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The Farndale Avenue Housing Estate
Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society
Production of

MURDER MYSTERY

by David McGillivray and
Walter Zerlin Jnr

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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ISBN 978-0-573-11141-9

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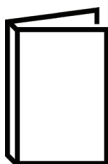
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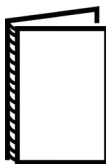


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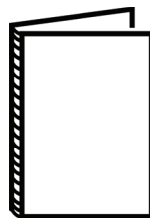
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin Jnr

David McGillivray and Walter Zerlin Jnr formed the touring theatre company Entertainment Machine in 1975. The following year their play *The Farndale/Macbeth* was performed on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe to such acclaim that a further nine *Farndale* plays ensued. Most are published by Samuel French.

The final play, *The Farndale/Peter Pan*, was left unfinished following the death of Zerlin in 2001. It was completed by McGillivray in 2013.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

In the preface to the last edition of this play, Walter Zerlin Jnr and I promised to do no further re-writing. Privately we remained dissatisfied with one scene. We couldn't be bothered to do anything about it until 1996, when a new tour was being planned. This was the incentive we needed. We wrote the new scene, which involves Felicity playing a new character, Mrs Castle, on November 2nd, 1996. The tour was a disaster. (It coincided with the death of Diana, Princess of Wales). Nevertheless the new scene features one of Zerlin's most inspired pieces of stupidity and I am very pleased that it is included for the first time in this edition.

David McGillivray
London, January 2007

MURDER MYSTERY

First produced at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe on August 18th, 1980, with the following cast of characters:

SYLVIA (playing INSPECTOR O'REILLY)	Pippa Sparkes
FELICITY (playing PAWN , a butler; COLONEL KING , Lady Bishop's brother-in-law)	Philomena McDonagh
AUDREY (playing LADY DOREEN BISHOP , a widow; VIOLET BISHOP , her spinster aunt; MRS KING , the COLONEL 's wife; JOAN BISHOP , Lady Bishop's cousin)	Anne-Marie Davies
MRS REECE (playing CLARISSA ROOK , Lady Bishop's sister; RÉGINE , the French maid; PATRICIA BISHOP , Lady Bishop's niece; LETITIA BISHOP , her sister; MR GOODBOBY , a solicitor)	Louise Barclay
THELMA (playing DAPHNE BISHOP , Lady Bishop's daughter; ROSE BISHOP , her spinster aunt)	Jeannie May Selfe
THE PRODUCER	David McGillivray

Directed by David McGillivray

Designed by Walter Zerlin Jnr and Gerald Tagg

This revised version was first produced at the Swan Theatre,
Stratford-upon-Avon on March 14th, 1988, with the following
cast of characters:

GORDON (playing INSPECTOR O'REILLY)	David McGillivray
FELICITY	Mary Roscoe
AUDREY	Angela Moran
MRS REECE	Marie Collett
THELMA	Jean Selfe

Directed by David McGillivray

Designed by Walter Zerlin Jnr and Gerald Tagg

ACTING EDITION NOTE

The new scene will be found on pages 79 and 81 and replaces the scene between O'Reilly and Pawn which begins with the stage direction "*Pawn enters right with a shovel raised above his head*" on page 22 and ends with the stage direction "*Blackout they exit*" on page 23.

In memory of
Walter Zerlin Jnr.
1949–2001
The funniest man I have ever met

PROLOGUE

*On stage there is a scene representing the drawing-room on the second floor of Checkmate Manor, **LADY DOREEN BISHOP**'s ancestral home, an isolated house near the sea. Leading off right is a staircase. Below this is a painted door. There is an exit through a curtained archway upstage left. Practical windows upstage centre, and through them a view of rolling hills on a summer's day. A fireplace right of the windows with a portrait of The Laughing Cavalier hanging on the same flat. Furniture includes a large armchair centre, a table bearing a chess-board and pieces downstage right and a standard lamp upstage left. At the front of the auditorium is a home movie screen and 8mm projector.*

MRS REECE, chairman of the Dramatic Society, and her second-in-command **THELMA**, who is wearing a sash reading "Miss Farndale 1988", are on hand to welcome the audience and settle them into their seats. The ladies sell programmes, each one containing a slip of paper to be used for the Murder Mystery Quiz, and give away samples of Mrs Dabney's home-made fudge.

