Whodunnit

A Comedy Thriller

by Anthony Shaffer

A Samuel French Acting Edition



New York Hollywood London Toronto
SAMUELFRENCH.COM

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"WHODUNNIT" was first presented on December 30, 1982 by Douglas Urbanski, Robert A. Buckley and E. Gregg Wallace, Jr., at the Biltmore Theatre, New York City, with the following CAST:

ARCHIBALD PERKINS *(The Butler)*. . . . . GORDON CHATER
ANDREAS CAPODISTRIOU *(An Oily Levantine)*. . . . . GEORGE HEARN
SILAS BAZEBY *(A Respectable Family Lawyer)*. . . . . JEROME DEMPSEY
REAR ADMIRAL KNATCHBULL FOLLIAT *(An Old Sea Dog)*. . . . . RONALD DRAKE
LADY TREMURRAIN *(A Dotty Aristocrat)* . . . . . BARBARA BAXLEY
LAVINIA HARGREAVES *(A Sweet Young Thing)* . . . . . LAUREN THOMPSON
ROGER DASHWELL *(A Black Sheep)*. . . . . JOHN GLOVER
DAME EDITH RUNCIBLE *(An Eccentric Archaeologist)*. . . . . HERMIONE BADDELEY
INSPECTOR BOWDEN *(An Unconventional Yard Detective)*. . . . . FRED GWYNNE
SERGEANT *(A Stolid Copper)* . . . . . JEFFERY ALAN CHANDLER

Directed by MICHAEL KAHN
Scenery by ANDREW JACKNESS
Lighting by MARTIN ARONSTEIN
Costumes by PATRICIA ZIPPRODT
Hair and Makeup by PATRIK MORETON
Sound by RICHARD FITZGERALD
Stage Manager FRANK MARINO

NOTES

(1) The VOICE OF THE MURDERER is tape recorded. The tape is speeded up slightly to conceal the sex and identity of the speaker.

(2) All the CHARACTERS are dressed in the style of the 1930's with the exception of the INSPECTOR and SERGEANT. The date of their clothing is ambiguous.

ACT ONE
Whodunnit
by
Anthony Shaffer

(Note: The first speech is delivered in darkness before the curtain rises.)

SCENE: *The Library of Orcas Champflower Manor. It is a rather grand 18th Century room which has obviously had its furniture made for it by someone like Chippendale. Bookcases stretch to the ceiling. On one wall stage left is an ornamental display of long swords. Stage right a door leads into a hallway. The time is early evening.*

VOICE OF MURDERER. Ladies and gentlemen, your attention please. Father Brown the priest detective of G. K. Chesterton asks, "Where does a wise man hide a pebble? On the beach. And where does a wise man hide a leaf? In a forest. And what does he do if there is no forest?

He grows a forest to hide it in -- (a fearful sin)." That was a clue, one of many I intend to give you tonight, and you will need all of them. Because what you have stumbled into tonight is nothing more or less than an old-fashioned closed circle, telephone wires have been cut, flood-waters have washed away the bridge, "My God you mean it has to be one of us" English country house whodunnit. But it has a difference. In order to save you from the miserable banality of the last scene where the murderous clergyman, or whoever it turns out to be, backs weapon in hand towards the French windows, snarling "I warn you, stay where you are, all of you, you'll never put me behind bars," I have decided to tell you who the murderer is at the outset -- thus saving you an evening's whispered speculation with your neighbor and the inevitable let-down when you find out you've guessed wrong. I am the murderer, I done it, or rather will have done it before the evening is much older. And who am I? Well you must permit me a little evasive mimicry, and the hope you will never guess simply from my voice. But I will give you all a sporting chance. Throughout the evening I will let drop in profusion certain deliberate mistakes from which you will be able to deduce quite easily who I am. But you must pay the greatest attention. Wool-gathering and expecting all the work to be done for you simply won't do tonight. O. K. ? Good. Then off we go, and remember -- listen hard and ask yourself the question, "Where would you hide a murderer?"

On the last line the curtain rises slowly and there is a crash of thunder and lightning. PERKINS, an ancient, grey-haired

butler, enters the room carrying a decanter of green gook, and turns on the lights. He is obviously drunk. He crosses to a table stage right on which stands a large collection of glasses and bottles. With every sign of caution, he takes a long drink from the gin bottle. ANDREAS CAPODISTRIOU stands watching from behind a curtain up right centre.

CAPODISTRIOU. Ah! The boozing butler. Hawkins, isn't it? Harry Hawkins?

PERKINS. No sir, Perkins. Archibald Perkins. *(PERKINS reaches for the decanter of zombie whammies holding it in his right hand as it dribbles on the floor.)* May I suggest a cocktail before dinner -- smooth on the palate, yet astonishingly galvanizing to the brain centre. I call it a Zombie Whammy.

CAPODISTRIOU. No thank you, Hawkins. I'll have an Oloroso sherry.

PERKINS. *(disgusted, to himself)* A sweet sherry before dinner! The man has the taste of a scullery maid. *(PERKINS pours the drink and hands it to CAPODISTRIOU.)*

PERKINS. It is Perkins, sir.

CAPODISTRIOU. I don't think so. There are some people who never forget a face, and others who never forget the tilt of a head as it swills an employer's gin. I am in the latter category. What's more, I've seen you somewhere quite recently.

PERKINS. Only sir, if you visited the establishments of Lady Cunard, Lady Astor, or Mrs. Simpson, in whose employment I have exclusively been since leaving the Syrian Embassy. *(PERKINS crosses stage right to liquor table.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. A descending order of gentility.

PERKINS. I assure you sir, my references are excellent.

CAPODISTRIOU. My friend, you invented your references just as you invented your name. They both bear the unmistakable mark of the mendacious menial.

PERKINS. 'Ere, you've got a nerve you 'ave.

CAPODISTRIOU. Ah, Cockney repartee. There's nothing quite like it anywhere in the world.

PERKINS. What's your game?

CAPODISTRIOU. Blackmail.

PERKINS. Blackmail?

CAPODISTRIOU. Precisely. As in the phrase, "Blackmail -- that's an ugly word, Inspector."

PERKINS. I'm not sure I follow.

CAPODISTRIOU. Come now, Hawkins, let us not be obtuse. The others will be here in a moment. I'm sure you wouldn't want them or your employer to overhear our little talk, now do you?

PERKINS. Mr. Bazeby? What do I care about him? A lawyer's small fry after the aristocracy.

CAPODISTRIOU. Then why accept the position?

PERKINS. Only temporary. A few weeks in fact, till I take up a highly important post in North America.

CAPODISTRIOU. That rather depends on whether or not your future employer discovers that you were discharged from the Syrian Embassy in Dublin, for being implicated in the theft of the Sulliman Tea Service.

PERKINS. Tea Service ... ? *(Drops silver service with a clang.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. Solid twenty-four carat gold, encrusted with precious jewels. Worth a king's ransom.

PERKINS. I don't know what you're on about.

CAPODISTRIOU. Come now, surely you recall it. It was carried away piece by piece in the bags of a bogus British football team who came to play the embassy. They played jolly well as a matter of fact. Silly of them really. That's how we came to suspect they were in fact a bogus British football team.

PERKINS. You can't pin the Dublin Plate Caper on me.

CAPODISTRIOU. I can and I will if necessary. I hold here the signed confession of the London goldsmith who melted it all down. *(He produces a paper. PERKINS makes a grab for it but CAPODISTRIOU is too quick for him.)* So you see, as your countrymen say, the pig is up.

