention from ze hallway was a very nice destraction. 'e was not here to steal everything, no, he merely wanted ze mask of Pharoah Tinamosen ze Fifth. You see, he thinks eet is part of hees collection now, and needed to get eet back. However, when ze lights went out, he could not reseest an even greater opportunity! Even though I bravely tried to capture ze villain, *(EUSTACHE unwittingly attacks TRENT TROWEL)* he eluded me in ze darkness. And so he took everyzing, even ze mayor's leetle dog. By ze time ze lights came back on, he had made hees escape.

Lights return to normal. All of the actors on stage freeze, except for the detectives who converge at center stage.

TROWEL: So he was there the whole time... that's why Tracy Dyck and her cop squad never saw him enter.

HOLMES: I commend you, Monsieur Eustache. That is a very plausible explanation of the events.

EUSTACHE: Thank you, mademoiselle.

HOLMES: Plausible, yet completely without evidence. In short: the wrong explanation.

EUSTACHE: What do you mean eet's wrong?

HOLMES: Because this is actually what happened.

The lights change colour, and all of the actors 'reset' to where they started in the last scene. In this pantomimed scene, instead of LE CAMBRIOLEUR, it is MAUREEN ARTEE and MR. SMITH who appear, and the gangsters from BIG BILL's gang rush in and steal things at the end.

HOLMES: *(in recorded sound bite)* I had been waiting for twelve and a half minutes outside the door for the opportune moment in which to make my entrance. The rescue of Beverly Stewart is a particular point of pride for me – let me diverge from this

narrative to explain that case to you. It had begun one night last February...

WATSON: Get on with it.

HOLMES: (*sound bite continues*) Right. I was on the verge of boredom, when who should walk past me? Maureen Artee! She met a nervous-looking postman at the door and left the hotel, but not without casting a contemptuous gaze my way. I deduced that she had planned a grand scheme, and therefore resolved to tell the arrogant police captain about it. But just as I entered the room, the lights went out. I was knocked over as people rushed into and out of the room – criminals under the guidance of that villainous woman. They took everything, just as Artee had instructed. When the lights came back, well, you know the rest.

Lights return to normal. All of the actors on stage freeze, except for the detectives who converge at center stage.

TROWEL: People rushing in? So there was more than one?

HOLMES: Oh, most definitely.

TROWEL: They must have been the thugs who beat me up in the dark.

EUSTACHE: Impossible. Le Cambrioleur works alone. Perhaps he moved so quickly zat you thought he was more zan one person.

HOLMES: It WAS more than one person. That is why your story is incorrect. Well, one of the reasons anyway.

EUSTACHE: (*mumbles to himself*) Bein, non, c'est impossible.

MS. BEATRICE: And here's why YOUR story is incorrect, Missy. Here's what actually happened.

The lights change colour, and all of the actors 'reset' to where they started in the last scene. In this pantomimed scene, ETHEL makes an appearance. The more loaded down she is with English muffins, the better.

MS. BEATRICE: (*in a recorded sound bite*) It was a horrible party, filled with noisy rapsCALLIONS and floozies displaying elbows and ankles for the world to see. Worst of all, there was no respectable food to eat, just fancy exotic nonsense like salted peanuts and bananas. Phooey. I had asked a waiter for a simple English muffin, but it never came. Nobody cared for poor Beatrice. Then some fool starts hollering from the hallway, and turns the lights out.

Now it was dark, but these eyes still work fine, you know, and I saw exactly what went on in there. You want to know who came waltzing into the room? (*ETHEL enters.*) *ETHEL!* And that's right, eating English muffins by the handful. She ate all but two of them too. When the lights came on, there they were on the table.

ETHEL exits. Lights return to normal. This time, all of the actors on stage stare at MS. BEATRICE

TROWEL: But who kidnapped Beverly Stewart and George? Who took the feather and the mask?

MS. BEATRICE: Is *THAT* what we're talking about? Sorry, didn't see. But those were good English muffins.

Everyone sighs in frustration. The actors from Scene 2 exit, leaving only the detectives and their sidekicks.

JANE: What about you, Mr. Trowel?

TROWEL: What about me?

EUSTACHE: What do you think happened?

HOLMES: Yes, pray tell, what is your explanation?

TROWEL: No story. Big Bill did it, though.

JANE: But how?

TROWEL: Don't know.

HOLMES: You have no evidence, or theories of probability, or deductions of any kind? You just...know?

