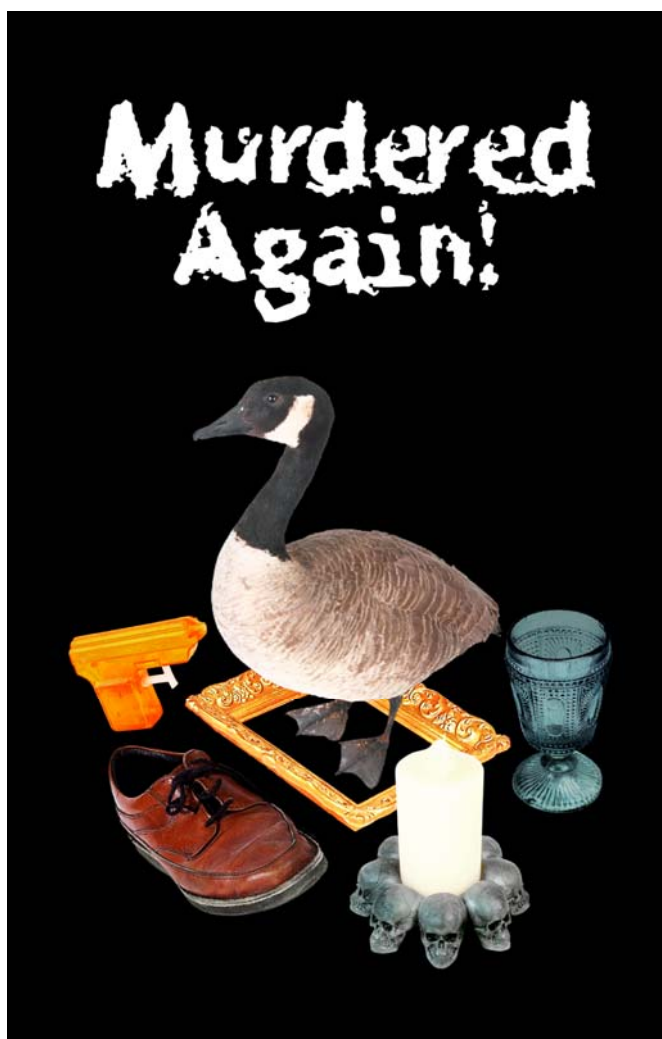


Murdered Again!



Kory Howard

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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Murdered Again!

FARCE. In this sequel to *Murder by Farce*, the usual suspects are now on trial for the “murder” of reclusive billionaire Tony Franstein. But just when the Butler admits to killing Tony Franstein, the judge reveals himself to be none other than Tony Franstein! This time, instead of solving Tony’s “murder,” the suspects must *kill* Tony in order to get his estate. Arriving at Tony’s mansion eager to “cook his goose,” the group quickly realizes that no one thought to bring a murder weapon, so they scramble about collecting “weapons” including a couch pillow, a shoe, a candle, a squirt gun, a picture frame, and a pencil. To help them out, Tony furnishes them with a knife, which they immediately lose. Then when the cops unexpectedly show up, they aren’t there to save Tony from a madhouse full of kooky murderers. They are there to kill Tony, too! Mayhem ensues when Tony is “murdered” yet again. Audiences will love all the plot twists and hilarious situations in this hysterical farce.

Performance Time: Approximately 75-90 minutes.

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Characters

(4 M, 3 F, 4 flexible)

TONY FRANSTEIN/JUDGE/DOCTOR: Billionaire who wants to avenge everyone who has done him wrong; wears a robe and wig for judge's disguise; as a doctor, speaks with a very outlandish and strange accent; male.

VANEETA LEE: An air-headed gold-digger in love with Tony for his money; hair is professionally styled, wears a glittery dress with a boa, large earrings, bracelets, rings, etc.; female.

KARINE CULLIMORE: Tony's detail-oriented ex-secretary who is still in love with him; writes "poetry"; female.

MRS. NANCY WALKER: Tony's old high school business teacher; likes to carry a squirt gun in her purse; old and wrinkly; female.

GREGORY DECKER: Egotistical bully who tormented Tony throughout high school and is still employed as a men's underwear inspector; male.

BRONSON BUTLER: Posed as Tony's butler but is really his confidant and lawyer; male.

DREYSON WILLARDS: Typical teenager who has matured somewhat; wears a hat; male.

OFFICER HARDY: Oblivious veteran cop; flexible.

OFFICER WITHERS: Rookie cop who goes by the book; flexible.

DOCTOR MADISON: Tony's elderly doctor; flexible.

MR./MRS. ROMERO: Vivacious, confident, animated lawyer; flexible.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change the script accordingly.

Setting

Courtroom and Tony's mansion.

Sets

Courtroom. There is a podium for the judge, a chair for the witness, and a small table for the lawyer. There are additional chairs for the other characters. May be performed on the apron in front of the curtain, if desired.

Living room of Tony's mansion. There are two staircases leading to upstairs rooms (opt). A desk sits center in front of a staircase. There is a couch with pillows center SL and a table for drinks SL. There is a chair and bookshelf SR. The front door is USR with a coat rack near it. A door leading to kitchen is between the staircases. There is a door leading SR and a door leading SL.