Five minutes before the advertised start of the play, the scenery disintegrates. First the painting comes off the fireplace flat. Then the pelmet and curtains fall off the window flat. The leg comes off the chess-table sending the board and pieces all over the floor. Finally the fireplace flat falls on to the stage.

FELICITY and **AUDREY** appear and replace the flat back-to-front, revealing pieces of paper with people's cues written on them stuck to the other side. They are about

to exit when they realize their mistake. They turn the flat the correct way round, then exit not realizing that it is now upside-down.

Pre-show music ends with a fanfare. In the ensuing silence MRS REECE can be heard arguing with THELMA. They break off and come down to the front of the auditorium.

MRS REECE Caught me on the hop. Sorry. Just one or two announcements before we begin: first of all some of you may have heard that we had a little calamity last night with the interval teas. Now we haven't as yet found out exactly who it was who misbehaved themselves in the tea urn. But we have spent all day scrubbing the thing out with Dettol. And I can assure you that there's nothing wrong with the water tonight. I passed it myself. Also I'd like to draw your attention to a change in the programme. The part of Inspector O'Reilly will not be played by Sylvia Frobisher. As you know Sylvia's not that quick on her feet, and that floodlight really did fetch her a heck of a thump on the head. But I spoke to her *au pair* this morning and apparently Sylvia has started forming sentences. Which is more than she could do when she was in the play. But with any luck she'll be up and about for the dinner dance. And stepping into the breach tonight is our stage manager Gordon Pugh. I know we're going to be behind him tonight because he hasn't acted since he played the second ox in *The Star of Bethlehem*. And finally those of you who were at this year's AGM will know that we had to cancel the traditional screening of Mrs Beasley's holiday movies due to the controversy surrounding the election of "Miss Farndale", an incident I won't elaborate on now because we don't want to open old sores. Suffice it to say that the title went *eventually* to Thelma Greenwood, our perennial leading lady. And perennial Miss Farndale. And I'm sure we all admire her diligence in demanding fourteen recounts. Even if it did mean missing the movie. Which Mrs Beasley had brought in specially. At great cost. And

she doesn't get much out of life. It's not as if she's a well woman...

THELMA We're pushing against time here, Phoebe.

MRS REECE (*to THELMA*) Really? (*To the audience*) She's not at all well. Although I'm sure you'll all be pleased to hear the cartilage operation was a success. So now we're going to see Mrs Beasley's latest production. In Super Beasley-Vision. "Hello, Isle of Man." All right, Thelma.

House lights down. THELMA switches on the projector and projects an out-of-focus picture that is an eighth on the screen and seven-eighths on the wall. MRS REECE is reading from notes and doesn't notice.

The first thing you'll see is a shot of Douglas taken in early morning sunlight from the ferry. These people in oilskins are a couple the Beasleys met on board. And the lady is a member of the Stourbridge Townswomen's Guild. Isn't that a coincidence? (*She looks at the screen. To THELMA*) I think it could do with a little shift to the starboard side, dear.

THELMA *jerks the projector about trying to centre the picture.*

That's the harbour just flashing past there. (*To THELMA*) Back to where you were, dear. That's perfect.

The picture is so out of focus that absolutely nothing is distinguishable.