TROWEL: That's about it, yup.

EUSTACHE: Hmph. Interesting technique.

HOLMES: Well, I still think my idea is by far the most reasonable one. I just need to find Maureen Artee somewhere in this city. Come along, Watson!

WATSON: Of course, Holmes.

HOLMES and WATSON exit.

EUSTACHE: Robberies are Le Cambrioleur's specialty. I am certain he ees involved, and I am certain I weel find him. Viens t'en, Monsieur Silencieux.

EUSTACHE and SILENCIEUX exit.

MS. BEATRICE: Well I'm going to find that no good Ethel and teach her a lesson. Hog all the muffins, will she? Let's go, Jane.

MS. BEATRICE and JANE exit.

TROWEL: Well I was in a jam. Three different leads, but which to follow? They all made sense. Well, maybe not the thing about the English muffins. But somehow, Big Bill was behind them all. And one question still nagged me: where had Clarice dusted off to? Had Big Bill learned that she was ratting him out? She could be in trouble. Or had she been in on it from the beginning? I didn't want to believe that, but I had to consider all the options. So do I go with the snooty French guy, the cranky old lady, or the smart and cute British chick? Huh. Suddenly the choice wasn't so hard. *(he calls to offstage)* Hey! Wait up, Shirley Holmes – Trent Trowel's coming with ya.

TRENT TROWEL runs offstage and the lights fade out.

ACT 2

Scene I

Fade in on TRENT TROWEL's office. MISS FLANNIGAN is smiling and quietly giggling while reading her love letter.

FLANNIGAN: Oh, you silly man. So clever. *(she giggles)* Even in a letter, you're a sweet-talker. *(she sighs)* Oh Reggie, soon we'll be together forever...

Enter TRENT TROWEL, SHIRLEY HOLMES, and WATSON. FLANNIGAN yelps in surprise.

TROWEL: Miss Flannigan – haven't ever known you to be jumpy like that.

FLANNIGAN: Oh, uh, sorry Mr. Trowel. I wasn't expecting... you.

TROWEL: So this is the ol' office. Truth is I don't spend that much time in this joint; I'm usually too busy on the street, where the action is.

HOLMES: Yes, of course. It is a ... lovely office. And perhaps you'll introduce us to...

TROWEL: Oh, right. That's Miss Flannigan. She keeps the place running while I'm out. This is Shirley Holmes.

HOLMES: Pleased to meet you.

HOLMES brusquely shakes MISS FLANNIGAN's hand.

TROWEL: And this is uh...

WATSON: Watson. Enchanté, mademoiselle.

WATSON takes MISS FLANNIGAN's hand in a charming, affectionate manner. TROWEL looks surprised.

HOLMES: Miss Flannigan, you have something in common with my dear assistant here.

WATSON and MISS FLANNIGAN suddenly pull away from each other.

WATSON & FLANNIGAN: What do you mean?

HOLMES: You have both been on holiday to California, recently.

WATSON & FLANNIGAN: And how do you know that?

HOLMES: Well, Watson, you told me.

FLANNIGAN: Not him – me!

HOLMES: Ah. Well, it's written all over you. The distinct pattern on your nails could only be the work of one Vicki Nguyen of Los Angeles. I've made a small study of nail polish and geography, and those are her trademark. Of course, it could be the work of a copycat, but then I noticed the fresh tan line on your wrist... as well as the palm-tree souvenir on your desk, that says California on it.

TROWEL: Yeah, she just got back from a vacation there. You got some skill, you know that?

WATSON: Well, it's a remarkable coincidence, is it not? But let's not bother the poor lady with your deductions, Holmes. Perhaps we should get what we came here for?

HOLMES: Quite right. Mr. Trowel, the maps you so graciously offered?

TROWEL: Right. (*he rummages around as he talks*) I still think it would be better if I came with you myself. I'm pretty much a walking map of this city, you know.

HOLMES: And as I told you, I prefer to work on my own.

TROWEL: Well what about him?

HOLMES: Oh, Watson doesn't count. He just sort of tags along. Like a puppy.

WATSON: Hmph.

TRENT TROWEL hands SHIRLEY HOLMES a map.

TROWEL: Yeah, I work alone too. It's so much easier that way.

HOLMES: So why the interest in breaking your solitary habits with me?

TROWEL: Well, I, uh...

He turns and speaks in his monologue everyone can hear.