PERKINS. Jig.

CAPODISTRIOU. A thousand pardons. Jig. But it is none the less up.

PERKINS. What are you going to do about it? Expose me?

CAPODISTRIOU. Oh no. That's not the game of Andreas Capodistriou, extortioner sans pareil. A knowledge of other people's piccadillys has got to be made to pay off.

PERKINS. How much?

CAPODISTRIOU. How much will you earn in America? *(CAPODISTRIOU picks up an abacus from table and computes.)*

PERKINS. Fifty dollars a week.

CAPODISTRIOU. Let us double it for the sake of untruth which makes one hundred -- or at the current rate of exchange about twenty-five pounds -- much too much for a light-fingered gentleman's gentleman. Let's say a third -

- eight pounds a week.

PERKINS. Eight knicker a week? *(Falls on his knees.)* Listen, guv'ner, you don't know what expenses I got. Me old mum's got arthritis something cruel. Costs me a packet.

CAPODISTRIOU. And what of your blind eldest daughter?

PERKINS. Daughter?

CAPODISTRIOU. Dragging her undernourished limbs 'round the gutters of London, selling matches to support a leprous sister no doubt?

PERKINS. Cor -- 'ave a 'eart, guv'ner.

CAPODISTRIOU. I thought I had a most generous heart -- only asking for a third of your income. In contradistinction that is to you, who have none at all. If you had a mum or a wife or daughter, you'd have sold them all into the kitty houses by now.

PERKINS. Kitty houses?

CAPODISTRIOU. Brothels, whorehouses.

PERKINS. Cat houses. Look, Chiefy, eight quid? I'll have nothing left after taxes. *(PERKINS rises from his knees.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. Then why not come and work for me? I'll see you live well enough.

PERKINS. Why do you need a butler?

CAPODISTRIOU. No, just a drunken drudge. Not that *servicing* people is really your forte, is it?

(Enter SILAS BAZEBY up left centre door.)

BAZEBY. Good evening. I'm Silas Bazeby, your host.

CAPODISTRIOU. Andreas Capodistriou. Charmed.

BAZEBY. *(Speaks as he crosses round book stacks and down stairs.)* I'm so glad you could come. You must think it a little unusual for a wife to invite guests whom her husband doesn't know. But I have such little time for social activities, and it does delight her so to fill up the house at weekends. Normally she'd be here to greet you herself, but I'm afraid she hasn't arrived yet. I must say I'm getting a bit worried.

PERKINS. Sir, Madam phoned an hour ago from your London flat. Her car's up the spout and she'll be here just as soon as she can.

BAZEBY. Oh dear, poor Angela. I do hope *I'll* be able to cope.

PERKINS. Perhaps I could tempt you to a Zombie Whammy sir? *(PERKINS again holds the decanter with liquid dribbling out.)*

BAZEBY. No you could not. Scotch and soda.

PERKINS. Very good sir.

CAPODISTRIOU. But we do know each other.

BAZEBY. What?

CAPODISTRIOU. Yes indeed. There are some people who never forget a face, and others who never forget the details of a misused client's account. I am in the latter category. In fact I sent a letter to your office. Didn't you get it? I marked it personal.

(PERKINS brings BAZEBY the glass of whisky and soda. BAZEBY takes it automatically and drops it on the floor.)

PERKINS. Let me get you another, sir. *(He retrieves the glass and moves to fetch a replacement.)*

BAZEBY. So you're the filthy rotter!

CAPODISTRIOU. Not so loud, Mr. Bazeby. Surely you don't want your butler to know about your maladroit embezzlement.

BAZEBY. To think that you're the man my wife sees fit to invite for the weekend. You can leave my house this instant. I'll have no blackmailing swine under my roof.

(PERKINS brings the replacement glass of whisky to BAZEBY.)

CAPODISTRIOU. Tut tut, Mr. Bazeby. Where's your stiff mouth?

BAZEBY. My what!

CAPODISTRIOU. Your famous English sang froid. Your stiff mouth.

BAZEBY. I'm afraid I don't follow you.

PERKINS. Perhaps Mr. Capodistriou is referring to a stiff upper lip, sir.

CAPODISTRIOU. Ah yes, indeed it is so.

BAZEBY. *(coldly)* Thank you, Perkins, that will be all for the moment.

(PERKINS retires to the pantry, down left door.)

CAPODISTRIOU. What a helpful manservant you have. Quite sensational powers of interpretation. Perhaps you could find him a position in the League of Nations.

BAZEBY. I don't need any of your damned impudence, Capodistriou. In fact, come to think of it, I don't need you here at all. Get out.

CAPODISTRIOU. No, I don't think so. A weekend in the country is what I enjoy most about England. Everyone is so relaxed and jolly good chaps. Except of course when they find out they're playing croquet with a criminal, or billiards with a bounder. Then they drop you like a hot yam.

BAZEBY. Potato!

CAPODISTRIOU. Potato!

(There is a crash outside. PERKINS enters from pantry and crosses down to liquor table.)

BAZEBY. What the devil's that?

PERKINS. I haven't the faintest idea.

BAZEBY. *(to CAPODISTRIOU)* Now you look here! Where's your proof of any, er, unlawful practice on my part? Just tell me that, eh?

CAPODISTRIOU. From indignation to bluster. Quite the usual route. Next comes wheedling and then pitiable appeals.

BAZEBY. My fist in your face comes next if you don't stop prevaricating and tell me what you know.

CAPODISTRIOU. I refer specifically to the Reverend Nigel Armstrong-Tweake's Charitable Trust Fund for the Sons of Indigent Mariners.

(BAZEBY puts his hand on CAPODISTRIOU'S mouth to silence him.)

CAPODISTRIOU. Need I say more?

BAZEBY. But I can explain about that ...

CAPODISTRIOU. To the deprived dependents, to the trustees, or to the police?

BAZEBY. Very well, so what do you want?

CAPODISTRIOU. Twenty-five hundred pounds.

BAZEBY. And after that another twenty-five I suppose, and so on.

CAPODISTRIOU. Not necessarily. It depends very much on inflation. It plays the very devil with the scrupulous extortioner's craft.

BAZEBY. The only thing that's scrupulous about you, Capodistriou, is your adherence to swinishness.

CAPODISTRIOU. Whilst in your case, of course, it is to the exalted standards of the British Law Society.

BAZEBY. At least I'm not a bloody blackmailer.

CAPODISTRIOU. What hypocrites you English are! Stealing from unsuspecting clients is unquestionably the favourite pastime of solicitors in this country, but a little circumspect blackmail is regarded as being quite beyond the bucket.

BAZEBY. Pale.

CAPODISTRIOU. Thank you. I think I'll ask for thirty-five hundred pounds.

BAZEBY. *(false hearty)* Now look here old man, I'm sorry if in the heat of the moment I seemed to draw some distinction between our activities. After all, it's been said many times that the law was invented purely to enrich lawyers. *(He laughs heartily and slaps CAPODISTRIOU on the back.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. Exactly. And blackmail was invented to enrich blackmailers. But by all means, cogitate most deeply my dear Mr. Bazeby, take your time. I shall be

fascinated by your decision.

(Enter REAR ADMIRAL KNATCHBULL FOLLIATT from up right door.)