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Props

Gavel	Hat, for Dreyson
Picture of Tony Franstein on an easel	Small bag of "arsenic" (white powder, e.g. flour, etc.)
Judge's robe and wig	Gun (toy)
Wad of cash (fake money)	Tray of drinks and sandwiches
Purse, for Mrs. Walker	Knife (plastic)
Water gun	Small cup of water
Notebook	Note (on Tony's "body")
Tape recorder (or another recording device)	Sandwich
Candle	Cap gun
Picture frame	Key
Pencil	Piece of paper
Fancy glass with a gold "T" on it	Pen

Special Effects

Knock at the door	Sound of tape fast forwarding
Scream	Lightning
Thud	Thunder
Breaking glass	Fake blood
Fart sound	
Sound of tape rewinding	

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**“when I said,
‘cook his goose,’
I meant,
‘snuff out his candle.’”**

—Bronson

Prologue

(AT RISE: Courtroom. Note: May be played before the curtain if desired. Tony Franstein, disguised as the Judge, is sitting CS behind a podium. Vaneeta is in the witness chair, and Lawyer Romero stands ready to ask questions. The audience serves as the "jury.")

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Order in the court! Order! *(Bangs gavel.)*

Mr. Romero, you may approach your first witness.

ROMERO: Thank you, Your Honor. Mrs. Lee—

VANEETA: It's just "miss," please.

ROMERO: I apologize. Miss Lee, can you please tell the members of the jury exactly what happened on the night of Tony Franstein's murder?

VANEETA: Of course. I received an invitation from Tony to a dinner party at his home. Naturally, I went. That's all there is to it.

ROMERO: And who else was invited?

VANEETA: Oh, I don't know. People of a lower class. No one worthy of Tony's money— *(Realizes.)* I mean, Tony's association.

ROMERO: And did anything out of the ordinary occur while you were there?

VANEETA: Nothing that I can remember.

ROMERO: Are you sure? Nothing odd happened?

VANEETA: Well, Tony was killed.

ROMERO: Oh, really? That is ordinary to you?

VANEETA: I guess not. But it turned out that he was just faking his death. He wasn't actually murdered.

ROMERO: I see. Before you knew he was only faking his death, did anything happen during that time?

VANEETA: Tony left a note saying that he would give everything he had to whomever caught his killer.

ROMERO: Did this capture your attention?

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VANEETA: Of course. I didn't want anyone else to have his money! It belonged to me!

ROMERO: And why did it belong to you?

VANEETA: Let's just say that Tony and I had a little thing going on...

ROMERO: You two were a couple?

VANEETA: Yes. Who could resist me?

ROMERO: According to my notes, it says that Tony died single.

VANEETA: Typical Tony...always wanted to keep me a secret. That's so like him.

ROMERO: Were you or were you not together?

VANEETA: As far as I'm concerned, we were together.

ROMERO: Did he ever acknowledge your relationship?

VANEETA: Yes.

ROMERO: May I remind you, Mrs. Lee—

VANEETA: *(Correcting.)* "Miss."

ROMERO: Yes, Miss Lee. May I remind you that you are under oath.

VANEETA: Fine. He didn't particularly care for me, but his money should have been mine!

ROMERO: So you had motive to kill him?

VANEETA: Yes, of course. I mean, we all had reasons to kill him. But I didn't do it.

ROMERO: But you did try to kill at least once before. According to the police, there was a plot to kill the two officers who arrived at Tony's home, is that correct?

VANEETA: It could be...

ROMERO: And what was your role in that plot?

VANEETA: I was to...um...distract the officers.

ROMERO: Distract?

VANEETA: You know...Va-va-voom! Boom-chicka-boom!

ROMERO: I'm afraid I don't, Mrs. Lee.

VANEETA: *(Correcting.)* Miss!

ROMERO: Right, *Miss*.

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VANEETA: All I was supposed to do was distract the officers with my lackluster charm and unintelligible wit while others slipped poison into their drinks.

ROMERO: Was that the same poison that was used to kill Tony?

VANEETA: How should I know?!

ROMERO: Because Tony was poisoned...by you!

VANEETA: Wha—why, I never! I didn't know he was poisoned.

ROMERO: You didn't know?

VANEETA: No. When I left Tony's house, he was still alive.

ROMERO: After being dead?

VANEETA: Yes. He was alive, then dead, and then alive again.

ROMERO: And now dead again.

VANEETA: That's what I've heard. But it wasn't me. Like I said, when I left, he was alive.

ROMERO: And I'm supposed to believe you...a self-proclaimed gold-digger with motive to kill?

VANEETA: Yes.

ROMERO: All right. No further questions, Your Honor.

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Mrs. Lee—

VANEETA: *(Correcting.)* "Miss"! Geez, people! Is it that hard?!

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Miss Lee, you may be excused.

VANEETA: But I don't have to use the restroom.

ROMERO: He means you may go.

VANEETA: But I don't *have to go*.

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Just get out of the chair, will you?

VANEETA: Hummmph! Make me look like a fool, will you?!

(Flustered, Vaneeta stands, trips over the leg of the chair, crosses to a row of chairs SR and sits.)

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Romero, you may call your second witness.

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ROMERO: I would like to call Bronson Butler to the stand.
(“Oooohs” are heard as Bronson rises from the audience and goes CS.)

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Please take a seat, Mr. Bronson.