I think this is the House of Keys. No, it's the Beasleys' hotel, and there's Mrs Beasley's husband pointing up at their suite. Can you see him? Hasn't he lost weight? Quite a super-slimmer. Where are we now? I think this is the new oil refinery at Rue Point. Seen through fog probably. The weather is so unpredictable over there, isn't it? I was over there a few years ago for their Jubilee or whatever it was, and one never knew... There's a Manx cat! Oh, it's gone. But there are the scratch marks on Mr Beasley's leg. Isn't that wonderful?

The film suddenly breaks leaving a glaring white screen.

Was that meant to happen?

THELMA Anyone got some Sellotape?

The house lights come up.

THELMA *exits.*

MRS REECE Evidently not. You know, ladies and gentlemen, this may sound foolish, but I sometimes think our productions are jinxed. I do. I mean, I've been out and about. I've been to the Old Vic and Stratford-upon-Avon. Nothing goes wrong with their shows. Of course they're not as adventurous as us. I suppose you can't have everything. *(She looks towards the wings)* Any joy with the Sellotape, people?

General cries of woe from backstage.

Hmmmm. Well, I'm afraid we may have to draw a veil over this débâcle. But we saw most of the best bits. So let's get on with our little play. And do concentrate like mad, won't you, because we're going to have a competition later on to see how eagle-eyed you've been.

FELICITY *appears.*

FELICITY Henry says will chewing gum do?

MRS REECE No, we're not bothering, dear. Is everyone ready back here?

They exit. AUDREY wanders casually on stage, takes out a cigarette, lights it, sits down, picks up a magazine and opens it. Her expression changes to surprise.

AUDREY Sorry. Have we started?

She runs off.

The house lights go down.

ACT I

The drawing-room of Checkmate Manor. It is a winter evening.

There is a thunder and lightning effect strangely at odds with the bright sunlight coming through the window. MRS REECE, as CLARISSA, can be seen running across the stage from left to right, struggling into a nightgown. As soon as she has climbed the stairs to the top, the lights come up, revealing CLARISSA buttoning her nightgown and waiting for her cue. There is a knocking, off. CLARISSA remembers something she has forgotten, gestures into the wings and is handed a piano accordion.

CLARISSA No, that's later.

She is handed a candlestick instead. She descends the stairs.

Humph. Three o'clock in the morning is a fine time for somebody to be calling at my sister Doreen's remote country house by the sea.

More knocking.

I suppose I'd better find out who it is. If only I could find the light switch so I could illuminate my way down the stairs. Ah, here it is. Brrrr, what a terrible... *(She clicks the switch on the window flat)*

Blackout.

They're supposed to be on now.

The lights come up full suddenly. CLARISSA tries to validate this cue by flicking the switch again. Imperfect black-out.

No, I want them on! One—two—three.

This allows the electrician to synchronize. CLARISSA flicks the switch and the lights come up full.

(looking out of the window) Brrrr, what a terrible night. Just look at that snow.

Snow flutters down the inside of the window much to the surprise of CLARISSA, who jumps away confused.

She hurries off right.

More knocking.

(offstage) I'm coming, I'm coming. Oh, it's you, is it? Forgot your keys again, I suppose. I should have gone off the other side, shouldn't I? Oh, fiddle.

CLARISSA enters and runs across stage from right to left.

Won't be a jiff.

She exits left.

(offstage) Sorry, I'm not thinking. Oh, it's you, is it? Forgot your keys again, I suppose.

CLARISSA enters left and stands with her back to the arch.

Do you realize that since I arrived here you've knocked me up three times? You'll have to be more careful in future.

FELICITY's white-gloved hands stretch out from the arch towards CLARISSA's neck.

After all, it would be the absolute living end if my sister learned of our intricately devised plot. So we're going to have to be frightfully secretive in the future, I can tell you.

The hands, unable to reach their target, make little beckoning movements.

Well, why are you just standing there behind me? Haven't you got anything to say for yourself?

FELICITY *(stage whisper from the wings)* Yes, move back! I can't reach you.