TROWEL: Ah, this doll was onto me. She was so smart, she made me feel like a sap. But in a good way. And looks! Man, if I had a nickel for every time I saw a woman as beautiful as her, well, I'd have five cents. What was I supposed

to do, tell her that I loved her at first sight? What kind a reaction would that get?

The other characters show mixed reactions.

TROWEL: Ah, what would a classy babe like her see in a run-down deadbeat like Trent Trowel? Still, I was determined that she knew something about this case that I didn't yet. And I had to find out what it was.

HOLMES: Mr. Trowel, I... I do think it's best if I run this first part of the investigation on my own. But I shall be happy to share my findings with you once I have them. Good... Good day, Mr. Trowel.

HOLMES and WATSON exit.

TROWEL: And just like that she was gone. I could see that it was going to take some work to win her over. If I could only find something that she missed at the scene of the crime, I could impress her. Besides, Clarice had said Big Bill was up to something there, so he must have left some clue behind. *(he speaks to MISS FLANNIGAN)* Miss Flannigan, I'm going to go back and see what I can find out at the hotel.

FLANNIGAN: Alright, good luck.

TROWEL: Ha. Luck is for chumps.

TROWEL exits.

FLANNIGAN: Well, then you're going to need it.

Lights fade out.

Scene 2

Fade in on ballroom. Two JANITORS are cleaning the room with a broom and mop. As in Scene 1, LE CAMBRIOLEUR is hidden behind a set piece, only visible to astute observers.

JANITOR 1: For a party full of fancy types, they sure made a mess.

JANITOR 2: What was the party for anyway?

JANITOR 1: Ah, it was for this group of famous detectives. But get this: someone kidnapped the singer and stole all the stuff they had here.

JANITOR 2: No kidding?

JANITOR 1: Yeah, those smug detectives were all patting themselves on the back when BOOM – lights go out. When they get them back on, everything's gone – even the mayor's dog.

JANITOR 2: Heh, serves them right.

JANITOR 1: What do you mean?

JANITOR 2: Ah, they think they're so clever. It's good someone puts those detectives in their place. It's not like they're any smarter than us.

JANITOR 1: Yeah, you're right. I mean, think about this: how easy would it have been for US to do it, huh? They probably would never have found out!

JANITOR 2: Exactly! I mean, of all the people to suspect, why not us?

JANITOR 1: Right? I mean, power goes out – who's got access to the fuse box?

JANITOR 2: These guys.

JANITOR 1: And who knows every nook and cranny of this place and could stash the goods in a place no one would know? AND clean up the evidence?

JANITOR 2: These guys.

JANITOR 1: AND who would no one suspect because they're hard-working employees of this here establishment?

JANITOR 2: Hard-working? Hmm...

JANITOR 1: Well, employees, anyway?

JANITOR 2: And they didn't even come to question or interview us or nothing.

JANITOR 1: Nope. Why talk to us? We're just lowly janitors.

JANITOR 2: You know what? I say the next time an opportunity like this presents itself... we do it.

JANITOR 1: Do what? Steal all of the stuff?

JANITOR 2: Yeah, why not?

JANITOR 1: (*nods in thought*) Hmm...

Enter EUSTACHE and TRENT TROWEL.

EUSTACHE: I am glad I am not ze only one who is back to take a closer look. Zat trap-door has somesing to do eet, I am certain.

TROWEL: What are you two doing? This is a crime scene! You're not supposed to be cleaning up – you could be erasing important clues!

JANITOR 1: Oh! Uh, sorry.

JANITOR 2: We're just doing our jobs.

TROWEL: (*to EUSTACHE.*) Ah, what's the use? What do these palookas know about crime anyway?

The JANITORS look at each other and give a knowing smile before exiting.

EUSTACHE: Ze trap door ees steel sealed with ze floor wax. No one has been through eet yet.

TROWEL: Ah, those janitors went and replaced the burnt-out bulb Shirley Holmes noticed. It was probably important.

EUSTACHE: So, you like zat woman?

TROWEL: Huh? What gives you that idea?

EUSTACHE: Well, you said before...

TROWEL: I can see you're a perceptive guy, Eustache. Yeah, I guess you'd call it love.

EUSTACHE: Love? I only said "like."

TROWEL: Oh? Well, uh, that's what I said too then.

EUSTACHE: Her skeels are very impressive. However, for her to deesmees Le Cambrioleur so queekly, thees I cannot overlook.

TROWEL: And she wouldn't listen to me about Big Bill either.