REAR ADMIRAL. Evenin'. *(slight hesitation)* Bazeby isn't it?

BAZEBY. Quite so.

REAR ADMIRAL. Knatchbull Folliatt. Your wife invited me for the weekend. Met her at Kitty Codrington's party last Wednesday in town.

BAZEBY. Yes, yes, of course. But I'm afraid she's been delayed. Her car's broken down. A cocktail? Perkins here has mixed a most ferocious concoction. He's christened it a er ...

(Once again, PERKINS holds the decanter of green liquid dribbling on the rug.)

PERKINS. A Zombie Whammy, sir.

REAR ADMIRAL. Good God! I'll have a pinkie.

BAZEBY. A what?

PERKINS. That's alright sir. I think the Rear Admiral is referring to a pink gin.

CAPODISTRIOU. And not to a little finger, eh?

REAR ADMIRAL. Eh? What?

CAPODISTRIOU. In America the little finger is called a pinkie.

REAR ADMIRAL. There's no accountin' for a country which calls a Lieutenant (left) Commander a Lieutenant (loo) Commander.

PERKINS. Do you take the Angostura in or out sir?

REAR ADMIRAL. Out

(PERKINS throws out the pink over his shoulder and adds gin and water.)

CAPODISTRIOU. And there's no accounting for a country which calls its backsides and its admirals by a common name, is there *Rear* Admiral?

REAR ADMIRAL. You're a damned insolent fellow sir. Who the devil are you?

CAPODISTRIOU. Andreas Capodistriou. A name to conjure with.

REAR ADMIRAL. Greek aren't you?

CAPODISTRIOU. Partly. All the races of the Levant course through my blood.

REAR ADMIRAL. Ah! So you're a Levantine! That accounts for it.

CAPODISTRIOU. Accounts for what, Rear Admiral?

REAR ADMIRAL. Your gall, sir. Your infernal gall. I remember in the Med you couldn't put into a harbour east of Naples without havin' you lot swarm over me poop deck floggin' your overripe figs.

(PERKINS gives the REAR ADMIRAL his drink.)

BAZEBY. *(to PERKINS)* How's dinner progressing?

PERKINS. I'm informed that there are no significant problems in the kitchen sir. Perhaps in the absence of Mrs. Bazeby you would care to consult the menu.

(BAZEBY and PERKINS draw apart to study the menu and exit into the pantry stage left as the ADMIRAL sits on down left centre chair.)

CAPODISTRIOU. And I remember you too, *Rear* Admiral.

REAR ADMIRAL. Oh really? I hardly think we're acquainted.

CAPODISTRIOU. Only through a mutual friend, now alas taken from us. *(CAPODISTRIOU produces a photograph and shows it to the REAR ADMIRAL from behind him.)* One Matteas Lakkas -- a very pretty boy with eyes like Calamatta olives, which he used once, indiscreetly, to encourage the ravenous attentions of an old sea dog in the port of Iraklion.

REAR ADMIRAL. What!!!

CAPODISTRIOU. There are some people who never forget a face, and others who never forget the details of an act of Poop Deck Pederasty. I am in this latter category. It's nastier than the squelch of ripe figs I think ... and so was what happened later.

REAR ADMIRAL. Later?

CAPODISTRIOU. Shame, remorse, suicide, and afterwards the big hush up.

REAR ADMIRAL. But what is it that you are suggesting sir?

CAPODISTRIOU. Please cease to bluster, Rear Admiral. He who buggers the bugler boy does not play the tune.

REAR ADMIRAL. Preposterous!

CAPODISTRIOU. What is?

REAR ADMIRAL. Everything you're saying, that's what's preposterous sir.

CAPODISTRIOU. I have the evidence -- the note the boy wrote before he shot himself.

REAR ADMIRAL. Who would believe it?

CAPODISTRIOU. The Sunday newspapers.

REAR ADMIRAL. *(low)* It was years ago. Why have you waited so long?

CAPODISTRIOU. There is always a momente-juste in these affairs. You are to receive a knighthood are you not?

REAR ADMIRAL. You know that?

CAPODISTRIOU. Of course. It is my practice to make myself privy to the secrets of the honours list. Why only a week ago a certain incipient peer parted quite happily with four thousand pounds, rather than have the world know that he is ungovernably besotted by the backs of boy scouts' knees.

REAR ADMIRAL. You're going too far.

CAPODISTRIOU. Too far, Rear Admiral?

REAR ADMIRAL. You damned cad. Is there no trick you wouldn't stoop to?

CAPODISTRIOU. None. From you I shall only want two thousand pounds.

REAR ADMIRAL. Dammit man, you must understand. All those boys were the same wherever you went in the Med. They led you on with their hot eyes and their sly fetchin' ways. They take to that sort of thing out there as naturally as our lads take to cricket.

CAPODISTRIOU. Poor Matteas was an exception. No it's two thousand pounds in the next fortnight, or, as they say --- else.

REAR ADMIRAL. I'll see you dead first, you tremendous dago bounder! *(The REAR ADMIRAL runs to fireplace and grabs a poker to attack CAPODISTRIOU with. At that exact moment BAZEBY and PERKINS enter from the pantry door stage left.)*

BAZEBY. Why, Rear Admiral, is something the matter?

REAR ADMIRAL. What? ... Oh no ... just mulling me gin.

(Enter LADY TREMURRAIN as the REAR ADMIRAL replaces the poker.)

LADY TREMURRAIN. Perkins, I'm utterly devastated. I know that Queen Victoria slept in my room but it would have been nice of someone to have straightened up after her. I need a slug of something chilled and remedial.

PERKINS. A Zombie Whammy, my Lady?

LADY TREMURRAIN. What the devil's that?

PERKINS. One jigger gin. One jigger rye. One jigger aquavit. One jigger sake. One jigger creme de cacao. A ptarmigan's egg. Dash orange bitters. Dash garlic salt. Dash sherbert fizz. Dash ouzo with added Maalox. Shake and serve chilled, my Lady.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Perkins, you must have lost your mind. I'll have a dry sherry. Though I loathe sherry. Tastes like embalming fluid. What are you having? *(She points at CAPODISTRIOU as PERKINS moves to get her sherry.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. Oloroso sherry, madame. I'm afraid I have sweet teeth.

LADY TREMURRAIN. *(examining them)* I'm not sure I find them all that endearing. *(She extends a hand.)* I'm Lady Tremurrain.

CAPODISTRIOU. Andreas Capodistriou. Enchanté -- *(He kisses her hand extravagantly, licking it actually. She snatches it back fiercely.*

LADY TREMURRAIN. You're supposed to shake it, not ingest it.

PERKINS. *(Arrives with the sherry.)* Your sherry, my Lady.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Thank you, Perkins. Bottoms up. *(She drains the glass in a single swallow and replaces it on the tray with a violent shudder.)* That stuff's like a cold swim. Once you get over the first shock, it's fine. Where's my host? *(a bark)* Silas? Silas, where are you?

BAZEBY. Ah, Charlotte. I'm sorry. I was unappraised of your arrival. *(Crosses down to her from the book stacks.)*

LADY TREMURRAIN. Well you're appraised of it now. *(She offers her cheek to be kissed. He does so.)*

BAZEBY. Delighted to see you.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Hullo, Knatchy! How's the terror of the Boy's Navy?

REAR ADMIRAL. 'llo, Charlotte.

LADY TREMURRAIN. I didn't know you knew Silas and Angela.

