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Norman Maine Publishing

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P.O. Box 1400
Tallevast, FL 34270

Sureluck Holmes, Private Eye

FARCE/MURDER-MYSTERY. Sureluck Holmes has decided to quit his job as a private eye and become the manager of a linoleum store. In an effort to rekindle Sureluck's sleuthing skills, Joni Watson, his devoted secretary, urges Sureluck to join the members of the Nemesis Society at Mordred Manor to solve the murder of a fellow detective. When Sureluck arrives at Mordred Manor, he's introduced to the Nemesis members who include a southern-belle mystery writer, a small-town sleuth from Wisconsin, a couple of British secret agents, a psychic detective, a forensic pathologist, and a Belgian investigator. But even in a house full of "mastermind" detectives, it isn't long before the president of the Nemesis Society is murdered and the sheriff is poisoned in plain view! Luckily for Sureluck and the other sleuths, Joni has gone undercover as a nurse. With Joni's knack for finding clues and a bit of sheer luck, Sureluck may stand a chance of solving the murders before someone else turns up dead. Or not!

Performance Time: Approximately 60-75 minutes.

Characters

(5 M, 8 F)

- SURELUCK HOLMES:** Private eye who would rather manage a linoleum store than solve mysteries.
- JONI WATSON:** Sureluck's devoted secretary.
- RATZO MCNAB:** Seeking vengeance against Sureluck for sending his brother up the river.
- DRUMMOND DASHLEY:** President of the Nemesis Society.
- REGGIE STEVENS:** British secret agent.
- ANGEL STEVENS:** Reggie's wife, also an agent.
- CAMILLA COPE:** Southern belle and mystery writer.
- PATRICIA CRANDALL:** Forensic pathologist.
- HERMOINE PIROUETTE:** Belgian sleuth; has a French accent.
- MISS MAPLES:** Elderly amateur sleuth from Butterbun, Wisconsin.
- AURELIA WHISP:** Psychic detective.
- SCRUBBS:** Housekeeper.
- SHERIFF HIGGINS:** Local sheriff.

Set

The study of Mordred Manor. Décor of the room should suggest an old-fashioned, stuffy atmosphere. There is a fireplace up right and a bookcase up left. There is a stuffed raven, a large magnifying glass, a meerschaum pipe on the mantel, dusty old books, and an abundance of plants. A large floor-to-ceiling window dominates upstage center. Two portraits flank the window upstage: one is of Edgar Allan Poe and the other is of Arthur Conan Doyle. Three chairs are grouped around a small table down right. A small couch sits down left at an angle. Wing entrance DSL leads to a main entrance and hall with a stairway (unseen) to the upper floors. Wing entrance left leads to a dining room, kitchen, etc., also with access to the upstairs. NOTE: It is important that characters are able to exit behind the curtains while it appears the windows stay closed. A simple slit in the flat can accomplish this.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Sureluck's office, early afternoon. Played before the curtain. There is a small desk and chair.

Scene 2: Study of Mordred Manor, 8 p.m.

Scene 3: Study of Mordred Manor, the following morning.

ACT II

Scene 1: Study of Mordred Manor, later that afternoon.

Scene 2: Study of Mordred Manor, a few minutes later.

Props

Small desk	Doctor's bag
File folders	Nurse uniform, for Joni
Large magnifying glass	Medicine bottle
Fireplace with mantel	Spoon
Stuffed raven	Black rose
Meerschaum pipe	Curtains
Fake houseplants	Handkerchief
Portrait of Edgar Allen Poe	Small towel
Portrait of Arthur Conan Doyle	Small card
Sign that reads, "Holmes Detective Agency"	2 Cell phones
Letter	Pill
Lamp with shade	Mug of coffee
Handgun	Keys
Papers	Water glasses
Water pistol	Bag of potato chips
Tarot cards	Old newspaper clipping
Small table	Note
3 Chairs	Microphone
Small couch	Box
Rocking chair	Deck of cards
Knitting	Fireplace tools including a poker
Bookcase	Blanket
Champagne glasses	Pillow
Old dusty books	Apron, for Scrubbs
Rope	Cigarette
Walkie-talkie	Linoleum samples

Sound Effects

Bell toll
Thunder
Lightning
Crunching sound (potato chips being eaten)
Gunshot

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"I want your boss...
D-E-D."

- Rizzo

Act i Scene 1

(AT RISE: Sureluck's office, played before the curtain. There is a small desk cluttered with files and junk on it and a chair behind it. Another chair sits next to the desk. Sureluck stands behind the desk holding up a sign against the stage curtain. The sign reads, "Holmes Detective Agency." Joni enters SL carrying a sealed envelope.)