EUSTACHE: Who ees zees Beeg Beel?

TROWEL: Big Bill is the kingpin of crime in this town. He's got his fingers in everything – racketeering, bootlegging, gambling rings, and a lot of smuggling. A real bad egg.

EUSTACHE: Someone ees coming. Hide! Queeckly!

EUSTACHE and TROWEL find cover. TONY enters stealthily.

EUSTACHE: (*whispers*) Who ees zat?

TROWEL: (*whispers*) That's one of Big Bill's henchmen. I've dealt with him before...

EUSTACHE pounces and grabs him from behind.

EUSTACHE: Aha! Got you!

TONY: Eh! What gives?

EUSTACHE: Who are you?

TONY: Tony! My name's Tony!

TROWEL: Aha. Also known as Tony the Snitch. Never have I come across a more hard-nosed, tight-lipped goon as this guy.

EUSTACHE: Oh, really? Tell us what ees going on here!

TONY: I ain't tellin' you nothin'. I'm especially not going to tell you about the secret room under the table.

EUSTACHE: Ees that so?

TONY: And I'm NOT telling you about how Big Bill's been having us sneak in there to plan something big for the last while.

TROWEL: You see – it's no use. We tried our best, but he'll never cooperate.

EUSTACHE: I hear more people coming. (*to TONY*) Keep quiet, you!

They take cover once again. VINNY, CANDY, MARIO, CLARICE enter.

VINNY: It's gotta be the funniest crime of the century! We never pulled off something half that good before!

CANDY: Yeah, right under their noses!

MARIO: Come on Clarice, isn't it hilarious?

CLARICE: (*depressed*) Yes, I suppose so.

EUSTACHE: (*whispered to TROWEL*) Ze creeminals!

TRENT TROWEL steps forward to begin his characteristic narration. The gangsters don't see him at first.

TROWEL: *(in his monologue everyone can hear)* There they were, Big Bill's cronies. And they had Clarice with 'em too.

EUSTACHE: *(whispered to TROWEL)* Non, non! Attendez!

CANDY: Did you say something, Mario?

TROWEL: This was the moment I've waited my whole career for. They were finally in my grasp!

MARIO: I didn't say nothin'!

VINNY: Well somebody's saying somethin'!

TROWEL: Finally, these guys were going to find justice at the hands of Trent Trowel!

CLARICE: Trent Trowel!

VINNY: Get him!

VINNY, CANDY and MARIO attempt to capture TRENT TROWEL. CLARICE yelps in terror. BIG BILL enters.

BIG BILL: Hold it.

Everyone freezes and looks at BIG BILL.

BIG BILL: So, Trent Trowel. We meet at last.

TROWEL: Big Bill.

BIG BILL: You been sticking your nose into our business for so long. And you know what? I'm sick of it. I'm done running from you.

TONY: Yeah!

MARIO: Tell 'em, boss.

TROWEL: I knew you were behind it all.

BIG BILL: Behind what?

TROWEL: The kidnapping of that canary, Beverly Stewart! And George!

EUSTACHE: And ze mask of Pharaoh Turamses ze fourth!

TROWEL: And that feather. Just give me the satisfaction and admit it before you silence us for good.

BIG BILL: Kidnapping? Silencing you for good? You see, that's what I'm talking about, guys. Every time a crime happens in this town, I get blamed for it. Like I'm some sort of monster!

VINNY: It's okay, boss.

CANDY: What do they know, anyway?

MARIO: Nobody understands you but us.

EUSTACHE: We know zat you are using ze trapdoor and planning somesing secret.

MARIO: Tony the Snitch? You been snitching again?

TONY: Nah, nah. I didn't say nothing about that. Well, except for what he just said, yeah.

CLARICE: Big Bill... I'm so sorry. It's all my fault. I went to Trent Trowel and told him that you were up to something in here. Please don't be mad.

BIG BILL: Ah, honey, I could never get mad at you. But how did you find out?

CLARICE: My friend, Darlene, told me. I was telling her how you said you were going to quit crime, but she knew you were up to something in here. She said it would be best if I told Trent Trowel about it and he would stop you. It's the only way you'd learn!

The henchmen gather threateningly around CLARICE.

MARIO: So that's how it is, huh?

VINNY: You sell us out to this private eye?

CANDY: No one betrays Big Bill.

TONY: Yeah, no one snitches! Especially about the flower shop!

MARIO, VINNY, and CANDY: (*angry at TONY*) Eh! Eh! Eh!