REAR ADMIRAL. Met Angela at Kitty Codrington's last week. Invited me down.

(As before we hear a crash outside. They look about.)

BAZEBY. Perhaps that's Madam.

PERKINS. If that's Madam she must be as pissed as I am.

LADY TREMURRAIN. By the way, where is Angela? *(As she and the REAR ADMIRAL sit in chairs down right centre.)*

REAR ADMIRAL. Dunno. Some infernal nonsense about a car.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Who else is coming?

REAR ADMIRAL. Dunno. *(Nods at CAPODISTRIOU.)* She seems to have some dashed queer tastes in house guests.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Not like Angela to have blackies for the weekend.

REAR ADMIRAL. It's jolly bad form. I mean when a feller goes to the country he doesn't expect to find a damned greasy jackanapes of a woggo standin' smirkin' at him in the drawin' room.

PERKINS. *(reappears with the sherry)* Your sherry, my Lady.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Thank you, Perkins.

REAR ADMIRAL. Anchors away!

LADY TREMURRAIN. Bottoms up.

(REAR ADMIRAL does a take. As before she drains the glass in a single swallow and replaces it on the tray as she shudders violently. PERKINS sets off to fetch another without asking.)

REAR ADMIRAL. Can't think how you can drink that stuff.

LADY TREMURRAIN. It's me doctor, Knatchy. Tells me I've got diabetes. Fool quack, took me off whisky. Tiresome little maggot. *(She takes cigarette from box and places it in holder.)*

REAR ADMIRAL. Better to snuff it from diabetes than from sherry poisoning I'd have said, what? With me it's hay fever.

LADY TREMURRAIN. That's a funny thing for an old salt to

have. I wouldn't have thought there was all that much hay at sea. What do you take for it?

REAR ADMIRAL. Pink gin.

CAPODISTRIOU. And I take money. *(As he offers lighted match to light her cigarette.)*

LADY TREMURRAIN. You take what, Mr. er ...

(The REAR ADMIRAL gets up and crosses into book stacks, up centre.

CAPODISTRIOU. Capodistriou. One of the Smyrna Capodistrious. I would advise you to remember the name well.

LADY TREMURRAIN. I somehow doubt that I shall be capable of doing so.

CAPODISTRIOU. But it is very important to have a good memory, chère Madame. There are some people who never forget a face, and others who never forget the slope of humiliated shoulders after their owner has been detected cheating at cards. I am in this latter category. *(He sits in chair right of LADY TREMURRAIN and takes cards from his pocket and ruffles them.)*

LADY TREMURRAIN. Cheating at cards ... ?

CAPODISTRIOU. Exactly two months ago in the Anglo-Swiss Bridge Club in Geneva. You were expelled -- given the bum's rash.

LADY TREMURRAIN. What fearful piffle is this?

CAPODISTRIOU. Useless to deny it, Lady Tremurrain. A good friend of mine who owed me a trifling favour, is on the committee.

LADY TREMURRAIN. I was unjustly accused. The

secretary was a stupid little man who believed the malicious tittle tattle of some jumped up ... *(She rises and crosses to centre.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. Greasy jackanapes of a woggo? No, I don't think so. The decision was upheld by the whole committee. Fortunately for you the affair was discreetly handled and no breath of it has reached the salons of London -- as yet.

LADY TREMURRAIN. *(Looks carefully about her.)* What are you going to do?

CAPODISTRIOU. Aha! Your voice I note has suddenly a timid and tremulous sound.

LADY TREMURRAIN. *(Strikes a piteously theatrical pose as she crosses back toward him. Spurious dramatic "Galsworthy" voice.)* Mr.... er ... I beg you to keep silent. My husband is a cabinet minister. A disclosure of this nature would ruin him.

CAPODISTRIOU. The Minister for War is he not?

LADY TREMURRAIN. Indeed he is.

CAPODISTRIOU. Then you have the remedy in your hands. Madame, I need information about the forthcoming Anglo-German Naval Agreement. *(He pulls her down to stool next to him.)*

LADY TREMURRAIN. Naval Agreement?

CAPODISTRIOU. I want you to find out for me whether Germany is going to be allowed to build as many submarines as England.

LADY TREMURRAIN. How could I possibly find that out?

CAPODISTRIOU. Ask your hubby.

LADY TREMURRAIN. But he is bound to secrecy. What

you suggest is treason! You must know I can't do what you ask. *(She frees herself and crosses stage left.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. I know no such thing. The only question is can you afford to be banned from every bridge table in London?

LADY TREMURRAIN. I would sooner disembowel myself with a teaspoon ... I mean, how would I pass the afternoons?

CAPODISTRIOU. There are other pursuits I'm told Madame, of even greater popularity -- the roll in the hay, the slap and the treacle. But perhaps such pre-dinner exercise is not to your taste.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Diabetes is debilitating enough for me without the additional fatigues of fornication.

CAPODISTRIOU. I think I can show you ways of overcoming such fatigues.

LADY TREMURRAIN. I note, sir, that you are as impertinent as you are odious.

CAPODISTRIOU. You are free to do so Madame, just as long as you also note that I shall require that information by the first day of next month.

LADY TREMURRAIN. I don't know how they ever allow your kind into this country, you monstrous little turd!

BAZEBY. *(Crosses down from the book stacks.)* Charlotte, has Mr. Capodistriou been anoying you?

LADY TREMURRAIN. *(recovering herself)* He really does have a most disobliging manner. I suppose people like that can't help it. After all, an upbringing in the slums of Smyrna can hardly be said to be adequate training for social exchanges in an English country drawing room. Angela must have taken leave of her senses.

BAZEBY. She always did have a soft spot for lame dogs.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Nothing lame about this dog. Not that it wouldn't be an exquisite pleasure to cripple him with a smashing boot up the bum.

BAZEBY. Quite so. I'm sure you're not alone in that sentiment. Ah, here comes Lavinia and her young man.

(Enter ROGER DASHWELL and LAVINIA HARGREAVES from upstage left door on balcony.)

LADY TREMURRAIN. He looks dramatically dishonest. Who is he?

BAZEBY. Lord Bathgate's nephew.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Indeed? Don't I recall some curious goings on about all that ...

BAZEBY. Now is not the time to renovate your memory. *(He crosses to greet them.)*

LAVINIA. Hello, Mr. Bazeby. It's absolutely super of your wife to invite us for the weekend. You know my fiance, Roger Dashwell, don't you?

DASHWELL. How d'ye do? *(Crosses down stairs into the room shaking BAZEBY'S hand hard.)*

BAZEBY. How do you do. I'm afraid Angela's been delayed so I'm rather as the saying goes, "holding the fort."

DASHWELL. Keeping the fuzzie wuzzies at bay, what? Haw haw haw ...

BAZEBY. Quite.

DASHWELL. Spiffin tiffin ...

BAZEBY. Cocktail? It's called a King Kong Whammy.

PERKINS. *(Again stands dribbling the green liquid on the rug)* A Zombie Whammy actually, sir. The King Kong has the added monkey's scrotum.

DASHWELL. Whisky and splash for me, old boy. Darling?

LAVINIA. A soft drink please. Orange squash or something equally futile.

DASHWELL. The old thing's got a touch of her jaundice back. Bad luck, really. She looks like a blasted lemon in some lights.

PERKINS. Will bottled orangeade suffice, miss?

LAVINIA. Super, Perkins.