JONI: *(Noticing the sign.)* Oh, gosh! It came!

SURELUCK: *(Bored.)* Yeah.

JONI: It's real classy, don't you think?

SURELUCK: *(Bored.)* Yeah.

JONI: *(Proudly.)* And very professional! It's gonna look just peachy hanging up outside. I mean, we'll get lots and lots of business when people see that sign.

SURELUCK: Oh, sure.

JONI: Hey...what's wrong, Sureluck?

SURELUCK: Look, Joni, it's no good.

JONI: Whatdaya mean? They spelled everything right!

SURELUCK: I mean the whole thing. I don't belong here.

JONI: Oh, Sureluck, we're not gonna start that again!

SURELUCK: Well, I don't!

JONI: Detection's in your blood!

SURELUCK: I'll get a transfusion then.

JONI: You come from a long line of the most distinguished detectives who ever lived! Your great, great, great, great grandfather Sherlock...well, I think everything that can be said about him has already been said!

SURELUCK: One "great" too many.

JONI: What?

SURELUCK: He's only three "greats" removed from me. And just because he could solve every puzzle that came along doesn't mean that I'm cut out of the same cloth.

JONI: But you are! You're a terrific detective!

SURELUCK: Oh, sure. I almost got killed wrapping up that last case! If Stinky Sassafras had aimed a little more to the left, he'd have hit my heart instead of those linoleum samples I had in my pocket.

JONI: Oh, Stinky was a wuss.

SURELUCK: Yeah, you slammed him a good one and grabbed that gun like a pro.

JONI: Oh, Sureluck, you know I'd never let anything happen to you!

SURELUCK: But that's what I'm talking about! You're always saving my neck.

JONI: Not always! I didn't do a thing to solve the Bateman Case.

SURELUCK: Yeah...that was real exciting. Mrs. Bateman's lost cat. All I did to solve that one was open a can of tuna and stick it outside her door.

JONI: Well! There was the Williams Case.

SURELUCK: The missing ring? That was a real challenge...

JONI: You found the ring, didn't you? All by yourself?

SURELUCK: Yeah...the eight year old finally told me he swallowed it, and all I had to do was—

JONI: The important thing is you got the ring back and they paid!

SURELUCK: Whoopee!

JONI: Sureluck! Now stop this! You're too young to have a mid-life crisis! We'll just get that sign hung up outside and then you can take me out to dinner and dancing.

SURELUCK: Oh, Joni, I don't feel like dancing.

JONI: You promised!

SURELUCK: Couldn't you just take money for a bonus for knocking Stinky Sassafras out?

JONI: No! I want dinner and dancing. Tonight!

SURELUCK: All right. But tomorrow...

JONI: What about tomorrow?

SURELUCK: I've been talking to Mr. Stanley.

JONI: (*Fearfully.*) Oh, no!

SURELUCK: Oh, yes! He wants to open a new linoleum store, and he says I'd make the perfect manager!

JONI: Sureluck!

SURELUCK: He says I know my floors. And you know something? Linoleum doesn't fight back or shoot at you!

JONI: But you're so brave and talented! Wouldn't you rather stop criminals in their tracks?

SURELUCK: Sure! On slick linoleum.

JONI: All right...all right...you don't have to decide this minute. We got a letter.

SURELUCK: Toss it.

JONI: It's from the Nemesis Society.

SURELUCK: The what?

JONI: Don't you remember Lt. Anderson telling us about them? If the cops can't solve a crime, they turn it over to the Nemesis Society. They can solve anything.

SURELUCK: They can, huh?

JONI: Nobody even knows who's in the Nemesis Society, but they've put lots and lots of criminals behind bars. Criminals who thought for sure they'd committed the perfect crimes.

SURELUCK: They probably want to send me up the river for impersonating a detective.

(Joni opens the envelope.)

JONI: Hmmmm! There's nothing in here but a blank piece of paper.

SURELUCK: Oh, brother! Oldest trick in the book! *(Sureluck takes the shade off of the lamp.)* Hold it up to the light bulb.

JONI: Why?

SURELUCK: Go ahead.

JONI: Oh, my gosh! It's a letter! The words have shown up!

SURELUCK: In this business, apply a little heat and you can find out anything you want to know. So, what's it say?

JONI: *(Reads.)* "Dear Sherlock Holmes." *(To Sureluck.)* They spelled your first name wrong.

SURELUCK: Who doesn't?

JONI: I like the way you spell your first name. Sureluck.
You're sure to have luck.

SURELUCK: Exactly what my folks said when they dragged me in here and sat me at the desk and told me to "Go get 'em, Son!"