VINNY: Don't go talking about that!

BIG BILL: Guys, guys, enough. It's time I come clean for the woman I love. Clarice, I was gonna save this for your birthday, but here it is. I AM done with crime. I had nothing to do with that business yesterday. You wanna know what's going on down there? See for yourself. Boys?

MARIO and VINNY go to the “trapdoor” under the table, and return with large bouquets of flowers.

CLARICE: Oh, flowers!

MARIO: Yup – nothin’ but flowers!

EUSTACHE: Nothing but flowers – I do not believe zis! Excusez-moi!

EUSTACHE goes under the table to the imaginary room under the floor.

BIG BILL: I know how much you love flowers, so I sold away all of my, uh, business ventures, and put it toward setting up a country-wide chain of flower shops.

TROWEL: You have got to be kidding me.

BIG BILL: Nah, nah. It’s for real. They’re going to be called Clarice’s Chrysanthemums.

VINNY: That’s beautiful, boss.

CLARICE: Really? Oh, honey! I’m sorry I doubted you.

EUSTACHE returns from under the ‘room’ under the table.

EUSTACHE: Eef I had not seen eet weeth my own eyes, I would not believe eet. Zere is only a room full of flowers down zere.

TROWEL: But something doesn’t make sense here. Why keep them in a secret hideout under this hotel?

BIG BILL: Well, I used to keep, uh, other stuff down there. It’s a nice storage space – as good as any other. The owner, uh, what’s her name again?

CANDY: Mrs. Benedict.

BIG BILL: Right – she knows all about it. It’s completely legit.

TROWEL: (*aside*) Well, it seemed like Big Bill was clean. I knew I should be happy and relieved, but instead I felt as cheated as the day I found out Twinkle Twinkle Little Star was the same tune as Baa Baa Black Sheep. After all: what was Trent Trowel without Big Bill?

CLARICE: C’mon, hon. Can’t you do something to help him?

BIG BILL: I had no idea I was so important to you. You know what? Since I'm turning over a new leaf and all, I'd be glad to, uh, let you know about some of the shadier characters of this town. In exchange for you looking over certain details of my past. What do you say? There are still a lot of bad guys out there.

TROWEL: Big Bill was right. Justice still needed to be served. This town still needed someone to look after it. And with this case still unsolved, Trent Trowel still had work to do.

Fade out.

Scene 3

A street café. Fade in on MAUREEN ARTEE and MR. SMITH sitting together in quiet conversation. HOLMES and WATSON enter.

HOLMES: There she is, Watson. It seems she's not even attempting to hide from me.

WATSON: What shall we do, then?

HOLMES: I do not have enough proof against her yet. So, I shall engage her in conversation and attempt to trick her into revealing something. This could be difficult, however; she is a master at deception. I do think that I shall have the advantage, though. Observe the way she seems to be waiting for me to find her; this shows that she has contempt for my abilities. When one is too proud, Watson, one may take advantage of it.

WATSON: Indeed, Miss Holmes. Indeed.

HOLMES and WATSON approach MAUREEN ARTEE and SMITH.

HOLMES: Beautiful day for a dinner date, Miss Artee?

ARTEE: Miss Holmes, I was wondering when I would next see you. Still on the loose, are you?

HOLMES: On the loose? Shouldn't I be the one asking you that?

ARTEE: Should you? Hmm...

HOLMES: Interesting coincidence, you being here in this city during its biggest criminal scandal. And you are the postman she was leaving with – no doubt an accomplice.

ARTEE: You see, my dear John? Just what I told you she would do.

SMITH nods.

HOLMES: What on earth do you mean? I would do what?

ARTEE: That you would try to frame me for the crime, as you always do.

SMITH: I tried to stop you, Miss Holmes. I went to tell the city's most famous detective, Trent Trowel. Unfortunately, he wasn't interested in what I had to say. I'm sorry my dear, I tried.

HOLMES: Is that so? And what was it you wanted to say?

SMITH: That YOU are responsible for the crime last night!

WATSON: That's preposterous. Who would think Shirley Holmes could do something like that?

SMITH: Maureen knew it. On our first date last week she told me all about you, and how you hounded her constantly trying to prove she was some sort of master criminal.

HOLMES: But she is!

WATSON: Don't fall for her trickery, sir. She is the one who committed the crime.

ARTEE: Oh, Watson.

SMITH: How could she have? I was with her the whole time yesterday evening. We left for dinner, took a stroll in the park, and then saw a movie.