BAZEBY. Do you know Lady Tremurrain and Rear Admiral Knatchbull Folliatt? Lavinia Hargreaves and Roger Dashwell.

LADY TREMURRAIN. How do you do?

REAR ADMIRAL. How d'ye do?

LAVINIA. / DASHWELL. How do you do?

BAZEBY. And this is Mr. Capodistriou.

LAVINIA. Oh, it's you!

CAPODISTRIOU. Indispensably.

LAVINIA. Hardly that. Don't you mean indisputably.

BAZEBY. Do you know each other then?

CAPODISTRIOU. Oh yes. Miss Hargreaves and I are old friends.

LAVINIA. We have met occasionally in London.

BAZEBY. *(Looks from one to the other curiously.)* I see. You seemed somewhat surprised to see Mr. Capodistriou here.

LAVINIA. Yes, I am a little.

CAPODISTRIOU. Perhaps it is seeing me in these clothes you're not used to.

LADY TREMURRAIN. I should have thought that it was you who wasn't used to them.

CAPODISTRIOU. *(meaningly)* You mean I'm a bit of a *cheat* in them?

LADY TREMURRAIN. *(hurriedly)* No, no I just meant that they were a trifle nouveau, that's all.

REAR ADMIRAL. And loud ... Loud as a sixteen inch shell ... Haw haw haw.

CAPODISTRIOU. Or as a sound of a suicide's gun?

(There is an awkward pause as we hear thunder and lightning and the lights flicker out and on again as DAME EDITH enters from upstage French doors.

BAZEBY. Ah, Dame Edith, so it was you who's been wandering about out there. We were rather curious who it was.

DAME EDITH. I've been looking for the entrance for the past half hour. I'm afraid I'm so short sighted I've demolished almost all of your outhouses.

BAZEBY. Well now that you're here, let me introduce you to Lavinia Hargreaves.

(Blindly DAME EDITH shakes hands with ROGER DASHWELL.)

BAZEBY. And Roger Dashwell.

(She shakes hands with LAVINIA HARGREAVES.)

BAZEBY. No no. This is Lavinia Hargreaves, and this is Roger Dashwell.

DAME EDITH. I'm so sorry. This blindness is a real curse.

LAVINIA. Don't worry. I'm quite used to it. Darling Roger here gets blind most nights of the week.

DASHWELL. Absolument pas, ravishing one. Sober as dear old Solomon, what? Not that I couldn't use a snort right now. Perkins seems to feel that the scotch needs another hour's maturing in bottle before he serves it ... God helps those, eh? *(He crosses to the drinks table to help himself. He pours a scotch. He then moves to give LAVINIA her orangeade.)*

(DAME EDITH bumps into the gong and gets tangled in it. She attempts to extricate herself from it, but makes a fearful hash of it. PERKINS moves to help.

PERKINS. Would madam care for my assistance in extricating her from that Kirghiz gong?

DAME EDITH. No, Perkins. Not Kirghiz *(Bangs gong.)* Jammu.

PERKINS. I beg your pardon. Would madam care for my assistance in extricating her from that Jammu gong?

(After complications, the task is completed.)

DAME EDITH. Thank you for helping me, Perkins. How are your corns these days?

PERKINS. It wasn't corns, madam. It was shingles.

DAME EDITH. You may very well be right.

PERKINS. Thank you, madam I do assure you it was

shingles. A most unfortunate complaint, being in fact a cutaneous disease which spreads round the crotch like a girdle.

BAZEBY. That will do, Perkins. I don't think any of us are particularly interested in hearing the details of your personal ailments.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Oh I am. I'm absolutely riveted. Perkins, are you sure it wasn't impetigo? Those are those nasty little blisters which cover the entire body until you're just one big pus bag.

(BAZEBY spits out his drink.)

LAVINIA. How very very nasty. I think I'll go upstairs and have a teeny vomit. *(She and DASHWELL cross to upper level and wander in and out of the stacks during the following exchanges.)*

BAZEBY. Dame Edith Runcible, do you know Lady Tremurrain?

DAME EDITH. How do you do?

LADY TREMURRAIN. My dear, haven't we met somewhere before?

DAME EDITH. I'm afraid I can't be sure. The memory is going as fast as the eyesight.

BAZEBY. They do say it's the memory that goes first.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Not necessarily. In my case, it's quite clearly the mammaries.

BAZEBY. Dame Edith is a very distinguished antiquarian and archaeologist. Dame Edith, I don't think you know Rear Admiral Knatchbull Folliatt.

(Missing the REAR ADMIRAL she shakes hands with BAZEBY. CADODISTRIOU moves forward and extends his hand.

CAPODISTRIOU. Andreas Capodistriou. Enchanté. *(He kisses her hand elaborately.)*

REAR ADMIRAL. Damn slimy Italiano way of going about things, nibbling her fingers.

LADY TREMURRAIN. He nearly had mine off down to the second knuckle.

PERKINS. A cocktail, madam?

DAME EDITH. *(Eyes it dubiously. It is one of PERKINS' Zombie Whammies.)* Do you recommend it?

PERKINS. Most emphatically, madam. It's a Zombie Whammy. I made it myself.

DAME EDITH. Oh well, in that case ... *(She drinks it down and all but explodes.)* Most unusual.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Fill me up again, will you, Perkins?

PERKINS. Certainly.

DAME EDITH. Are you a Greek, Mr. Capodistriou?

CAPODISTRIOU. Mostly, Dame Edith, mostly. But part of my blood is from beyond the Bosphorous.

DAME EDITH. Ah Turkey. How well I know it. Up at four o'clock in the morning, digging away like moles. By ten o'clock, it's too hot you see.

CAPODISTRIOU. Yes I do see. But please correct me if I'm wrong. Is not the word "hot" in English slang, used to describe something stolen?

DAME EDITH. I really wouldn't know, Mr. Capodistriou. Slang is scarcely my forte.

CAPODISTRIOU. Nonetheless I believe it is so. If for example an archaeologist discovered a valuable pot, but concealed the find, and smuggled it out of the country,

that pot could be said to be "hot." *(He picks up an antique vase from the table for illustration.)*

LADY TREMURRAIN. Thanks, Perkins. Bottoms up.

CAPODISTRIOU. There are some people who never forget a face, and others who never forget a face intagliated on a stolen vase, amphora, or wine cup. I am in this latter category.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Perkins, if you don't find me something to gnaw on immediately I shall go into a diabetic daze.

DAME EDITH. My God! You're a blackmailer!

CAPODISTRIOU. Sssh! Not so loud.

DAME EDITH. By your discomfiture anyone would think I was blackmailing you. Ha ha! How much?

CAPODISTRIOU. You should be able to manage three hundred a year, I think.

DAME EDITH. But that would cripple my research. It's out of the question.

CAPODISTRIOU. You must give me leave to believe otherwise, and what is more I shall want the first half in cash next week. If not, I'm afraid it will be exposure, professional ruin, and even perhaps a Greek prison cell, the contemplation of whose slimy old walls, I swear even an archaeologist like yourself will quickly tire.

DAME EDITH. You really are the most odious little Greco-Turk I have ever encountered. *(She grabs vase from him and attempts to bean him with it as ...)*

BAZEBY. Dame Edith! *(Takes vase from her and takes her to a chair upstage left to sit.)*

DASHWELL. I say, Rear Admiral. Lavinia here was wondering if you had any tales of daring-do bashing the Boche you would care to tell her about. She's a sucker for daring-do, is Lavinia.