BRONSON: Fine. But, first, time out! *(Everyone freezes and lights change. To audience.)* I’m sure all of you are wondering what is going on right now, so let me explain. Exhibit B. *(Puts a picture of Tony Franstein on an easel.)* This is Tony Franstein, and he was murdered! *(Murmurs are heard.)* Dunn...dunn...dunn. Six people are on trial for his murder. You already met Exhibit A: Vaneeta Lee. Impressed? I didn’t think so. A gold-digger without much of a claim! Pun definitely intended! She loved Tony, but only for his money. Did she kill him? No. She wouldn’t have the brains for it. Next, we have Exhibit C. *(Spotlight on Mrs. Nancy Walker.)* Mrs. Nancy Walker, an old schoolmarm. This is what she had to say about her role in Tony’s death.

(Others unfreeze. Lights change. Mrs. Walker takes the stand.)

MRS. WALKER: *(To Romeo.)* Did I see Tony die? Oh, yes, he was dead.

ROMERO: And did you see who killed him?

MRS. WALKER: Of course not. He wasn’t actually dead!

ROMERO: Excuse me? You just said he was dead.

MRS. WALKER: He was. But then the cops came, so we stuffed him into the couch to hide him. Next thing we all knew, Tony fell out and came back alive. It was a miracle.

ROMERO: So, when you saw Tony last, he was still alive?

MRS. WALKER: Yes.

ROMERO: You didn’t kill him?

MRS. WALKER: My heavens, are you deaf or am I just mute? Didn’t you hear me say that he was alive?

ROMERO: Yes. I just wanted to clarify. When did you find out that Tony was actually dead...for real?

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MRS. WALKER: I only found out when I was called to court. Preposterous! A fake dead guy actually dead! Murdered nonetheless! Whoever heard of anything so absurd!

(Spotlight down on Mrs. Walker. Bronson steps forward. Others freeze.)

BRONSON: *(To audience.)* Good old Mrs. Walker...Tony's old business teacher. And as old as she is, her mind isn't as crazy as you might think. Tony was dead and then came back alive. We faked his death. It was a scheme between him and me, you see. He wanted to get payback to all the people who had done him wrong. To explain further, let's turn to Exhibit D: Dr. Madison.

(Others unfreeze. Lights up on Dr. Madison, who is sitting in the witness chair.)

ROMERO: *(To Dr. Madison.)* You told Tony that he only had two weeks to live?

DOCTOR: That's correct.

ROMERO: What was his reaction to the devastating news?

DOCTOR: Obviously, he was shocked and surprised. But he was determined.

ROMERO: Determined? In what way?

DOCTOR: I didn't really understand everything he said, but he mentioned something about teaching some kind of lesson to people.

ROMERO: When you saw Tony last, was he still alive?

DOCTOR: Yes. You see, his diagnosis was miscalculated.

ROMERO: Elaborate, please.

DOCTOR: Some infected honey badger's blood somehow got mixed in with Tony's. Nothing was wrong with him at all.

ROMERO: When did you find this out?

DOCTOR: About two weeks after I told him he had two weeks to live.

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ROMERO: Did you call him to tell him the mistake?

DOCTOR: I tried. His phone had been disconnected, so I went over to his house as fast as I could. I was afraid he had done something drastic.

ROMERO: What did you find when you arrived at his house?

DOCTOR: Tony seemed to be having some kind of party. I told him the news and left.

ROMERO: And that was the last time you saw him?

DOCTOR: That's correct.

ROMERO: How did you react when you found out that Tony was actually murdered for real?

DOCTOR: Wait! Tony's dead?! When did this happen?!

ROMERO: Did you not read the summons when you were called to court for the murder of Tony Franstein?

DOCTOR: *(Sheepishly.)* Um...no.

ROMERO: No further questions, Your Honor.

(Lights down. Lights up on Bronson. Others freeze.)

BRONSON: *(To audience.)* Tony thought he was going to die, so before he did, he wanted to teach a lesson to all of the people who had done him wrong throughout his life--one they'd never forget. To do that, he faked his death. I am... *(Realizes.)* ...*was* Tony's lawyer, but I acted as his butler. We planned the whole thing. I would "kill" him when the lights went out. When the lights came on, Tony laid on the floor playing dead. After the supposed "murder," I placed a note in his pocket, which said that whoever solved the crime would inherit his entire estate. All the doors and windows were locked and unbreakable...like rats trapped in a cage. You should have seen them all run wild trying to solve the crime! Quite ingenious, really. Sad thing is they didn't learn any lesson. Tony's death didn't affect them at all. Example, Exhibit E: Dreyson Willards, a typical, ignorant teenager.

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(Lights up on Dreyson. Others unfreeze.)

DREYSON: *(To Romeo.)* I told you, I didn't care about that old dude.

ROMERO: So his death had no effect on you?

DREYSON: Well, I guess maybe...

ROMERO: How so?

DREYSON: Tony dying sure helped my feet.

ROMERO: Your feet?

DREYSON: Oh, yeah. I took these sweet socks off him while he was playing dead. *(Shows his socks.)* My feet have never been so spoiled. I bet these suckers cost at least 50 dollars each.

ROMERO: But did Tony's murder, real or fake, change you as a person?

DREYSON: So he actually did die, then?

ROMERO: Would it make a difference?

DREYSON: Nope. Dead or alive, he didn't mean anything to me.

ROMERO: Did anyone else seem affected by his death?

DREYSON: Nah. We all just wanted his money. Dangle millions and billions of dollars in front of someone, who wouldn't?