JONI: Awwww, you must have been so cute back then!

SURELUCK: It was last year when my dad retired!

JONI: Oh, well, now, listen to this. (*Reads.*) "The Nemesis Society has an opening for a new member, and considering your pedigree, we ask that you consider joining. We will host a weekend meeting at Mordred Manor so that you can meet our members and we can get to know you. Arrive Friday evening at eight." (*To Sureluck.*) Gosh! The letters all disappeared! Gee, we'd better find out where Mordred Manor is.

SURELUCK: Look, Joni, I got an important meeting with a linoleum distributor on Saturday morning, so count me out of that.

JONI: Sureluck! This is the chance of a lifetime! You'll be with the best of the best!

SURELUCK: I sure will! I'll be picking the samples I want for my new store!

JONI: (*Angrily.*) Sureluck Holmes! I think...I think...

SURELUCK: What? What do you think?

JONI: I think you're an idiot!

SURELUCK: Look, Joni, you're not going to be out of a job! I'll make you head cashier!

RATZO: (*Off left.*) Holmes! Are you in there, you bum?

JONI: Oh, gosh!

RATZO: (*Off left.*) You better say your prayers!

JONI: Hide!

(*Sureluck dives under the desk as Ratzo enters SL, gun drawn. Joni steps in front of desk.*)

RATZO: Where is he?

JONI: Who?

RATZO: Holmes!

JONI: Do you have an appointment?

RATZO: *(Waving the gun.)* This says I don't need no appointment!

JONI: Well, I'm sorry, but Mr. Holmes is out on a case right now and won't be back until...later.

RATZO: I'll wait!

JONI: Later next week! It's a very long-distance case. Is there anything I can help you with?

RATZO: Not really. I just want your boss... *(Spells.)* ...D-E-D.

JONI: *(Spells.)* D-E-D? I don't quite understand.

RATZO: Dead, lady! Dead! He sent my brother Big Eddie up the river for a long, long time! And I intend to send your boss down river for an even longer time!

JONI: Big Eddie? I don't seem to recall—

RATZO: It wasn't Eddie's fault that his three businesses burned up the same night. Lightning could strike three times. There's nothin' to say Eddie was trying to cash in on his 10-million-dollar insurance policy.

JONI: Oh, that's the case where Mr. Holmes found all those cans of gasoline in Big Eddie's car, and all those matches and all those phone calls to Sammy the Snake and Lulu the Louse telling them when to set the fires?

RATZO: Yeah, that's the case.

JONI: Well, now, Mr.—

RATZO: Ranzo. Just call me Ranzo!

JONI: Well, now, Mr. Ranzo, I certainly will tell Mr. Holmes you stopped by.

RATZO: I'd appreciate that. *(Ranzo cordially moves left as Joni picks up the gun from desk, which has lain unnoticed behind papers. Ranzo suddenly halts and turns. Angrily.)* Hey, wait a second! I came here to get Holmes, and that's just what I'm gonna—

(Joni aims the gun at him.)

JONI: Oh, Mr. Ranzo, don't make me shoot you.

RATZO: Well, I...ah...

JONI: I'll tell Mr. Holmes you stopped by.

RATZO: Yeah? And tell him I'll get him...and I'll get him soon! Just not when you're around! *(Exits SL.)*

JONI: It's all right, Sureluck. He's gone!

(Sureluck comes out from under the desk.)

SURELUCK: Thanks again, Joni!

JONI: Good thing I hadn't given this water pistol to my nephew yet.

SURELUCK: What am I gonna do? He sounded like he means business.

JONI: You'll be awfully easy to find at a linoleum store. But he'll never find you at Mordred Manor!

(Blackout.)

Scene 2

(AT RISE: The study of Mordred Manor, 8 p.m. Dashley, the leader of the group, stands in front of the desk. Aurelia sits tensely in a chair right laying tarot cards on the small table in front of her. Camilla lounges on the couch. Hermoine sits in a chair right. Miss Maples sits in a rocking chair down left, knitting. Patricia sits in a chair right. Angel paces nervously up right. Reggie stands left leafing through volumes from the bookcase. Everyone has a filled champagne glass near at hand.)

DASHLEY: And now, members of the Nemesis Society, I ask that you raise your glasses for our annual toast. *(All but Angel raise their glasses.)* Angel?

REGGIE: Come along, darling! Champagne never hurt anyone!

ANGEL: I don't like it!

CAMILLA: You don't like champagne? Why, hon, I never thought I'd hear such words slip from a lady's mouth!

ANGEL: It's not champagne I don't like. It's...it's...