HOLMES: Of course she didn't do it herself – Maureen Artee would never stoop to getting her hands dirty in that way. She has a network of criminals working for her.

MAUREEN and SMITH look at each other and laugh.

SMITH: That is the silliest thing I've ever heard: network of criminals. I've only known Maureen a short time, but she's the sweetest, kindest person I know.

ARTEE: Aww. John, my sweet, could you be a dear and get me another one of these wonderful drinks?

SMITH: Of course, sweetie-pie.

WATSON: She may seem to be kind – but she's a villain. She's THE villain!

SMITH shakes his head and exits.

ARTEE: Really, Dr. Watson. Do calm yourself. We all know who the *real* villain is here.

WATSON: What? I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

ARTEE: Shirley Holmes, of course.

HOLMES: Nonsense.

WATSON: Yes, er, nonsense. Who would believe that?

ARTEE: Is it really so farfetched, Doctor? Don't you think it odd that Shirley Holmes is so good at knowing what criminals do? Since she knows our minds so well, it would not be a stretch to say that she is a criminal mastermind even greater than I.

HOLMES: It is through sheer deductive reasoning that I make the conclusions I do.

WATSON: Yes, yes of course. You do read a lot of psychological dissertations about the criminal mind, though. As if obsessed with how to commit crimes.

HOLMES: To know my quarry better, of course.

WATSON: Of course, of course. And...and you do know common police procedures and what they often overlook.

HOLMES: So that I can find those clues myself. Really, Watson, don't tell me that you are starting to believe this woman.

WATSON: No, no. It's just... interesting, that's all.

ARTEE: Yes, Doctor Watson. It's very interesting. It would be rather easy to convince others that this detective is so good at figuring out crimes because SHE is that one that commits them.

HOLMES: Listen, you're wasting your breath on Watson here – he is loyal to the end. And your little friend Mr. Smith is not even here, so you can drop the charade. I will find out your involvement in this – as I always do. So laugh all you want, but soon you shall be laughing in a jail cell. Come along, Watson.

WATSON: Yes. Yes, I'm coming.

HOLMES and WATSON exit. SMITH returns with two more drinks, but MAUREEN ARTEE gets up to leave.

SMITH: Oh? Where are we going? I thought you wanted...

ARTEE: We're not going anywhere – I'm leaving. I'm sorry, John, I think this relationship has run its course. It's time I get back to England and begin some real work, now that Shirley Holmes won't be there to stop me.

SMITH: What? I don't understand. Was it something I did?

ARTEE: You were wonderful, John, simply wonderful. You played your role beautifully. But I've a criminal empire to run, and I've been away too long already.

SMITH: You mean you ARE a criminal?

ARTEE: Oh yes.

SMITH: Then Holmes didn't do anything? You committed that kidnapping and robbery yesterday!

ARTEE: No, not I. And of course Holmes didn't do it, but I could see that someone was setting up a grand heist. No one can spot an opportunity for crime better than I. At first I thought of committing the robbery myself, and beating the unknown criminal to the punch. But when I figured out who the real criminal was, well, I came up with a much better idea. Rather than stealing a few trinkets to make Shirley Holmes look foolish, what a perfect chance to rid myself of that incorrigible nuisance for good. All I had to do was frame her for the crime someone else was already committing.

SMITH: Oh no. What have I done?

ARTEE: Oh don't let it bother you. What's she to you?

SMITH: She's an innocent woman!

ARTEE: Well, there's nothing you can do anyway.

SMITH: But you've told me everything – and I'm going to tell the police about you!

ARTEE: What are you going to tell them? I've done nothing illegal, well, not here at least. And the evidence will soon be stacked against her rather convincingly. Nothing you do will change people's minds – you've got nothing. You can't save her.

SMITH: Maybe not... but I have to try.

ARTEE: Oh, how adorable. Now I know why I 'fell for you' in the first place. Well, all the best. Toodles!

MAUREEN ARTEE exits.

SMITH: I knew this online dating thing wouldn't work out. Ugh, I've got to tell somebody, even if they don't believe me... I've got to tell them that Shirley Holmes is innocent.

Enter SERGEANT MALONEY.

MALONEY: (*singing to himself*) My Bonnie lies over the ocean, my Bonnie lies over the sea...

SMITH: Officer! Officer! I'm so glad you're here.

MALONEY: What is it, lad?