ROMERO: Would you kill for millions of dollars?

DREYSON: No. But if someone else did, and I could reap the reward, that's fine with me.

ROMERO: Did you kill Tony Franstein for his money?

DREYSON: No way, homie.

ROMERO: Did you kill him because you didn't like him?

DREYSON: Trust me, I would rather kill him for his money.

ROMERO: Just answer the question: Did you kill Tony Franstein?

DREYSON: How many times do I have to say no? Just because I didn't care about him, doesn't mean I'd kill him. Leave that to the professionals.

(Lights down on Dreyson. Lights up on Bronson. Others freeze.)

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BRONSON: *(To audience.)* Youth these days...so desensitized that death doesn't even affect them in the least. C'est la vie! To speed things along, our last two exhibits, F and G, had pretty much the same story to tell.

(Lights down on Bronson. A spotlight on Gregory Decker SL. A spotlight on Karine Cullimore SR. There is a spotlight on Romero, or a voiceover may be used, if desired.)

ROMERO: *(To Gregory.)* Please tell me your recollection of the events at Tony's mansion on the night of his murder.

GREGORY: Fancy house...fancy dinner. I was delighted to be there—

KARINE: *(To Romero.)* Ah, Tony! It was a pleasure being in his company—

GREGORY: Excuse me! May I finish?

KARINE: Here we go again...

GREGORY: Thank you. *(To Romero.)* I was delighted to be there, at first, anyway. Beautiful women, caviar!

KARINE: There was no caviar.

GREGORY: Fine. *(To Romero.)* Crabby, ugly women and peanut butter-and-jelly sandwiches. The night was awful.

ROMERO: Did Tony's fake death affect you at all?

GREGORY: *(Laughing.)* No—

KARINE: *(To Romero.)* Deeply!

ROMERO: Please elaborate.

GREGORY: Well, you see—

ROMERO: Miss Cullimore, please.

GREGORY: Oh, I see.

ROMERO: We should have never done your testimonies this way.

GREGORY: You're telling me!

ROMERO: Miss Cullimore, please tell the jury why you were so deeply affected by Tony's death.

KARINE: I was...I was in love with Tony!

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ROMERO: So, you had romantic feelings for Tony?
(Gregory and Karine speak their next line simultaneously.)

KARINE: Yes.

GREGORY: No! Eeeew! Are you kidding me? I inspect
underwear for a living. Why would I—?

ROMERO: Again...I'm talking to Miss Cullimore.

GREGORY: (Clears throat.) Eh-hem. Of course. Go on.

KARINE: (To Romero.) Tony was my boss. I was his secretary.
It was a perfect match.

ROMERO: He reciprocated those feelings?

KARINE: Yes.

ROMERO: He did?

KARINE: He did what?

ROMERO: He reciprocated the same feelings you had for
him?

KARINE: I don't know what that means.

ROMERO: He felt the same romantic feelings for you as you
did for him.

KARINE: No.

ROMERO: I see. So you killed him because he despised you?

KARINE: No! I would never ever have done that to dear,
sweet, innocent, ravishing—

GREGORY: Ooooookay! We get it! Move along, already!

KARINE: What would you know about love?

GREGORY: More than to love a wrinkly, rotting old dude.

ROMERO: All right, let's just get to the point. Miss
Cullimore, did you kill Tony?

KARINE: Never.

ROMERO: Gregory, did you kill Tony?

GREGORY: I almost wish I did now.

KARINE: You monster! How dare you talk about my Tony
like that!

TONY: (As Judge, shouts.) Order! Order! Get out of my
courtroom!

GREGORY: Thank you!

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KARINE: Fine.

(Lights down. Lights up on Bronson. Characters freeze.)

BRONSON: *(To audience as "jury.")* Do you understand now why these people never learned their lesson? Let's recap the evidence so far. We have Tony, a rich, thought-to-be-dying billionaire who fakes his death to teach a few selfish people the right way to live, with regrettably, no effect. Tony discovers that he's not actually dying. Everyone leaves the mansion perturbed by the events of the night, but no one had killed Tony. So why are we here for Tony's murder? I guess that leaves Exhibit H: me!

(Lights up on the court. Others unfreeze. Bronson sits in the witness chair.)

ROMERO: Bronson Butler, let's cut to the chase. Did you kill Tony Franstein?

BRONSON: The first or second time?

ROMERO: Um...the first?

BRONSON: No. I only pretended to kill him. Oh, the looks on everyone's faces!

(Murmurs are heard in the courtroom.)

ROMERO: All right. How about the second time?

BRONSON: Yes. I killed Tony Franstein!

("Oohs" and "boos" are heard from the courtroom.)

KARINE: I'll kill you!

VANEETA: *(To Bronson.)* You fish turd!

(Karine and Vaneeta go to accost Bronson, but Greg and Dreyson hold them back.)

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GREGORY: Ladies!

VANEETA: Get your hands off me!

GREGORY: *(In disbelief.)* Oh, come on now! Who wouldn't want a piece of Gregory Decker?

VANEETA: Eeeew!

DREYSON: Yeah, man. Too far!

(Everyone argues.)

TONY: *(As Judge, shouts.)* Silence! *(Bangs gavel.)* Everyone, sit down! I want to hear this man's testimony.

ROMERO: Thank you, Your Honor. Mr. Butler –

BRONSON: Actually, my last name is not Butler.