REAR ADMIRAL. Really? Daring-do, eh?

LADY TREMURRAIN. Surely there is some outrageous man to man incident you can recall, Knatchy, which will make this poor girl's hair curl.

REAR ADMIRAL. Well, I don't know.

LADY TREMURRAIN. Come, come now, do you think I'm referring to catemites?

LAVINIA. What the hell's a catemite?

LADY TREMURRAIN. It's defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as a sodomite's minion. Hence the phrase, "a cat might look at a queen."

LAVINIA. Yes, I see. But what about the Eyeties then, Admiral? You must have had some fun fighting them.

REAR ADMIRAL. No go, little girl. The Eyeties were supposed to be our allies -- remember?

LAVINIA. Oh, yes ... what jolly bad luck.

DASHWELL. I say, Bazeby old chap, isn't it about time we donned the jolly old nosebags?

BAZEBY. I thought we'd hold on for Angela.

DASHWELL. Why, has she got the grub boxed up in the back of her car? Haw haw haw.

CAPODISTRIOU. You have too voracious an appetite, cher Roger. You must learn the pleasures of the patient predator.

BAZEBY. I hadn't noticed you'd learned that, Mr Capodistriou. And I see you know Mr. Dashwell too.

CAPODISTRIOU. Oh yes, indeed I do.

DASHWELL. Eh what?

BAZEBY. You seem to know everybody, Mr. Capodistriou.

CAPODISTRIOU. Not everybody, Mr. Bazeby, but I like to think I profit a little from everybody I meet, and that

they profit from me. Don't you agree, my dear Miss Hargreaves?

(LAVINIA turns away abruptly.)

DASHWELL. Here I say. You can't go upsetting Miss Hargreaves like that, old boy.

CAPODISTRIOU. Old boy, is it? We've grown some fancy manners, haven't we?

DASHWELL. I'm sorry you don't approve of me lingo. Have to blame the old Alma Mater for that I'm afraid.

CAPODISTRIOU. And what might that be -- the old Alma Mater?

DASHWELL. B.N.C.O.U. old sausage. Brasenose College at Oxford University to be precise. *(Crosses to liquor table to pour a drink.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. And subsequently the University of Life, eh?

DASHWELL. Well I've knocked about a bit in the last few years. Opal mining, cattle ranching ...

CAPODISTRIOU. ... rock breaking, mail bag sewing ...

DASHWELL. I'm afraid I don't quite follow your drift, old fruit.

CAPODISTRIOU. Very simply old boy, old sausage, old fruit, I am referring to your spell of penal servitude in the Boggo Road jail, Brisbane, for your part in the Kyrenian Kangaroo Caper.

DASHWELL. What do you mean?

CAPODISTRIOU. Surely it hasn't slipped your mind already. A consignment of souvenir kangaroos made in Cyprus, each with four ounces of heroin sewn into its pouch. The customs officers, who in a rare moment of

Marsupial insight, bounded to the right conclusions were most unamused. Their displeasure cost you eight years inside.

DASHWELL. In my opinion, old bean, you're completely crackers, off your chump, out to lunch.

CAPODISTRIOU. And in my opinion your opinion is as worthless as your character. You must realize that there are some people in this world who never forget a face, and others who never forget a face even when it has been cunningly changed to serve the needs of criminal impostiture. I am in this latter category.

DASHWELL. If I were you chum, I'd rather be in the category of not making slanderous remarks, that might cost me dear.

CAPODISTRIOU. Your real name is Charles Corrigan, an obscure member of the Australian Criminal Fraternity. The real Roger Dashwell was accidentally drowned in the Murimbidgee River while attempting an incautiously inebriated Scottische across some stepping stones. I must say you seized your moment admirably, and in a trice had him safely buried under your own name. Subsequently of course, you took the name of Roger Dashwell and in due season turned up in England as the long lost heir.

DASHWELL. But look here, I don't think you can prove a word of all this.

CAPODISTRIOU. Indeed I can. You see you were rather careless. Removing Dashwell's identity bracelet was not enough. You should have also remembered his signet ring. *(Shows him a signet ring he is wearing and then pulls it away.)*

DASHWELL. *(Leaps at ring.) (Australian accent)* Suffering Sheilas! *(Looks around him and regains his composure.)* Alright, what have you got in mind?

CAPODISTRIOU. Why don't we start you off at a modest ten pounds a week?

DASHWELL. A tenner a week! Fair suck of the sauce bottle cobber, you must be crazy!

CAPODISTRIOU. Crazier than losing your title and your heiress?

DASHWELL. You don't think Lavinia would desert me, even if she knew the truth? She loves me.

CAPODISTRIOU. She loves the idea of becoming the Countess of Bathgate.

DASHWELL. Balls! She loves me for meself. For my ready wit, for my roguish smile. For the insouciant set of my gay foulard scarves. For my curiously opposed profile, half Valentino, half Errol Flynn. She's told me so, often. You see, once a chap like me has captured a gel's affections, any peccadilloes in his past which come to light only serve to make him seem the more rippingly irresistible.

CAPODISTRIOU. Very well. Let's ask her shall we? Miss Hargreaves!

DASHWELL. *(capitulating, sotto voce)* Alright, alright I agree.

LAVINIA. Yes. *(Crosses down from book stacks.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. I wonder if I might have a word with you.

DASHWELL. I've said I agree.

CAPODISTRIOU. Good. Then you've nothing to fear. Why don't you get your charming fiancee a drink.

DASHWELL. I say, old thing, another of those er ... futile er ... *(He crosses to liquor table.)*

LAVINIA. Orange things?

DASHWELL. Yes. *(He reaches for soda bottle and finds it empty. He runs off left through dining room door for another.)*

LAVINIA. Thank you. What do you want?

CAPODISTRIOU. You. You failed to turn up on Monday.

LAVINIA. I've had enough. I think I'd rather let the whole thing come out and get it over with, than spend another fetid evening enduring your little monkey paws racing all over my body. My family would understand I'm sure.

CAPODISTRIOU. My dear Miss. Hargreaves, it's not your family we're concerned with now, but that of the Bathgates. The present earl is 93. His heir is Mr. Dashwell. It is most likely that in the next couple of years you will become the Countess of Bathgate unless ...

LAVINIA. Unless ...

CAPODISTRIOU. Unless he learns about the child whose birth and death you concealed in Turkey last year. That I fear might upset his noble scruples somewhat.

LAVINIA. You wouldn't tell him!

CAPODISTRIOU. I am prepared to wait until next Monday evening.

LAVINIA. Alright. But just you wait, you dreary little man. When I'm married and have succeeded to the title ...

CAPODISTRIOU. You will still come. What you did may not be grounds for annulment, but it would still interest the Turkish authorities.

LAVINIA. What could anyone prove? The child died naturally.

CAPODISTRIOU. So you say, but with what I could tell them, would they believe it? And could you afford the scandal of an investigation?

(She looks away, unable to answer.)

CAPODISTRIOU. You see, you can do nothing. As you say in England, I know where the body is entered.

LAVINIA. *(irritably)* You mean interred.

CAPODISTRIOU. Everyone corrects my English. How kind you all are in this country.

LAVINIA. How you disgust me!