SMITH: I have important information about the crime at the Victoria Grand Hotel yesterday. The kidnapping and robberies!

MALONEY: Really? Well, let's hear it.

SMITH: Someone is going to be falsely accused! Innocent people are going to be framed for a crime they didn't commit.

MALONEY: Ah, I see. I'm really glad that you came to me, then! We're just dying to solve that case. Come with me, sir. Tell me everything you know...

They exit. Fade out.

Scene 4

Ballroom. MS. BEATRICE and JANE are in the room, seated on a bench. LE CAMBRIOLEUR is hiding on stage once again.

JANE: What are we doing here?

MS. BEATRICE: Waiting.

JANE: Waiting for what?

MS. BEATRICE: I'll know when I see it.

JANE: You still think Ethel did it, I suppose.

MS. BEATRICE: Of course. She told me so when I asked her.

JANE: How could she have told you – she's back in Newport.

MS. BEATRICE: No she's not, she's right here.

JANE: (*aside*) Oh, man, she's finally lost it. (*to MS. BEATRICE*) Is Ethel sitting on this bench with us right now, Aunt B?

MS. BEATRICE: Don't be silly. Not here on the bench. She's just gone to get some tea.

JANE: Sure she is. And she's got Beverly Stewart with her.

MS. BEATRICE: You still hung up on that country singer? No, why would she be with Ethel?

JANE: Because you think Ethel kidnapped her.

MS. BEATRICE: I never said that.

JANE: You've been saying the whole time that she did it.

MS. BEATRICE: No, I said she ate all the English muffins.

JANE: Oh brother. So who did the robbery and the kidnapping?

MS. BEATRICE: How am I supposed to know? Honestly, girl.

JANE: But shouldn't we be out looking for clues or something?

MS. BEATRICE: I prefer to let the clues come to me.

JANE: That makes no sense.

MS. BEATRICE: Just you wait and see, dear.

JANE: Well, I'm sure you'll be alright here on your own for a few minutes – I've got to go get something from our room. Be right back.

JANE exits. MS. BEATRICE does not realize she has left.

MS. BEATRICE: Oh I'll be fine, Jane. You know, you don't need to watch over me so much – I'm perfectly capable of taking care of myself. Sheesh – people don't give me nearly enough credit. Treating me as if I'm clueless – well! You just run along and do whatever it is you need to do.

ETHEL enters with tea and English muffins.

ETHEL: Here you go, you old bat.

MS. BEATRICE: Thanks, you old hag. Ugh, where'd you get these? They aren't as good as the ones from yesterday. I wish you hadn't eaten all of them!

ETHEL: I left you two on the table – right there.

MS. BEATRICE: And ate a dozen yourself.

ETHEL and MS. BEATRICE turn up their noses at each other.

ETHEL: So how's the garden coming this year? I can't seem to get my tomatoes to bloom properly... hopefully the groundskeeper can do something with them while I'm on this vacation with you.

MS. BEATRICE: With me? I invite you on a trip, and you spend most of your time gallivanting about on your own, doing who knows what.

ETHEL: There's so much to do! If you had your way, we'd just sit around this hotel the whole time. Besides, I don't want to get in your way; you're the big detective now – you've got this case to solve.

MS. BEATRICE: Oh, yes. I suppose I do.

ETHEL: Well, I'll leave you to it. I've got a bungee lesson in half an hour anyway. Bye, you old bat.

MS. BEATRICE: See you later, you old hag.

ETHEL exits, and HOLMES, EUSTACHE, and TROWEL enter.

TROWEL: Yeah, I got the same call. Watson said to come here to the ballroom right away.

EUSTACHE: *(to HOLMES)* I thought eet was all your idea, and he was speaking on your behalf.

HOLMES: No, I haven't seen Watson since this morning, when we confronted Maureen Artee. Unfortunately she was rather disobliging in my investigation, so I spent the rest of the day looking for clues around the city. Unsuccessfully, I might add.

MS. BEATRICE: Ha. And you were so certain.

HOLMES: It's not often I feel like I'm missing something important, but this is one of those times.

TROWEL: I'm just wondering why Watson would call all of us? Why not just talk to you?

Enter MAYOR DEFEHR, MRS. BENEDICT, SERGEANT MALONEY, WATSON, SILENCIEUX, and JANE. Extras dressed as police officers add an imposing atmosphere.

DEFEHR: There they are!

MRS. BENEDICT: Oh! Oh you villains!

EUSTACHE: What?