ROMERO: No?

BRONSON: No. I only said that to hide my true identity.

VANEETA: But it fit so well! Bronson Butler....a butler named Butler who butled!

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Sit, Mrs. Lee.

VANEETA: It's Miss!

TONY: *(As Judge.)* Who cares? Romero, please continue.

ROMERO: Bronson, will you please tell us what happened?

BRONSON: Gladly. The truth can finally be known. Unlike all these other morons, when I left Tony's house, Tony was dead.

ROMERO: How did that come about?

BRONSON: I will tell you if you stop interrupting.

ROMERO: Of course.

(Bronson rises from his chair and dramatically reenacts the following.)

BRONSON: Tony and I were in cahoots. He came up with the master plan...to fake his own death. As his confidant and lawyer, I posed as Tony's butler. My job was to "kill" him – or at least make it sound and look like he was murdered – stab him right in the heart when the lights were out. Put an

envelope with a note explaining the witch hunt to find the killer in order to inherit all of Tony's money. Cut the phone cord. Lock the door and "lose" the key! And, then, make sure everyone took the bait in catching the killer. I, of course, stood to inherit all of Tony's estate. (*Exclamations from Vaneeta and murmurs from the others are heard.*) After everyone had learned their lesson and left, Tony was going to hand over everything to me. But, no! The Doctor had to ruin it all. When Tony learned that he wasn't going to die, he, of course, did not hand over his estate. So I decided to take it myself. I figured no one would care if Tony was found to be truly murdered. I took the rat poison that was to be used to knock off the police officers, dumped it into his drink, and watched him wriggle and writhe as he took his last breath. He died, simple as that.

ROMERO: So, you killed Tony Franstein?

BRONSON: Yes. I am proud to say I did. (*Murmurs from the courtroom. To others.*) Oh, don't act all sentimental. I was the only one with enough chutzpah to do it.

ROMERO: Judge, did you hear this man's confession?

TONY: (*As Judge.*) I did, indeed.

ROMERO: And what do you make of it?

TONY: (*As Judge.*) Balderdash! I don't believe it! You didn't kill Mr. Franstein, Mr. Butler.

BRONSON: I indeed did, sir. Poisoned him with his own poison. Gave him a taste of his own medicine, you might say. Quite ingenious...until this moment at least.

TONY: (*As Judge.*) I repeat: You never killed Tony Franstein!

BRONSON: Sure, I did. I saw him choke, foam at the mouth, keel over.

TONY: (*As Judge.*) What? Like this? (*Pretends to choke, foam at the mouth, and keel over.*)

BRONSON: Actually, yes. Exactly like that. How did you know?

TONY: (*As Judge.*) Because, my boy, I am Tony Franstein!

(Everyone gasps. Romero urges the audience to join in. Tony takes off his judge's robe and wig and stands in full glory.)

BRONSON: That's impossible! I watched you die with my own eyes!

TONY: Ha-ha! Rat poison! You should have tried some yourself. Smarties...quite tasty, really.

BRONSON: I don't get it.

TONY: You wouldn't. You're not as bright as you think. I set the whole thing up: the rat poison, the police...everything!

BRONSON: But why?

TONY: I wanted to see who I could really trust...who my closest friends were, if any. I wondered if money was the only motivation for you to be my friend. I guess I was right.

BRONSON: But...but—

TONY: Don't worry, Bronson, my boy. I won't have you arrested for my attempted murder. I believe you've learned your lesson. I hope that goes for all of you, too.

(A few nod and/or utter "yes" softly.)

BRONSON: Tony, I don't know what to say.

TONY: Don't worry about it, Bronson. I forgive you. You are sorry, right?

BRONSON: Um...yes...of course...sure...I couldn't say for sure.

TONY: Good enough for me. I hope there are no hard feelings from anyone. I had the best intentions. How about everyone join me at my mansion for a round of drinks? Bury-the-hatchet kind of get-together. What do you say? *(A few awkward acquiesces. Others look at each other.)* Great! I look forward to seeing you all again! Shall we say in an hour?

BRONSON: Yeah...um...okay.

ROMERO: Court dismissed then, Mr. Franstein?

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TONY: Yes, Romero. Thank you very much for your services.
Here's your payment.

(Tony hands Romero a thick wad of cash. Vexed, Vaneeta and the others look on.)

ROMERO: Anytime, Mr. Franstein. *(Exits.)*

TONY: *(To others.)* I'll see you all in a bit. Thank you for a most entertaining trial! Ha! Murdering Tony Franstein! *(Laughs.)* Ha-ha-ha! *(Exits.)*

GREGORY: *(To others.)* You guys aren't really going to have drinks with that guy, are you?

VANEETA: I don't know. *(Shrugs.)* It is free drinks.

MRS. WALKER: Do you think he has Sarsaparilla? I'll go if he has Sarsaparilla.

KARINE: That's all you can think about at a time like this?

MRS. WALKER: Why not?

KARINE: Don't you get it? Tony's alive! That means I still have a chance.

VANEETA: Oh, please, he would never go for you. Not when he has this. *(Gestures to herself.)*

BRONSON: All right, everyone, just stop. I have an idea.

GREGORY: *(Sarcastic.)* Great. The great Bronson Butler has another brilliant idea!

BRONSON: You scoff, but you might actually like this one.