CAPODISTRIOU. I expect your disgust, Miss. Hargreaves, as much as I enjoy your body. There are some people who never forget a face, and others who never forget the expression on a face which is trying to hide its enjoyment of a little low life nooky. I am in this latter category, and I am absolutely certain that you will be around punctually at eight o'clock next Monday evening to sample the heady delights of 27 Balaclava Mansions.

LAVINIA. Eugh!

(DASHWELL enters speedily with another soda and hands LAVINIA her drink.)

CAPODISTRIOU. Ah, the gallant Mr. Dashwell. Back so soon! How exactly you suit your name.

DASHWELL. How d'ye mean, old prune?

CAPODISTRIOU. You dash well. It is the English fun, is it not?

DASHWELL. Pun ... it's a pun.

CAPODISTRIOU. Thank you. Everyone is so kind.

VOICE OF MURDERER. So here we all are, gathered together for the weekend in an English country house -- and one of us hell bent on murder. I'm sorry to intrude but I

really can't resist talking to you now, as I stand here in the library at Orcas Champflower Manor, inhaling tobacco smoke deeply

(LADY TREMURRAIN smokes.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. and thinking pretty smugly I admit, that I really do have a pretty fool proof murder plan.

(ROGER smokes.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. Yes, all has been plotted, and brilliantly stage managed.

(BAZEBY smokes.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. But enough of self-congratulation.

(REAR ADMIRAL smokes.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. One must not be carried away either by the intoxication of the plan,

(DAME EDITH smokes.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. or by the strength

(LAVINIA smokes.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. of the drinks at the cocktail hour.

(PERKINS smokes.)

(We reveal during the course of this speech, very slowly, that everybody on stage is smoking -- either cigarettes, or in the case of ROGER DASHWELL, a pipe. The object of the slow reveal is to allow the audience to believe that the murderer has made a slip and by refering to smoking we will easily guess his identity. PERKINS is the last to smoke, and covers his furtive drag on the cigarette by fiddling with the carpet.)

BAZEBY. Perkins, what are you doing?

PERKINS. I haven't a friggin' notion.

BAZEBY. One more drink for everybody and then we'll start.

PERKINS. Without madam, sir?

BAZEBY. Yes, without madam.

PERKINS. A further cocktail, Dame Edith?

DAME EDITH. No thank you, I've been Whammied enough.

LADY TREMURRAIN. So when are you to be married, my dear?

LAVINIA. The old ball and chain will be cemented into place at Christmas. I do hope it'll work out.

LADY TREMURRAIN. There's no earthly reason why it shouldn't provided you always remember that it takes two to make a marriage -- and sometimes several.

DAME EDITH. It is Mr. Dashwell to whom you are affianced, is it not?

LAVINIA. That's right, Dame Edith. Isn't he super?

DAME EDITH. Oh charming. May one ask how long you've known him?

LAVINIA. Oh, long enough.

DAME EDITH. I've been married thirty years, and you know it's a funny thing, but the older my husband gets the more he interests me. I suppose it's because I'm an archaeologist.

REAR ADMIRAL. I saw in the Times that your uncle has recognized you as his heir. How long was it you were away exactly?

DASHWELL. Fifteen years, sir. Down among the convicts, don't you know.

REAR ADMIRAL. Eh? You mean you were in jail?

DASHWELL. No, sir, I meant the Aussies.

REAR ADMIRAL. Oh. Well a spot of adventure never hurt anybody. Mind you, if you want to see native life, you don't have to leave England these days.

DASHWELL. You mean that greasy pedlar over there?

REAR ADMIRAL. Put a Golly in an English drawing room and I tell you it's the end of civilisation as we know it.

BAZEBY. I have noticed that every time my guests have a chat with you, Capodistriou, they finish up looking unhappy. Are you blackmailing them too?

CAPODISTRIOU. We all have to live.

BAZEBY. Not you, Capodistriou. I see no good reason for you to go on living at all.

CAPODISTRIOU. You know that's the first time I've been threatened by a distinguished member of the legal profession. It's most blood curdling.

BAZEBY. Never underestimate British phlegm, Capodistriou.

CAPODISTRIOU. I don't know about British phlegm, Mr. Bazeby, but I do know a little about British flesh, and I can

assure you I never do underestimate it. *(He looks lasciviously at LAVINIA.)*

CAPODISTRIOU. In fact, I have a consuming passion for the perfect English complexion, the strawberries and yoghurt.

BAZEBY. I think you are quite the most despicable man I've ever met.

CAPODISTRIOU. Really? And what do you propose to do about it?

BAZEBY. *(loudly)* Kill you, Capodistriou! That's what I propose to do about it. Kill you -- you stinking little worm.

(Everyone looks at BAZEBY, then away, embarrassed.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. An incautious remark -- the first loss of control. I will have to be careful so perhaps I had better inconspicuously turn away to study the reflection of my face. It has at all costs to be studiously composed.

(The clock chimes 8 as they all turn slowly to reveal what they're doing on the end of the murderer's speech. On their respective chime:

Chime 1 PERKINS looks in silver server.

Chime 2 BAZEBY looks into silver cigarette case.

Chime 3 DASHWELL looks into picture frame from table.

Chime 4 REAR ADMIRAL looks into polished shoe.

Chime 5 LADY TREMURRAIN looks into compact mirror.

Chime 6 DAME EDITH picks up silver cigarette box and looks into it.

Chime 7 LAVINIA looks into gong.)

PERKINS. Ladies and gentlemen, dinner is served.

BAZEBY. Come along, everybody. Let us not keep Cook waiting. She is rather apt to get a bit upset if we keep her masterpieces hanging about.

DASHWELL. Jolly good. I'm as hungry as a horse.

LAVINIA. I could eat a horse.

LADY TREMURRAIN. If I know anything about that pinch-penny cook that is precisely what you will be doing.

REAR ADMIRAL. Permit me to take you in, ma'am.

DAME EDITH. Oh thank you, Admiral. How truly gallant. You make me feel like an old cargo ship being escorted by a frigate.

CAPODISTRIOU. I shall stay here for a moment. It is always my custom to kneel for a short while in prayer before dinner, and thank the good God for the many blessings he has bestowed upon me. I shall be with you all shortly.

(PERKINS opens the door and BAZEBY starts to lead the way through it with LADY TREMURRAIN. The others file out, leaving CAPODISTRIOU alone on the stage as he turns off the lights. CAPODISTRIOU kneels down and bends his

head in prayer.

As CAPODISTRIOU chants, the REAR ADMIRAL enters from dining room leaving door open and gets his sword and takes his position stage right stacks. DASHWELL enters from front doors stage right and gets his sword and takes his position stage left stacks. LADY TREMURRAIN enters from dining room and enters stacks stage left. PERKINS enters from the secret door stage right and crosses to get sword and enters stacks stage left. BAZEBY enters through front door and crosses down to get sword and enters stacks stage left. DAME EDITH enters from dining room, gets sword and enters stacks stage right. LAVINIA enters from dining room and closes the door behind her. She gets sword and enters stacks stage left.

As the last person enters we hear the murderer's voice.

VOICE OF MURDERER. Ah! At last, I've got him where I want him. I'll take this oily fellow now and so am I revenged. And I'll do it boldly in the presence of all and yet no one will know whodunnit!!

(There is a crack of thunder and lightning as all the swords are raised one by one starting downstage left and working around to downstage right. Suddenly a sword flashes stage right, and CADODISTRIOU'S head is struck off his body and bounces downstage spurting blood as ...)