CLARISSA *realizes and leans back so that she can be strangled. As soon as the hands touch her throat she begins struggling violently.*

In the struggle FELICITY, as PAWN the butler, is pulled from the wings and seen quite plainly. She forgets about the throttling and darts back out of sight.

CLARISSA *notices her absence and strangles herself, folding up on the floor. There is an imperfect black-out during which CLARISSA can be seen to get up, hurry to the window and pick up the pelmet and curtains. The lights come up revealing her replacing them.*

CLARISSA Drat!

She exits left as AUDREY, playing LADY DOREEN BISHOP, enters down the stairs and screams. She walks uncertainly to the spot where CLARISSA's body isn't and studies the empty space.

DOREEN Clarissa!

CLARISSA *creeps in right, clutching a chess-piece, and lies on the floor.*

DOREEN *moves to the bell-rope left and, as she pulls it, it comes away in her hand.*

PAWN *enters left.*

DOREEN *hands PAWN the bell-rope and he throws it through the curtains of the arch.*

PAWN You rang, milady?

DOREEN Ah, Pawn. Come here quickly, man. Something utterly ghastly has happened to my sister, Clarissa, who, as you can see, is lying here at my feet.

PAWN realizes the true position of CLARISSA and pushes DOREEN in the appropriate direction.

PAWN Grip yourself, ma'am. It's strangulation what we have here.

DOREEN You mean she's dead?

PAWN Alack, that is the case.

CLARISSA has a coughing fit.

DOREEN Poor Clarissa. And on a wonderful day like today.

PAWN What a tragedy.

DOREEN Is that a lifeless chess-piece I see clutched in Clarissa's black hand?

PAWN Yes, a bishop.

DOREEN But Bishop is our family name. Could there be a connection?

PAWN Not half, milady. Look at this here chess-board.

They move to where the chess-pieces are scattered over the floor.

DOREEN Why, yes, this is as clear as day. A black bishop is missing from the board.

PAWN Snort. Well, there is nothing we can do to solve this mystery. Shall I telephone for the police?

DOREEN Be so good as to do that.

PAWN discovers he doesn't know where the telephone is and enquires into both wings without success.

PAWN (*consulting the "corpse"*) Have you seen the telephone, Mrs Reece?

CLARISSA Underneath the chair, dear.

PAWN *removes the telephone from underneath the armchair, and places it on the table.*

DOREEN (*ad libbing*) How's that telephone call coming along, Pawn?

PAWN Just trying to get through, milady.

He picks up the receiver and speaks into it without pausing at all during the speech. Simultaneously DOREEN reconstructs the chess-table, and is handed a dustpan and brush from off stage with which she sweeps up the chess-pieces.

(*on the phone*) Good morning. This is Pawn, Lady Bushop's bitler at Checkmate Manor. Yes, it is indeed a capital morning, but I fear we must discuss a graver matter than—oh. (*He replaces the receiver, picks it up again and dials a number and speaks without pausing as before*) Good morning. This is Pawn, Lady Butler's bishop at Checkmate Manor. Yes, it is indeed a capital morning, but I fear we must discuss a graver matter than the weather. What am I driving at? I'll tell you, Officer. Murder that's what. (*He takes the receiver, looks at it quizzically, and then replaces it to his ear*) No, this is not a practical joke. There is a corpse up here and it smells fishy to me. What's that you say? The inspector will make this case a priority? I'll inform her ladyship. (*He hangs up. To DOREEN*) Good news... (*He picks up the receiver again*) Thank you very much. Goodbye. (*He hangs up again. To DOREEN*) Good news, your lady...m'ship shape lady... Inspector O'Reilly will be here in a flash.

DOREEN *disposes of the chess-pieces by tipping them on to the chess-board.*

DOREEN O'Reilly? But he's the man who solved the Limehouse murders. Tell Régine, our French maid, to take the plastic covers off the armchairs and put an extra coat of liquid Gumption on the wash basin in the guest cloakroom.