MRS. BENEDICT begins to hit TROWEL with her purse.

TROWEL: Lay off, lady!

DEFEHR: Hold on, Mrs. Benedict. Let's hear the whole story now. I'm still not convinced they're the criminals.

HOLMES: What are you talking about?

WATSON: Oh, Shirley Holmes, we know everything. You can drop the act already.

HOLMES: Whatever do you mean?

MALONEY: We know it was you. All of you!

MS. BEATRICE: What's going on here? Jane? Jane! Why won't you look at me?

JANE: I don't want to believe it, Aunt B. But I have to.

MALONEY: Listen up "Detectives." You're all under arrest for robbery and kidnapping. You played a nice little game, pretending to be detectives. Now we know that you are the crooks. Probably have been for years!

HOLMES: Absurd!

MALONEY: Mayor, this is how it went down...

The lights change colour, and all of the actors 'reset' to where they started in Scene 2, including TRACY DYCK and BEVERLY STEWART.

MALONEY: *(in a recorded sound bite)* The private detectives had it all planned out. To create a distraction, Shirley Holmes started yelling from the hallway. Meanwhile, Trowel snuck over and turned off the lights. Once they were out, Moustache grabs the mask; old lady Beatrice grabs her feather; Trowel grabs the dog, and Shirley Holmes grabs Miss Stewart. They hide the evidence, and then turn the lights back on. Then they pretend they don't know what happened.

Lights return to normal. TRACY DYCK exits. BEVERLY STEWART conceals herself under the table where the trap door is.

WATSON: And Shirley Holmes is the mastermind behind it all. It was all planned out.

HOLMES: Oh really, Watson!

WATSON: These detectives are the perfect criminals. They are so good at catching criminals because they are criminals themselves.

EUSTACHE: What would lead you to believe zis?

MALONEY: What, we were supposed to believe all those silly villain stories?

HOLMES: Watson, please. You've been deceived by Maureen Artee.

WATSON: No, not deceived. Shown the light.

HOLMES: You make all these claims, yet you have no evidence.

WATSON: Oh, there is evidence.

JANE: I found the feather in your suitcase upstairs, Aunt Beatrice!

MS. BEATRICE: Wha...wha? Wha?

MALONEY: And your buddy found the pharaoh's mask in your room, Inspector.

MONSIEUR SILENCIEUX holds up the mask and shakes his head, disappointed.

TROWEL: Ah, this is all a set-up. What about me? I don't have no dogs in my pocket.

DEFEHR: Yes, surely Trowel is innocent!

MISS FLANNIGAN enters with the dog carrier and dog.

FLANNIGAN: Sorry, Mr. Trowel. I can't cover for you anymore. It's not right what you're doing.

DEFEHR: Georgie! (to TROWEL) You FIEND!

He runs and gets the dog.

TROWEL: Miss Flannigan? What the?

FLANNIGAN: I heard the poor thing barking in your office. I had to do something.

TROWEL: I can't believe it, Miss Flannigan. I never thought you'd betray me.

FLANNIGAN: You betrayed yourself.

HOLMES: This can all be explained simply: someone planted this evidence on our persons.

MRS. BENEDICT: Which is what I thought at first.

MALONEY: But who had access to all of your locked rooms? We had to get Mrs. Benedict to open them all up with the master key.

MRS. BENEDICT: And there's only one of those. I keep it on me at all times.

HOLMES: Where is Miss Beverly Stewart then? I suppose she was in my room?

WATSON: I was relieved to find out that was not the case.

HOLMES: Thank you, Watson.

WATSON: But then I knew you'd cover your tracks better than any of your other criminal detective friends here. No, you'd have a better hiding spot than that.

HOLMES: Ha! And where would that be?

WATSON: In the place that was most obvious, but the one you convinced us not to bother looking. The trap door! See – there is no wax seal – there never was any wax seal – but we trusted your phony powers of observation. And I believe...that she is in there still.

EUSTACHE: Aha! You have slept up with your accusations. I looked in zere myself, and zere was no one.

WATSON: So you say.

WATSON opens the "trap door" and produces a disheveled and blindfolded BEVERLY STEWART. Everyone gasps.

MRS. BENEDICT: I don't believe it – Beverly Stewart!

STEWART: A song? Alright – hit it boys...

BEVERLY STEWART collapses.

DEFEHR: I've seen enough. Maloney, arrest them!

MALONEY and other officers round up the private detectives.



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