DASHLEY: Oh, Angel, my pet...none of us likes that. But we'll come to that later. For now, we owe it to ourselves to raise our glasses in honor of our many successes this year!

REGGIE: Hear! Hear!

PATRICIA: I think we did a particularly clever job cornering the San Antonio Strangler.

HERMOINE: If you had not analyzed zat hair under zee fingernails of zee final victim we never would have discovered zee killer was a chimpanzee!

MISS MAPLES: One trained by that odious undertaker who just wanted more business.

ANGEL: What some people won't do for a buck!

AURELIA: And we must not forget the Cantonville Corpse.

CAMILLA: Why, if you hadn't read them cards of yours right, Aurelia, we'd never have guessed that the killer was a psychic.

AURELIA: It takes one to know one!

CAMILLA: Just what my mama used to say! And how about the Moosehead Murders!

REGGIE: I say! Dashley must take credit for that one!

DASHLEY: (*Trying to be humble.*) Oh, well, it was the tracks in the snow that really gave it all away! He thought he could wear a smaller-sized shoe to throw the police off the track—

PATRICIA: Which it did!

DASHLEY: But our tests confirmed with a smaller shoe he sank into the snow deeper than he would have with his actual size.

MISS MAPLES: And to think he cut off several toes so he'd fit into those shoes!

HERMOINE: A couple of million bucks...zees is what you call a "big payoff," no?

DASHLEY: And hats off to you, Hermoine, for ferreting out the Poughkeepsie Poisoner.

HERMOINE: I had zee help of my colleagues here!

PATRICIA: Once we determined the poison had come from a plant that only grows in Malaysia—

HERMOINE: And zee Poughkeepsie zoo jungle house—

PATRICIA: It wasn't too hard to pin the tail on that donkey—the zookeeper.

HERMOINE: To zink! He wanted to collect all zat insurance he took out on his wife so he could buy another elephant for zee zoo!

MISS MAPLES: He reminded me of Mrs. Culpepper.

REGGIE: Another small-town parallel, Miss Maples?

MISS MAPLES: You must forgive me, but living in Butterbun, Wisconsin, gives me a perspective on life you big city people don't quite have. You see, human nature is so...apparent...in a small town. And Mrs. Culpepper loved dogs. She loved them so much she ended up having 23 dogs

running around in her yard, her house, everywhere. You can imagine the neighbors! Well, when Mrs. Culpepper bought number 24, a little Jack Daniels Terrier...

REGGIE: I do believe it's a Jack Russell Terrier, Miss Maples.

MISS MAPLES: Oh, why, yes, how Freudian of me. Anyway, number 24 was the straw that broke the camel's back. That Jack Russell led the dogs in a revolt against their appalling conditions and they ran Mrs. Culpepper off her own property.

CAMILLA: Why, hon, you sure do spin a tall one.

AURELIA: The Kawasaki Killings was no tall one.

ANGEL: (*Sadly, at the point of tears.*) So we've come to it finally.

REGGIE: Now, angel, darling...

DASHLEY: It's all right, Reggie. We must toast Sam for solving that case.

ANGEL: Who else but Sam Slade would have driven a motorcycle at 150 miles an hour on a winding mountain road to capture the guy who was picking off bikers every time they left Kermit's Chili Hideout?

PATRICIA: What were there, 13 victims?

MISS MAPLES: A baker's dozen.

DASHLEY: Here's to Sam! We'll never see the likes of him again!

AURELIA: His spirit calls out for justice, Dashley! Justice!

HERMOINE: We are working on it, Aurelia.

CAMILLA: But not fast enough. I sure do miss Sam. You ever notice how he had the broadest shoulders? The slimmest waist? The most delicious smirk? The bluest eyes? The deepest voice? The strongest hands? The—

PATRICIA: Stop it before you set that couch on fire, Camilla.

HERMOINE: You and he...l'amour toujours?

CAMILLA: You got that first part right! It was me and him...and I'm gonna find out who killed him before I...I...

(Camilla dissolves into tears. Miss Maples moves to the couch, sits, and holds Camilla's hand.)

MISS MAPLES: Oh, my dear...you remind me so of Miss Granger in Butterbun...and how distraught she was when her prized rooster was torn to shreds by a nasty old fox.

(Camilla wails louder.)

DASHLEY: Miss Maples, I don't think a small-town parallel is in order here.

ANGEL: No! But action is!

DASHLEY: First we toast our successes!

REGGIE: 'Bout time, old chap!

DASHLEY: To the Nemesis Society!

ALL: The Nemesis Society!

(Everyone drinks. Cautiously, they each look to one another as if waiting to see who is poisoned.)

PATRICIA: *(Nervously.)* What's wrong?