CURTAIN FALLS

ACT TWO
Whodunnit
by
Anthony Shaffer

Scene One

(Note: The curtain rises AFTER the murderer's speech.)

VOICE OF MURDERER. Ladies and gentlemen, unless you are prepared to leave the murder of the odious Capodistriou unsolved, I must beg your further attention. Immediately after the killing the police were informed, and while waiting for them to arrive, a little desultory dinner was taken. I must confess that most of the company had no appetite for it, but I ate well enough -- considering that the lamb fricasee was raw, and the crème brûlée overcooked. Finally, I took myself for a stroll in the garden. It was a truly beautiful June evening, scented and still, and as I paced the lawn listening to the

chimes of a distant church clock float up faintly from the valley below, and watching the bats flit through its ancient tower, I knew with a complete certainty that the police would find out absolutely nothing.

(As curtain goes up we see SERGEANT STANDISH standing in silhouette at the front door. He is a young uniformed copper. He turns on the lights and comes into the room. As he stands with his back to the audience studying the bloody prie dieu, a sword descends just missing him. He starts and jumps back as the INSPECTOR steps forward. He is dressed in smart tweeds.)

SERGEANT. Oh, it's you, sir.

INSPECTOR. What an astonishing way to kill someone, sergeant.

SERGEANT. I quite agree, sir. It's most odd.

INSPECTOR. I'll say it is. A feller gets his nut cut off with a sword before they've even started the soup course, and no one saw a thing.

SERGEANT. Perhaps they're all in it together, like in that Agatha Christie book 'Murder on the Orient Express'.

INSPECTOR. You mean it's a crime inspired by detective fiction?

SERGEANT. Well it could be, sir.

INSPECTOR. If only it were, sergeant, if only it were -- but in my experience life seldom copies art. It's dull, boring, and routine. So let's start with the doctor's report.

SERGEANT. *(Takes out a piece of paper.)* Yes, sir. *(reads)* The overt cause of death was beheading ...

INSPECTOR. Well I'd have said that that was just about as

overt as you can get.

(The phone rings and the SERGEANT picks it up.)

SERGEANT. Yes, speaking ... Yes, doctor ... what? I'll tell him. Right, thank you very much, doctor. *(to INSPECTOR)* That was the doctor, sir.

INSPECTOR. So I gathered. What does he want?

SERGEANT. He says he has been examining the victim's head, and that there is something very peculiar about it.

INSPECTOR. Peculiar?

SERGEANT. He says it's covered in makeup.

INSPECTOR. Makeup? Does he mean the stock aids of the ageing Latin -- a little dye to cloak the grey of the pencil moustache?

SERGEANT. No, sir. Stage makeup, he says.

INSPECTOR. Stage makeup?

SERGEANT. He's washed it off and there's another man underneath who looks quite different. Fair haired, younger -- sort of regular looking business man. He's taken a photograph and it's on its way over.

INSPECTOR. My God! This case is getting odder by the minute. Perhaps you're right and we should look to the world of thriller fiction for a solution after all. Tell the houseguests I want to see them.

SERGEANT. Which one first?

INSPECTOR. I think all together to start with -- till we get acquainted ...

SERGEANT. Right. *(Opens the door and PERKINS falls through.)* Mr. Perkins, please!

SERGEANT. Could you ask Mr. Bazeby and his guests to step in here for a moment, please.

PERKINS. Very good, sir. *(exits)*

INSPECTOR. You know a bit about detective fiction then, do you, Sergeant?

SERGEANT. Oh yes, sir. I read a lot of them myself. My favourite is Hercule Poirot *(French accent)* ze little grey cells ... you know, sir.

INSPECTOR. I prefer Dr. Fell myself ... a more erudite class of fellow altogether.

SERGEANT. Oh yes I know him -- he's in the John Dickson Carr books isn't he?

INSPECTOR. That's right. A whopping great fellow who wheezes about on a cane, wearing a big cloak, floppy hat, smokes cigars, drinks quarts of beer, quoting funny bits of poetry. I think he was based a bit on that writer fellow G. K. Chesterton.

SERGEANT. Really, sir?

INSPECTOR. Yes. In another life I often fancy I'd have been a bit like that.

SERGEANT. I wouldn't have thought you'd read all those thrillers, sir.

INSPECTOR. I must admit I'm something of a fan myself. Though it wouldn't do to let the boys at the Yard know that.

SERGEANT. Oh I can quite see that, sir.

INSPECTOR. But on this occasion it might come in very handy. I mean, what is signally the most important fact about this case, do you think?

SERGEANT. The murder itself, sir?

INSPECTOR. Exactly. I mean if you wanted to murder a

man, sergeant, one of the last things you would think of doing is beheading him with a long curved Kushkara sword. Wouldn't you agree?

SERGEANT. It wouldn't be my cho ce, sir, no.

INSPECTOR. But it might very well be the choice of someone fascinated by detective literature.

PERKINS. *(entering)* The house guests, sir.

(Enter the REAR ADMIRAL, LADY TREMURRAIN LAVINIA HARGREAVES, ROGER DASHWELL, DAME EDITH and BAZEBY. They look cowed and scared.)

SERGEANT. I'll just chase up that photograph, sir. *(He exits through the French doors.)*

INSPECTOR. Ah! The suspects.

BAZEBY. What are you talking about, suspects?

INSPECTOR. No routine protests, if you please.

BAZEBY. Routine protests? What the devil --

INSPECTOR. I mean that it seems to me, that I may have been fortunate towards the end of a longish career in run of the mill villainy, to find myself for the first time investigating what I believe is called a classic, closed circle, English country house murder, with half a dozen archetypal suspects such as you would find in books, and a butler. So don't let's spoil it all by routine protests. *(He looks significantly at DASHWELL.)*

DASHWELL. What are you looking at me for? I don't know anything about this. I haven't done anything. I'm innocent, do you hear me? Absolutely innocent.

INSPECTOR. That sort of protest is perfectly permissible, as long as it's done in character. You, Rear Admiral, can

bluster but not whine. You, Lady Tremurrain, can voice your innocence in terms of haughty aphorism. You young people can be racily disrespectful of the might of the law, whilst you, Mr. Bazeby, and you, Dame Edith, can be respectively fustian and frumpish. As for you, Perkins, your role is to grovel polysyllabically.

PERKINS. I don't know what you're on about.

INSPECTOR. Well I'm sorry if I'm coming on a bit fancy, but it seems to me that if I'm to solve this crime I've got to put myself into the position of the person who designed it. In other words, I should try and behave a bit like one of those eccentric sleuths out of detective fiction. It might just give me the proper insights. *(With the above speech the INSPECTOR crosses up to the front door to a clothes tree upon which are hanging some garments. From among these he selects a floppy hat, a cape and puts them on. From a nearby umbrella stand he selects a cane and by the time he descends the stairs again he is "Doctor Fell," limp and all.*

LAVINIA. Well at least I see you know who we all are.

INSPECTOR. Mr. Perkins was good enough to supply a list of the guests. Fitting the faces to the names called for astonishingly little skill.

BAZEBY. And might we have the pleasure of your name, sir?

INSPECTOR. I am Chief Inspector Bowden of the C.I.D. I was dining in the area with the Lord Lieutenant of the County, and he asked me to take charge of the case. And now that the formalities are over, perhaps we can begin.

DAME EDITH. Surely we're not all here. Where are the maids and the cook?