PAWN I hasten to do your bidding, ma'am.

THELMA, as DAPHNE in a tennis outfit, makes false entrance left and then retreats off.

DOREEN Hold your horses, though. Do you hear a faint scuffling outside the door?

PAWN A faint scuffling? Why, no.

DOREEN Surely my ears do not deceive me. Hist.

Deafening sound as of several flats falling to the ground.

VOICE (*offstage*) You blithering idiot!

PAWN The house is as silent as the grave, milady.

DOREEN It would certainly seem so. And yet some sixth sense warns me we are not alone.

PAWN Is someone out there trying to put the wind up milady?

DAPHNE (*offstage*) It is only I, dear Pawn.

DOREEN Phew! We were becoming agitated by none other than my own daughter, Daphne.

PAWN The enchanting lass.

He and DOREEN face in opposite directions to greet DAPHNE.

DOREEN (*beckoning into the wings*) Daphne, darling...

After some moments THELMA, as DAPHNE, bounds in, holding a tennis racquet and ball. She opens and closes her mouth and flaps her tennis racquet about—she has forgotten her lines.

DOREEN and **PAWN** dart their eyes at each other nervously. Suddenly **DAPHNE** panics, screams and falls on top of **CLARISSA**, causing her to groan in pain.

She's going to faint. Quick, Pawn, catch her.

PAWN She's safe in my grasp, milady.

They move to DAPHNE, crouching by her side.

DOREEN This has been too much of a shock for her teenage metabolism. Thank goodness I always carry smelling salts with me. *(She fumbles for the smelling-salts she's forgotten. To PAWN)* Would you administer them?

PAWN Where are they?

DOREEN Haven't got them.

DAPHNE surreptitiously produces them from her pocket and hands them to **PAWN**.

Daphne, darling, speak to your mother.

DAPHNE Mother, I've just had the most terrible dream. I thought I saw Aunt Clarissa lying dead.

DOREEN It was no dream, darling. Clarissa has passed on violently.

DAPHNE You mean she blabbed and someone rubbed her out?
(She gets up)

DOREEN Where do you pick up these crude expressions? Pawn, kindly remove my sister in a dignified fashion.

PAWN I am, ma'am, your obedient servant.

DOREEN Daphne, now that we're alone... *(She hands dustpan and brush to CLARISSA)* Take that off for me, Phoebe.

PAWN takes hold of **CLARISSA**'s feet, pulls, and removes her shoes. He and **CLARISSA** struggle off right, all the time within easy earshot of the following:

Daphne, now that we're alone, I must chastise you for making irresponsible remarks about Clarissa in front of faithful old Pawn.

DAPHNE But, Mother, even old Pawn knew that Aunt Clarissa was one of several members of our family who were involved in a conspiracy to discover the contents of Daddy's will, which is being read tomorrow evening.

DAPHNE uses her racquet to bounce the tennis ball on the floor, but it bounces away and she loses it. Another ball is bounced on from the wings and she uses this instead before losing it. A succession of balls—some of different colours—appear, much to DAPHNE's annoyance.

DOREEN I must admit that you are correct on two counts, Daphne. Firstly your aunt was indeed a mercenary woman whose cravings overstepped the bounds of decency. Equally, her desire to have your late father's will altered in her favour was an open secret.

She stops and stares in astonishment at the tennis balls bouncing round her. They cease.

This means, of course, that practically everyone in our household had a motive to kill her. Come in.

Pause. Nothing happens.

MRS REECE, now dressed as **RÉGINE** the French maid, is seen running behind the window, left to right.

There is knocking, off.

Come in.

RÉGINE enters with a tray and bad French accent. She adjusts her uniform, steps forward and the cap comes off.

RÉGINE Bonjour, madame. I am the French maid now, aren't I?

DOREEN Yes. What is it, Régine?

RÉGINE I 'ave prepared ze 'ouse as you wish, madame. Shall I now boil ze doilies in ze room of Mamzelle Clarissa?