HERMOINE: [Nozing!] [Nozing!] *[Nothing.]*

ANGEL: Why should there be anything wrong?

REGGIE: Just because poor Sam died...

CAMILLA: That sure don't mean we're all in for it. Does it?

MISS MAPLES: Certainly not. Sam died in his bed.

DASHLEY: And the door was locked.

PATRICIA: Only his fingerprints were on the lock.

HERMOINE: Or anywhere else in zee room!

ANGEL: But he was poisoned! There was enough mercury in his system to fill a hundred thermometers!

REGGIE: Now, Angel, darling...maybe he just had a bad piece of fish.

ANGEL: He was murdered!

DASHLEY: But there were no marks on the body...no syringe found anywhere...no glass or anything which contained any poison.

MISS MAPLES: And the only thing in his stomach were a few chili cheese fries.

ANGEL: So? Are the world's greatest detectives stumped?

(They all look at each other embarrassedly.)

PATRICIA: Not a single clue to help us!

AURELIA: You're wrong, Patricia. You're so wrong. There was the rose. The black rose.

MISS MAPLES: That's right! A single black rose in the center of Mr. Slade's bedroom floor.

DASHLEY: The police said it must have been a joke from a jilted girlfriend.

PATRICIA: In very bad taste, if you ask me.

REGGIE: Well, jilted girlfriends are known to try to snap back, if you know what I mean.

ANGEL: And what would you know about it, Reggie? Have you jilted someone?

REGGIE: Oh, darling, of course not! I'm just speaking...well, in general.

MISS MAPLES: Reminds me of Miss Lipcott.

PATRICIA: Is she the one with the pig?

MISS MAPLES: Oh, no! Miss Lipcott was all set to marry Brian Voss, but then he got cold feet and called off the wedding.

HERMOINE: She did not take zee news well?

MISS MAPLES: I should say not. One night she snuck into his bedroom while he was asleep, and she had a chainsaw and she proceeded to—

(Scrubbs bursts in SL.)

SCRUBBS: Oh, my gosh! Oh, my gosh!

DASHLEY: Scrubbs! What do you mean bursting in on us without knocking?!

REGGIE: Really! That is the first thing the agency should have told you!

SCRUBBS: I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

MISS MAPLES: Can't you see the poor girl's frightened?

HERMOINE: What has happened?

SCRUBBS: I heard noises! Strange noises! Like somebody trying to break in!

PATRICIA: Not the press, I hope!

AURELIA: Oh, dear! I don't even have lipstick on!

SCRUBBS: I don't know who it is, but I heard a bang...and then a voice...an angry voice!

REGGIE: I say, Dashley...ought we go investigate?

DASHLEY: *(Nervously.)* I...I...well, it could be a dog.

SCRUBBS: No dog I ever heard says words like that!

ANGEL: Honestly! Do I have to do everything? *(Charges off SL.)*

REGGIE: Darling! Darling, do be...careful!

ANGEL: *(From off left.)* Who are you? What do you want?!
(All on stage cringe fearfully. Some grab whatever weapon might be close to them. Sureluck bursts in SL followed by Angel.) I said, "Who are you?"

(Sureluck races behind the desk and hides under it.)

DASHLEY: Oh, dear!

(Ratzo enters SL, a rope in his hands.)

RATZO: Where is he? Holmes, I'm gonna get you!

HERMOINE: *(Points right.)* He went zataway!

RATZO: Hey, thanks, lady! *(Ratzo moves right, then stops and turns back.)* But if you're lyin', I'm gonna plug each 'n every one of you!

REGGIE: Rather hard with a rope, old boy!

RATZO: Oh, a wiseacre, huh?

ANGEL: Don't antagonize him, Reggie!

RATZO: Yeah...don't agonize me or I might do somethin' you'll regret. And you see Holmes, tell him Ranzo's on his tail! *(Ranzo races off SR.)*

SURELUCK: *(From under the desk.)* Is he gone?

DASHLEY: Mr. Holmes, I presume?

(Sureluck rises slowly, nervously. Higgins enters SL.)

HIGGINS: All right, what's goin' on here?

PATRICIA: Are you the...police?

HIGGINS: Sheriff Andy Higgins, ma'am.

DASHLEY: Well, I can assure you, Sheriff Higgins, nothing here is amiss.

HIGGINS: Looks like you got a couple of misses here. *(To Camilla.)* How do you do, ma'am?

CAMILLA: *(Flattered.)* Well, Sheriff, I do declare, ain't you the cutest thing since Barney Fyfe?

HERMOINE: To what do I owe zees pleasure, Sheriff?