GREGORY: Ugh. Okay, what is it?

BRONSON: Come close.

GREGORY: No thanks.

BRONSON: No, everyone, come in close. This needs to be discussed in private.

DREYSON: No one's even here.

BRONSON: Oh, there's always someone watching. *(Gathers others close.)* Ever heard of "double jeopardy"?

KARINE: Oh, yes! Points are worth double in the Double Jeopardy round, but the questions are super hard.

BRONSON: Not that kind of double jeopardy!

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KARINE: Oh.

BRONSON: This is what I propose, but come in
closer...especially you, Vaneeta.

VANEETA: Creep!

(Lights fade to black as they whisper conspiratorially.)

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(AT RISE: Tony Franstein's mansion. Voices are heard offstage. Gregory, Bronson, Mrs. Walker, Vaneeta, Karine, and Dreyson enter. Note: Throughout the scene, there are cliché lightning and thunder effects.)

BRONSON: All right, everyone, just remember...act normal, casual. Don't cause any suspicion.

MRS. WALKER: Why would we do such a thing, Bronson?

BRONSON: Because of what we're going to do.

MRS. WALKER: Oh.

GREGORY: I can't believe we're actually here again.

KARINE: I'm quite delighted.

VANEETA: I wouldn't get your hopes up. Tony is not the kind of man who would go after the likes of you.

KARINE: And I suppose you're anything better?

VANEETA: I've got the vavoom, chicka!

(Gregory knocks on the door.)

DREYSON: Who cares?! I'm already ready to leave.

MRS. WALKER: I'm with Dreyson.

GREGORY: I agree. Let's just get our free drinks and get this over with.

VANEETA: It better be an expensive bottle, whatever it is.

MRS. WALKER: With our luck, it'll just be club soda.

BRONSON: Or warm water again.

KARINE: Knock again, Greg.

GREGORY: Okay, okay. Don't get so pushy. *(Knocks again.)*

BRONSON: *(Calls.)* Tony! We're here!

TONY: *(Offstage.)* Coming! Coming! *(Enters from the kitchen door CS and opens the front door.)* Welcome, everyone. I'm so glad you could make it.

GREGORY: Yeah, yeah. Where are the drinks? *(Enters.)*

Murdered Again!

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BRONSON: Hello, Tony. So good to see you again.

(Others enter.)

TONY: Is it? Last time, you tried to kill me. I hope that won't happen again.

BRONSON: Of course not. Water under the bridge.

TONY: That's comforting. Speaking of water, I apologize for the weather. It sure puts a damper on the party.

BRONSON: I'm sure it won't be a bother.

TONY: Hello, Vaneeta. So glad you could make it.

VANEETA: *(Flirtatiously.)* My pleasure as always, Tony-Wony.

(Vaneeta flirts with Tony and tickles him with her boa.)

TONY: The pleasure is all yours, Vaneeta.

VANEETA: *(Flirtatiously.)* You got that right.

TONY: Come in, everyone. Make yourself comfortable. I was just getting everything ready in the kitchen.

BRONSON: Do you need any help?

TONY: No thank you. Last time, you tried to poison my drink.

BRONSON: *(Annoyed.)* Again, dwelling on the past.

TONY: Can you blame me?

(Bronson moves away from Tony. Karine approaches Tony.)

KARINE: *(Flirtatiously.)* Hi, Tony.

TONY: Oh, yes, well, hi. If you'll excuse me, I'm just going to finish up.

KARINE: *(Flirtatiously.)* I'll be right here.

TONY: Yes, I was afraid of that.

GREGORY: Hurry along, Tony. I want to get this night over with.

TONY: Oh, Greg, we haven't even had our drinks. And I'm making delicious PB-and-J sandwiches! Nothing exciting has even happened yet.

GREGORY: You can say that again.

TONY: I didn't know you were hard of hearing. *(Louder.)* Nothing exciting has happened yet.

GREGORY: *(Playful.)* Thank you. I'll take ice in mine.

TONY: Of course. Please take a seat. Make yourself at home.

VANEETA: Don't mind if I do. *(Flops down on the couch.)*

TONY: I'll only be a minute.

BRONSON: *(Under his breath.)* So will we. *(Tony exits.)* All right, everyone, gather 'round.

VANEETA: Do we have to?

BRONSON: Of course. We don't have much time.

VANEETA: Can we at least all gather on the couch?

BRONSON: Fine. Come on, everyone, find a spot.

(The others jostle about as they struggle to fit on the couch.)

MRS. WALKER: *(To Dreyson.)* Watch where you're touching, young man!

DREYSON: But I—

KARINE: *(To Mrs. Walker.)* That was me. Sorry.

BRONSON: *(To others.)* Okay. Now—

(Fart sound. Bronson sniffs and then the others sniff.)

VANEETA: Eeeew, gross! Who let one slip?

GREGORY: Doesn't smell like one of mine. You'd definitely know...a little mixture of sweet honey with a sour egg.

BRONSON: *(Clears throat.)* Eh-hem...

MRS. WALKER: *(To others, slowly raising her hand.)* Guilty. My control isn't what it used to be. I'm old, you know.

BRONSON: Do your best to hold it next time.

DREYSON: Here's a crazy thought—

BRONSON: Excuse me, but I am in charge here.

Murdered Again!

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DREYSON: May I just say this one thing? It might be helpful.

GREGORY: Give it a rest, kid.