DOREEN No. Miss Rook will no longer require her boilies doiled on account of her being dead.

RÉGINE (*dropping the tray*) Mon Dieu!

DOREEN You foolish girl. Those stains will now have to be soaked in a solution of vinegar and warm soapy water. And what a time for such a thing to happen. I can hear Inspector O'Reilly's police car approaching.

There is the sound effect of vast traffic noise: horns blowing, juggernauts changing gear, newsvendors' cries, etc. Eventually a police siren emerges from the mêlée, then the entire effect stops abruptly. There is a knocking, offstage.

PAWN *enters left.*

PAWN Inspector O'Reilly, milady.

DOREEN Ah, Pawn, who is it?

PAWN Inspector O'Reilly, milady.

DOREEN Good. Show him in.

PAWN *bows, steps backwards and treads on the foot of GORDON, playing INSPECTOR O'REILLY, who enters behind him. He is wearing a trenchcoat.*

O'REILLY Ow!

There is confusion as PAWN makes a hasty exit.

Lady Bishop?

DOREEN Yes, I've been inspecting you, Expector. Come in and warm yourself by the fire.

O'REILLY My, what a grand blaze. (*He notices with surprise the upside down flat and stretches his hands upwards to warm them*)

DOREEN Yes, so welcoming, don't you think? Régine, a glass of sherry for our guest.

RÉGINE Not yet.

DOREEN Oh, sorry. Em...may I introduce my daughter Daphne?

O'REILLY With the greatest of pleasure.

DAPHNE How do you do, Inspector.

DOREEN And would you care for a glass of sherry?

O'REILLY Well, just a soupçon.

DOREEN Régine, a glass of sherry for our guest.

RÉGINE Oui, madame.

RÉGINE curtsies and exits left.

O'REILLY moves up right. DOREEN sits in the armchair.

O'REILLY I'm sorry we have to meet under such unfortunate circumstances, milady.

DOREEN Ah, yes. Clarissa was too, too young. I expect you'll want to inspect her, Inspector?

O'REILLY I fear that will be my hapless duty. But first I must make some notes. What can you tell me about... *(He forgets the name)* ...your sister.

DOREEN She was my sister. *(She picks up the sewing box. The bottom falls out and everything is left on the floor. She extricates her embroidery and begins sewing on her lap, attaching it to her dress)* She had recently arrived here at Checkmate Manor for the reading of my late husband's will.

O'REILLY Might I say, milady, that your late husband, Sir Reginald Bishop, was a fine man.

RÉGINE enters left with what is obviously a glass of orange juice. Seeing that O'REILLY is up right, she exits.

DOREEN A fine man? Why, yes, some might think so. But those of us who lived with him knew better.

O'REILLY Be so good as to elaborate.

DAPHNE My father was little more than an animal, Inspector. No, Mother, let me speak. Don't interrupt me, please, Mother. You know he would use Brillo pads on the Teflon saucepans and refuse to walk on newspapers after the kitchen floor had been washed.

O'REILLY *moves down right.*

O'REILLY How did you tolerate such behaviour, Lady Bishop?

RÉGINE *enters up right and exits when she sees O'REILLY has moved again.*

DOREEN Look around you, Inspector. I had everything a woman could desire. Reggie may have been a pig, but at least he was well-endowed. Another sherry?

O'REILLY No. But may I compliment you on the rich, red ruby nectar I have in my hand?

He turns as we hear bumping behind the downstage right door.

RÉGINE *(offstage)* Door won't open.

O'REILLY *crosses to the door and makes an abortive attempt to grasp a non-existent handle.*

O'REILLY It's not a real door.

RÉGINE *(offstage)* Sugar.

O'REILLY Have you got the rich, red ruby nectar?

The orange juice is passed round the top of the stairs.

DOREEN I like a man who appreciates a fine, dry Cyprus. Hold it up to the light, Inspector.