HIGGINS: A foreigner, huh? You ain't a Ruskie, are you?

HERMOINE: Belgian, mon cher Sheriff.

HIGGINS: Just as bad. So I wanna know how come I got two cars racin' up this mountain road like it's the Daytona 500! And they both turn in at Mordred Manor!

DASHLEY: Mr. Holmes?

SURELUCK: Some guy was chasing me.

HIGGINS: He was, huh?

SURELUCK: Road rage.

HIGGINS: That so?

SURELUCK: I could have been killed. But then I saw the lights here, and I thought maybe I'd be safe here.

HIGGINS: You might be. You might not. What're you all doing here?

DASHLEY: Just friends...having a friendly weekend.

HIGGINS: (*Looking around.*) Never been inside here before. I didn't think anybody lived here.

PATRICIA: It's our weekend getaway.

HIGGINS: (*To Camilla.*) Every weekend?

CAMILLA: Oh, why, you forward lil' ole thing, you! 'Course not every weekend. We take a few off so we can –

DASHLEY: Tend to our business.

HIGGINS: What is your business?

ANGEL: Look, Sheriff, you don't have any business interrogating us. You ought to be looking for Ronald Road Rage.

HERMOINE: (*Points right.*) He went zataway!

HIGGINS: How do I know it's not a trap?

PATRICIA: (*Points left.*) Then go thataway!

ANGEL: (*Tiredly.*) Just go.

HIGGINS: I'll go...but I'm keepin' my eye on this place. There's somethin' funny goin' on here. I can feel it in my bones.

MISS MAPLES: Some Icy Hot will take care of that, Sheriff.

HIGGINS: Hardee-har-har. (*Heard from Higgins's shoulder walkie-talkie, "Sheriff? You there, Sheriff?" Into walkie-talkie.*) Yeah, I'm here. (*Heard from walkie-talkie, "Mrs. Benton just called in. She's hysterical." Into walkie-talkie.*) Jeeves is up in a tree again? (*Heard from walkie-talkie, "You got it." Into walkie-talkie.*) I'm on my way. (*Higgins moves left.*)

REGGIE: Poor woman's butler is caught in a tree?

HIGGINS: It's her cat. (*Ominously.*) But I think I'm going to have some bigger fish to fry. (*Higgins exits SL.*)

HERMOINE: Zut alors! What can he mean by zat?

ANGEL: Don't worry. He couldn't tell a catfish from a shark.

CAMILLA: I think he's kind of cute.

PATRICIA: Camilla, you think anything in pants is cute.

DASHLEY: (*Clears his throat.*) Excuse me, but I think we ought to introduce ourselves to our potential newcomer, Sureluck Holmes.

REGGIE: (*To Dashley.*) Elementary, my dear Watson.

SURELUCK: Oh, she's not here.
DASHLEY: Oh, so you have a "Watson"?
SURELUCK: My secretary, Joni. But she's busy this weekend.
CAMILLA: Such a shame!
DASHLEY: Allow me to make the introductions, Mr. Holmes.
SURELUCK: Oh, Mr. Holmes is my father. I'm Sureluck.
DASHLEY: Well, then, Sureluck, this is Reggie Stevens and
his wife, Angel. They're with MI-5, 6, 7, and 8.
REGGIE: If you forget my name, just call me 008.
ANGEL: And I'm 001.
SURELUCK: Gosh!
DASHLEY: I'm sure you've heard of Hermoine Pirouette?
HERMOINE: Enchanté.
SURELUCK: Oh, yeah...you're French.
HERMOINE: Belgian!
CAMILLA: Like the waffle.
DASHLEY: Meet Camilla Cope.
CAMILLA: Author of 45 mystery thrillers based on cases I
have personally solved.
SURELUCK: Gosh! (*Aurelia approaches Sureluck and takes his
hand.*) What are you doing?
AURELIA: You...you have his spirit...you have his cunning!
You will solve the crime! Your aura precedes you!
DASHLEY: Aurelia Whisp.
REGGIE: Tarot cards, Ouija boards, tea leaves.
MISS MAPLES: But she gets results, Reggie.
SURELUCK: Can I have my hand back?
AURELIA: Yes...you'll need it! Do you have a gun? (*Sureluck
shakes his head no.*) Well, you'll think of something else.
PATRICIA: (*Extends her hand.*) Patricia Crandall, Sureluck.
Pleased to meet you. I'm the forensics expert here, so if you
find a corpse, let me know, and I'll take it from there.
DASHLEY: And finally we've got Miss Maples.
MISS MAPLES: From Butterbun, Wisconsin.
SURELUCK: Crime capital of the world, huh?