BRONSON: *(To Dreyson.)* Go ahead, but no more...

(Mispronounces as "coup de tat") ... coup d'état ideas.

VANEETA: *(Correcting.)* I'm pretty sure it's "coup de jour."

KARINE: That's "soup du jour." It's "Coupe de Ville."

BRONSON: No, that doesn't sound right.

DREYSON: It's actually "coup d'état," but it's not like any of you would know that.

MRS. WALKER: What do you know, hipster?

DREYSON: Apparently, more than you.

MRS. WALKER: You should be slapped, young man.

GREGORY: Just tell us your thought, Dreyson.

DREYSON: It seems awful suspicious that all of us are crammed on this little couch. I suggest we all spread out and act like we are doing normal things. You know, just in case Tony comes in.

(Others agree.)

BRONSON: Okay, that's a pretty good idea. No more of those, though. Leave the ideas to me.

DREYSON: Yeah, yeah.

GREGORY: *(To others.)* I say we just go in there and kill him right now.

BRONSON: No, we have to plan this out. Now, everyone, pick a spot in the room and act natural.

(Everyone picks a spot in the room and acts "casually" as if they are engaged in normal activities. Note: This should be played with comedic effect using unnatural, repetitive movements. For example, someone repeatedly pulls a book off a shelf and then puts it back, another person stands and sits in a chair over and over, etc.)

GREGORY: Sure, listen to the punk teenager instead of the successful adult.

VANEETA: You inspect underwear for a living.

GREGORY: At least I have a job to make money instead of trying to marry for it.

VANEETA: Humph!

BRONSON: All right, everyone, calm down. We need to work together if this is going to work.

KARINE: So what do we do now?

BRONSON: You all know why we're here. Did you at least bring... *(Tony enters. Their normal, repetitive actions become nervous and bumbled. Trying to cover.)* ...your...um...cooking utensils?

TONY: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt anything.

BRONSON: Oh, no. We were just talking about...um... cooking. *(To others.)* Weren't we?

MRS. WALKER: *(To Tony.)* Yes, cooking your goose.

TONY: My goose? But I don't have a goose.

VANEETA: What she means is...is...Greg?

GREGORY: What? Me?

VANEETA: Tell him what we mean.

GREGORY: *(To Tony.)* Oh...yes...well, Bronson, here, was telling us the one time that he had your succulent duck here—

DREYSON: *(To Tony.)* And we were hoping that you'd be cooking your goose tonight.

TONY: Oh, yes, of course. Well, I was just planning on having drinks and chatting for a little bit, but I suppose I could cook my goose.

MRS. WALKER: That would be delightful.

TONY: But, first, I wanted to know if anyone would like ice in their drink. *(Others murmur their assent.)* Great. I'll get the oven warmed up for the goose and start on the drinks. I'll be right back.

GREGORY: Take all the time you need.

(Tony exits.)

BRONSON: *(To others.)* Okay, did you guys bring your utensils?

VANEETA: You mean, we're actually going to cook a goose?

MRS. WALKER: I didn't even know Tony had a goose. Last time we were here, I didn't see any goose.

DREYSON: *(To others.)* Crap. We're in trouble.

BRONSON: *(To others.)* No, when I said "cook his goose," I meant "snuff out his candle."

KARINE: *(Confused.)* I don't see a candle that's lit.

BRONSON: Ugh! You guys are so dimwitted. *(Pause.)* Vaneeta, why are you smiling at me like that?

VANEETA: My mom used to call me that.

BRONSON: Huh?

VANEETA: She would say, "Vaneeta, darling, you are so dimwitted." I would just smile at her and nod like this. *(Demonstrates nodding.)* She was so kind.

BRONSON: Well, please stop. *(To others.)* So, no one brought anything to kill Tony with?

MRS. WALKER: We're going to kill him?!

BRONSON: Yes! We went over this in the courtroom, remember? Double jeopardy?

GREGORY: Of course. *(Thinks.)* What was that again?

BRONSON: It means we can't be tried again for Tony's murder since we were already on trial for his murder.

KARINE: So we can just go in there and kill him right now?

BRONSON: Yes.

KARINE: Then why didn't you say so?

BRONSON: I did. "Cook his goose"... "snuff out his candle"?

VANEETA: Not those again.

BRONSON: They mean to kill him.

GREGORY: What are we waiting for? Let's go kill him! *(Heads toward the kitchen door.)*

BRONSON: Wait! We can't just barge in there!

GREGORY: But you said we can go—

BRONSON: Yes, but we have to have a plan.

MRS. WALKER: Why do we always have to have a plan?

BRONSON: That's just how it works. Plus, we need to make sure nothing goes wrong.

GREGORY: I have a plan. How about we all go into the kitchen and kill Tony! I'll suffocate him with this pillow. *(Holds up a couch pillow.)*

TONY: *(Poking his head into the room.)* Did I hear my name?

BRONSON: Yes. Gregory was telling us a really funny joke about you.

TONY: Oh. I'd love to hear it. *(Steps into the room.)*

GREGORY: I bet you would. *(Slight pause.)* You know what? Bronson is much better at telling this joke than I am.

BRONSON: What? Oh...um...Vaneeta, here, really liked it, so we should have her tell it.

VANEETA: Oh...yes...but—

DREYSON: Enough. I'll tell the joke.

TONY: I'm ready...