O'REILLY raises the glass too sharply, sending a spout of orange juice shooting into the air. As it descends, he attempts to catch it in the glass again. **DOREEN** sees this spectacle. She and **O'REILLY** make the mistake of looking at each other. They go into surreptitious spasms of laughter, **O'REILLY** turning his back to the audience, and **DOREEN** burying her face in her bosom. **DAPHNE** clears her throat loudly and pointedly. **DOREEN** and **O'REILLY** recover themselves.

See how...

DOREEN and **O'REILLY** begin giggling again.

DAPHNE (*furious*) Stop it.

DOREEN See how...

More corpsing.

DAPHNE Pull yourselves together!

DOREEN (*doing so*) See how its warm texture seems to emit a friendly glow.

O'REILLY It is divine.

There is a long pause with more suppressed giggling.

DAPHNE seethes.

DAPHNE Are there any more questions you wish to ask us, Inspector?

O'REILLY (*subsiding*) Most certainly.

He places the glass of orange juice on the chess-table, which collapses again. This sends DOREEN and O'REILLY into further paroxysms.

O'REILLY leaves the stage entirely for a couple of moments, then returns with a terribly straight face.

(*addressing the floor*) I shall have to interview everyone who was in the house at the time of the crime.

DOREEN The only people you have not yet met are my two spinster aunts, Rose and Violet Bishop, who are asleep upstairs.

O'REILLY Where are they?

DOREEN They're asleep upstairs.

PAWN enters left.

PAWN Dinner is served, milady.

A gong is heard, off.

DOREEN Will you join us, Inspector?

O'REILLY You are most gracious, ma'am.

DOREEN rises, tries to remove embroidery from her lap and realizes she has sewn it to her dress. To avoid another outburst, she starts to go out left.

DOREEN *(as she goes)* Perhaps you'll be so good as to accompany my daughter?

O'REILLY nods, trying to conceal his laughter. DAPHNE moves to him and grips him violently by the arm.

DOREEN exits.

DAPHNE What strong, powerful arms you have, Inspector.

RÉGINE enters left.

RÉGINE Please, Inspectair, I must speak wiz you.

PAWN Régine! Be about your business, my girl.

A dog barks, off.

Down, boy.

Blackout.

PAWN, O'REILLY and DAPHNE exit.

The lights come up again revealing RÉGINE trying to repair the chess-table.

DAPHNE *enters, dabbing her lips with a napkin.*

DAPHNE (to RÉGINE) Get off. (Into the wings) Come on!

RÉGINE exits. O'REILLY enters left, minus trenchcoat, also dabbing his lips with a napkin.

O'REILLY What a positively delightful meal, Thelma... Daphne.

DAPHNE It was nothing.

O'REILLY But what about that delicious lemon soufflé, which added a touch of sheer luxury to the bill of fare?

DAPHNE Well, it may have seemed ultra-sophisticated, but in fact it's so quick and easy to prepare.

O'REILLY I must make a note of the recipe.

DAPHNE Let me see if I can remember it. Ah, yes. To serve six to eight people put the yolks of four eggs, five ounces of sugar, half a pint of water, half an ounce of gelatine, and the grated rind of two lemons into a large basin.

O'REILLY Will a wash-basin do?

DAPHNE Certainly not. Then put the basin over a saucepan of hot water and whisk the mixture until it's light and creamy. Remove from the heat and add the juice of two lemons and continue to whisk until thick. Add half a pint of double cream and the whisked egg whites. Turn this into a soufflé dish and leave to set. Decorate with whipped cream and nuts.

O'REILLY Mmmmm, thanks, Daphne. I'm sure the boys at the station will want to give this to their wives tonight.

DAPHNE And what about you, Inspector? Will you be giving it to your wife tonight?

O'REILLY I would if I had one. But, truth to tell, I'm fancy free. What about you?

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