MISS MAPLES: Don't laugh! You remind me of Jeremy Overton, a nice young man who always had something snappy to say. That was until the town grocer put him in a meat cooler and—

DASHLEY: Miss Maples solves crimes by drawing small-town parallels to big city situations. And there you have it.

SCRUBBS: You forgot me.

DASHLEY: The housekeeper, Scrubbs.

SCRUBBS: You need anything, let me know. I got all the keys.

DASHLEY: That will be all, Scrubbs.

(Scrubbs curtsseys badly and exits SL, almost bumping into Joni, who enters wearing a nurse's uniform and carrying a doctor's bag.)

JONI: There you are, Mr. Holmes.

DASHLEY: That's his father.

JONI: *(To Sureluck.)* Didn't expect to see me, did you?

SURELUCK: No, I didn't...Ms...Ms...

JONI: Grimschtick.

SURELUCK: Grimschtick?

JONI: Your nurse! It's time for your nerve tonic!

SURELUCK: What nerve tonic?

(Joni pulls a bottle from her bag along with a spoon. She pours some medicine into the spoon as she rattles on.)

JONI: Oh, he always has to play this silly game. What nerve tonic? Ever since that last case, you know, Dr. Strangelove has had you on nerve tonic. *(To others.)* He's a mess without it!

PATRICIA: Don't let us stop you, Sureluck.

JONI: Here we are! Open wide!

(Joni grabs Sureluck's nose and forces him to take the medicine.)

SURELUCK: Yuck!

JONI: And how do we expect to get better if we don't take our medicine and get complete rest?

DASHLEY: Oh, but there's no rest for the wicked, ma'am. Sureluck, here, must solve a murder.

SURELUCK: I must?

JONI: I forbid it!

SURELUCK: Whose murder?

CAMILLA: Poor Sam's.

MISS MAPLES: Sam Slade's murder. He reminded me of—

ANGEL: He died last week in his apartment.

REGGIE: In his locked bedroom.

AURELIA: He was poisoned!

PATRICIA: But no one knows how the poison was administered.

DASHLEY: The only clue was a single black rose lying on the floor. If you wish to enter the Nemesis Society as a full-fledged member, you must solve this crime.

SURELUCK: *(Nervously.)* Oh, well...piece of cake.

JONI: Mr. Holmes!

DASHLEY: And it must be done by Sunday as the bell tolls noon.

SURELUCK: What bell?

(A loud bell tolls.)

JONI: That bell!

(Scrubbs enters SL. She hides a black rose behind her back.)

SCRUBBS: Dinner is served! And this came for Mr. Drummond.

(Scrubbs holds out the rose. Everyone gasps.)

DASHLEY: For me?

SCRUBB: That's what the card says.

ANGEL: Where'd you find this?

SCRUBB: Knock on the back door. When I opened it, nobody was there. Just this lying on the stoop.

(Sureluck and Joni hide behind curtains as Angel, Reggie, Miss Maples, Aurelia, Hermoine, and Scrubbs race off SL. Camilla, not realizing Sureluck and Joni are hiding in the room, grabs Dashley.)

CAMILLA: What's the rush, Dashley?

DASHLEY: There might be some trace of who left this!

CAMILLA: Maybe I did.

DASHLEY: I seriously doubt you'd do this to a rose.

CAMILLA: Ain't you just sweet as Alabama iced tea!

DASHLEY: Now, Camilla, really...

CAMILLA: Oh, Dashley...why do we keep dancin' around like this?

DASHLEY: Camilla, I've told you before...you're just a bit too...

CAMILLA: Forward?

DASHLEY: Well, in a word, yes.

CAMILLA: I see something I want, and I go for it!

DASHLEY: I'm not like a puppy in a window.

CAMILLA: I think you're the cutest little puppy in the whole pet shop.

DASHLEY: You tell that to every man you meet! Next it'll be Sureluck!

CAMILLA: Oh, he's cute all right, but he'd take some breakin' in. I prefer a pet who's housetrained.

DASHLEY: Really, Camilla! That's insulting. Go into dinner!

CAMILLA: Meet me on the terrace. Midnight.

(Camilla moves left, turns back, and blows him a kiss. She exits. Dashley takes out a handkerchief and wipes his forehead. Patricia enters SR.)

PATRICIA: Not hungry, Dashley?

DASHLEY: I was just...just...on my way in.
PATRICIA: Any idea who could have sent the rose?
DASHLEY: None whatever.
PATRICIA: Maybe it was me?
DASHLEY: Why would you do that?
PATRICIA: Because you still haven't paid me back, Dashley.
You still owe me all that money you borrowed last year.
DASHLEY: I...I was just...waiting for this meeting.
PATRICIA: Dashley, quit stalling. I want the money!
DASHLEY: You'll get it.
PATRICIA: When?
DASHLEY: Tomorrow. I promise! I'll write you a check
tomorrow!
PATRICIA: Cash, Dashley. Your checks bounce like jumping
beans.