DREYSON: Six people walk into a house—

TONY: I'm laughing already!

DREYSON: One of them says, "Man, I'd love to have a place like this. How do you think I can get that much money?" Another one says, "Well, I have a pillow. All you have to do is kill Tony!"

BRONSON: *(To Tony.)* 'Cause you see, "Tony" is the name of the owner of the house! *(Fake laugh.)*

TONY: Just like my name.

GREGORY: You know, I never even realized that. What a coincidence!

VANEETA: *(To Tony.)* But it's definitely not you.

TONY: That is really funny. Now, if you'll excuse me, I am close to finishing in the kitchen, and then I'll be out with your drinks.

KARINE: Do you want any help, Tony? 'Cause I can help.

TONY: No, please...stay as far away as you can. *(Exits.)*

BRONSON: Good cover, Dreyson.

DREYSON: Yeah, yeah.

Murdered Again!

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BRONSON: *(To others.)* So, back to our plan. Any suggestions on how to go about this?

MRS. WALKER: I have a gun.

GREGORY: That would be quick and easy.

BRONSON: *(To Mrs. Walker.)* You have a gun?

MRS. WALKER: Of course. I always carry it with me.

BRONSON: Why, on second thought, I'm not even going to ask.

GREGORY: Sounds simple enough. Grab the gun, go into the kitchen, and shoot him before he knows what's coming.

KARINE: You can't shoot my poor Tony!

VANEETA: Quiet, pork chop.

GREGORY: *(To others.)* Then we'll all dine on that cooked goose and separate, never to see each other again.

BRONSON: Good enough. But I wouldn't bet on eating any cooked goose. Now, who wants to shoot him? *(Vaneeta, Greg, and Mrs. Walker raise their hands immediately.)* Dreyson, no?

DREYSON: You know what. I'm not really in the mood.

BRONSON: Excuse me?

DREYSON: I don't know. This seems so childish.

VANEETA: Good thing you're a child, then!

BRONSON: Look, Dreyson, we came here to kill a man, so I suggest you get in the mood. If not, maybe you should leave, then.

DREYSON: Don't tempt me. I just might.

GREGORY: You can't leave. This is as macho as a man gets.

DREYSON: Or a criminal.

VANEETA: Both are the same thing, really.

BRONSON: Karine, what about you?

KARINE: I'm still in love with him. I'd rather see him marry Vaneeta than shoot him.

BRONSON: Fine. Greg, will you just do the honors, please?

GREGORY: My pleasure. Mrs. Walker, hand me the gun, please.

MRS. WALKER: Sure. (*Digs around in her purse and pulls out a water gun.*) Here it is!

BRONSON: Mrs. Walker! What is this?

MRS. WALKER: It's a gun. I'm surprised you can't see that.

BRONSON: This is a water gun!

MRS. WALKER: I know.

BRONSON: You said you had a *gun*.

MRS. WALKER: I do.

BRONSON: Where?

MRS. WALKER: Right here. (*Waves the water gun at him.*)

BRONSON: But that's not—

MRS. WALKER: (*Realizes.*) Oh! Did you think I had a real gun? What lunacy!

GREGORY: May I ask *why* you have a water gun?

MRS. WALKER: When my students talk out of turn, they get a little squirt in the face. It's very effective. Now it's a habit that I carry it around in case of moments like this.

VANEETA: I might have to try that sometime. Whenever a guy turns me down, I'll squirt him in the face.

DREYSON: That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. I don't know how you survive from day to day.

VANEETA: Hey!

(*Vaneeta grabs the water gun from Mrs. Walker and shoots Dreyson in the face.*)

DREYSON: Yeah, you're right. Very effective. I hate you even more now and never want to talk to you again.

VANEETA: Ugh!

BRONSON: All right, everyone. We'll have to think of something else.

GREGORY: I liked my idea of just going in there and killing him.

VANEETA: Yeah, me too.

BRONSON: I guess that will have to do. Everyone, grab something to kill Tony with.

KARINE: *(In tears.)* While you guys are off killing the unrequited love of my life, I'll be here writing a goodbye poem to him. Excuse me. *(Crosses to a shelf and takes a notebook from it. She sees a tape recorder.)* What's this?

BRONSON: Looks like a tape recorder.

KARINE: It seems to be recording.

GREGORY: Well, stop it! Maybe Tony is bugging us!

(Karine stops the tape recorder, sits in a chair, and begins writing.)

BRONSON: I don't like this place. Let's get this over with as quickly as possible.

(Vaneeta grabs a candle, Greg grabs a pencil, Bronson grabs a picture frame, and Mrs. Walker brandishes her water gun. Dreyson sits. Note: Or they can grab other random household items.)

GREGORY: *(To Vaneeta.)* What are you going to do with a candle?

VANEETA: Burn him to death.

GREGORY: It would have to be lit. And I'm pretty sure it wouldn't kill him.

VANEETA: Well, if you're so smart, what about you?

GREGORY: What?

VANEETA: What good is a pencil?

GREGORY: *(Indicating pencil.)* This baby is sharp, and I'm pretty strong. One swift jab in the wrist ought to do it. *(Demonstrates.)*

BRONSON: You might as well beat him over the head with your shoe.

GREGORY: Actually, that might be a better idea! I do wear a size 11. *(Drops the pencil and takes off his shoe.)*

[END OF FREEVIEW]