*(Patricia exits SL. Again Dashley wipes his forehead with his
handkerchief. Angel enters SL.)*

ANGEL: Dashley! Have you got it?
DASHLEY: Oh, Angel, my dear, I was hoping we'd have a
few minutes alone.
ANGEL: Have you got it?
DASHLEY: Upstairs...in my nightstand. But let me tell you, it
wasn't easy.
ANGEL: Why? Did Reggie contact you?
DASHLEY: Oh, why, no, my dear! Absolutely not!
ANGEL: I'll bet.
DASHLEY: I have been the soul of discretion.
ANGEL: So, what's been going on between him and 005?
DASHLEY: Tut, tut, not till I see the green!
ANGEL: After dinner...eleven...your room. I'll have a check.
DASHLEY: Cash. I only accept cash.

(Reggie enters SL.)

REGGIE: Oh, here you are. Dinner is about to be served, Angel. You wouldn't want to miss it, would you?

ANGEL: Of course not, darling.

REGGIE: And Dashley...I wouldn't put too much worry into that silly rose. I'm sure it's just some kind of stupid joke.

DASHLEY: Yes...yes...stupid. That's all.

(Dashley exits SL.)

ANGEL: Coming, darling?

(Reggie moves to the rose.)

REGGIE: I'll be along. Don't want to leave a mess for the maid, you know.

(Ashley exits SL in a huff. Reggie picks up the rose and looks at the card. Miss Maples enters SR, drying her hands on a small towel.)

MISS MAPLES: Oh, why, Mr. Stevens. Bending over like that, you remind me of Horace Van Skulk.

REGGIE: Really, Miss Maples...I hardly think I fit into your small-town parallels.

MISS MAPLES: Oh, but you do, my good man. You do. Horace was the local pharmacist, and he married a woman quite a bit younger than himself...Doris was her name. And because she was outspoken and wore bright red lipstick everyone in Butterbun thought she was far too wild for Horace.

REGGIE: And was she?

MISS MAPLES: Oh, heavens, no. When Doris finally left him, we all found out he'd had a string of girlfriends, and to support them, he had been stealing electronics from the [Best Buy] next to the pharmacy. *[Or insert the name of another electronics retailer.]*

REGGIE: Really, Miss Maples, you can be quite...exasperating at times.

(Reggie storms off SL.)

MISS MAPLES: Oh, dear...now who was it in Butterbun who told me that very thing?

(Miss Maples exits SL. Hermoine enters SR, making sure no one is around. She pulls out her cell phone and dials.)

HERMOINE: *(Into phone.)* It's moi! I have decided. No! I will not do it! It is too dangerous! If zey found out... No! No, I will return zee down payment! But I will not betray zee Nemesis Society!

(Dashley enters SL.)

DASHLEY: Hermoine! Is that a cell phone I see?

HERMOINE: *(Clicks her phone shut.)* I...I just...I was checking on mon chat.

DASHLEY: What shot? You shot someone?

HERMOINE: "Chat!" "Chat!" You say "cat."

DASHLEY: Oh, well, my dear...you know the rules. No phones!

HERMOINE: Oui! I am sorry.

DASHLEY: You haven't seen Ms. Scrubbs anywhere, have you?

HERMOINE: Zee housekeeper? No!

DASHLEY: I think something's boiling over in the kitchen.

(Dashley and Hermoine exit SL. Sureluck and Joni step out from behind the curtains.)

SURELUCK: What are you doing here, Joni?

JONI: I...I thought I could help!

SURELUCK: Playing a nurse and making me look like an idiot?

JONI: I'm making you look...deceptively inept.

SURELUCK: Not hard to do that!

JONI: This is your big chance! If you find out who killed Sam Slade you'll be the best of the best!

SURELUCK: Joni, can I show you a few linoleum samples? I've got a nice pattern here for your –

JONI: Please, Sureluck. I believe in you!

SURELUCK: But what if I don't find out who killed Sam Slade?

JONI: You will! We've already heard enough to make me think –

SURELUCK: Think what? It's an inside job?

JONI: *(Quickly.)* No! I was going to say the work of an outsider.

SURELUCK: *(With a laugh.)* Look, anybody can see that somebody in this house killed Sam Slade. And if we're not careful, there could be another murder.

(A scream is heard off left as the curtain falls.)

[END OF FREEVIEW]