

SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

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Bullets for Broadway

An Interactive Musical Comedy Mystery

Book and Lyrics by
David Landau

Music by
Killer Tracks

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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BULLETS FOR BROADWAY first opened in at the Murder to Go Dinner Theater in Cedar Knolls, New Jersey in March 2002.. The performance was directed by David Landau. The cast was as follows:

BAXTER MALLNSTOCK..... Leo Hatem
ELI BLAINE..... Jim Folly
TONY ALTO Joseph Molino
TOFFEE ALTO..... Katherine Smizer
MIMI SHERATON Tina Zoganas
ABIGAIL MULDER Deborah Lichtenstein

INTRODUCTION

I invented the interactive mystery play back in the early 1980s as an attempt to mix environmental theater with audience involvement. My goal was to allow the audience to experience the story as if they were extras in a movie. The entire production, from script to props, direction to surroundings, was oriented towards encompassing the audience in the world of the mystery and not merely with the game of solving it. Mystery parlor games existed since the turn of the century. As theater, it is the story of the characters which must always take centerstage – a story of people who find themselves in desperate situations and are compelled to perform desperate acts. The comedy must come from the characters and not at their expense or that of the story.

It can become tempting for cast members to play for a laugh, but this seldom works. The audience laughs the most at things that are played straight – discovering the humor for themselves. Audiences identify and sympathize with characters that are real and seldom with caricatures. An actors approach to an interactive mystery should be no different than that taken to Shakespeare or any other theatrical work. Why is the character there, what are they thinking, why are they doing what they do and what do they want? The more real, the more the audience becomes involved in this new reality and the more both they and the performers will enjoy the experience. The audience itself is utilized by the performer, as a prop, a confidant, another cast member. The audience is on stage with them.

In a true mystery there can be only one logical culprit, pointed out not only by the clues, but by the motivation, personality and situation that character finds himself/herself in. While there are a number of other likely suspects, this character is the inevitable guilty party. The mystery has been sown well when the average of correct guesses is 10-20%. By the end of the play, when all is revealed, the audience should sigh a collective “Of course, I should have thought of that!”

The interactive mystery play offers theater patrons, performers and producers many unique opportunities. The audience can be taken to the edge with suspense and then suddenly dropped into a humorous release of tension. The characters can become so real that they can reach out and touch the audience, literally. The theatrical fourth wall is placed behind the audience. If done correctly, the interactive play can be one of the most involving forms of theater possible.

David Landau

Creator of the first interactive mystery play, “*The Mystery Express*”, Dec. 1982

Member of The Dramatists Guild and Mystery Writers of America

CHARACTERS

BAXTER MALLENSTOCK – Producer of the new Broadway musical, *The Mafia Queen*.

ELI BLAIN – Naïve composer/lyricist/book writer of the musical.

TONY ALTO – Gangster who is the sole backer of the musical.

TOFFEE ALTO – Gangster’s wife who is the star of the musical.

ABIGAIL MULDER – FBI agent, under cover as a chorus girl, trying to build a case against Tony.

BERNIE BROADHURST – Pretentious actor who plays the “Tony” part in the musical and is having a affair with Toffee – using her for her money. (Same actor as **TONY**).

MIMI SHERATON – Wealthy patron of the arts, Broadway investor and gossip columnist.

THUG - same actor as **ELI**.

AUDIENCE

Members of the audience should play the following roles:

The show’s director

Theater critics (mad-libs of reviews)

Chorus girls

Back up dancers (Toffee recruits them)

Theater Investors

SETTING

It’s opening night, the review party, where everyone is waiting for the reviews to come out. A newspaper on the tables has a headline “State’s Witness on Money Laundering Missing” and a smaller article “‘*Mafia Queen*’ opens on the Great White Way, starring a Real Mafia Queen. Is it Biographical or just bad taste?”

Characters mingle with guests, recognizing them as producers, investors, critics, and other theater high society types.

The Stage Manager gives each table a “Mad-Lib” asking them to help write a review by picking words as requested – without knowing the sentences they fit into. They will be titled: *The Record*, *The News*, *The Post*, *The Ledger* and *The New York Times*. As there are only five reviews, the same review can be given to two tables next to each other so that the cast can pick which one is better, by looking at them during the food breaks. Stage Manager should note and tell the cast which tables have which reviews.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

PERFORMANCE SPACE

The following play was designed to be performed in a dining room, dinner theater, night club, theater-in-the-round, or a thrust stage where the acting area is level with the first row. The intention is to make the audience feel like they are actually in the location of the story. The performance is a sort of reverse theater in the round, with action performed around the circumference of the seating area, as well as down the aisles and in the center. The audience should be seated at tables, either dinner or cocktail. Tables could be added in front of the first row in the case of thrust or arena stages. Audience members can also be seated on stage.

SCENES & BREAKS

The script is formatted into four or five scenes running in length from 12 to 20 minutes. Between each scene is time to serve a course of a meal, serve drinks, or play music as desired. During these breaks characters mingle helping to establish character and reveal information to the audience in a one on one manner. The script can easily be adapted to eliminate some of these breaks. If this is the desire, black-outs should take place between scenes, with an intermission between either scenes 2 and 3 (if four scenes) or 3 and 4 (if five scenes). There should be some kind of break just before the finale scene to allow audience members to hand in their guesses as to "whodunit."

MUSICAL NUMBERS

The musical numbers in the show have been designed to be performed to recorded backing tracks. Once a license has been signed, a CD with recordings of both the instrumentals and the composer singing the lyrics can be obtained from Samuel French, Inc. Lead sheets will be provided when available. Also on the tape is the opening theme music which is to be used at the beginning of each scene.

AWARDING PRIZES

The "Sleuth Sheets" are handed out with the programs at the beginning of the night and collected by the characters before the finale scene. They should be handed to the Stage Manager, who will sort out the correct answers. After the curtain call, the correct answers are handed to the main character, who reads out the names of the successful sleuths. Generally, all correct answers are placed in a hat and a character draws one name. A prize is then awarded to that patron by a cast member. The prize can be a bottle of wine, a T-shirt, almost anything. It's the thought that counts.

PRE-SHOW MINGLES

BAXTER – Baxter moves from table to table, introducing himself and recognizing people as rich Broadway backers, reviewers or fellow producers. He reminds them of his past productions “Rats – now and forever in the alley behind the Winter Garden,” “Move over *Titanic*, there’s a new disaster in town: *Hindenberg – the Musical*,” “*West Village Story* – a musical that’s fun and gay,” and of course “*Into The Hood* – an inner city fairytale.” Now, with *The Mafia Queen* such a hit, he tells guests he is presently allowing only select investors the opportunity to get in on his next musical – “*Enron – the musical*,” or: “*How Not to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*.”

ELI – Shyly introduces himself to each table, asking if they liked the show and mentioning that he wrote it. He asks where everyone’s from and tells them he’s from Gary, Indiana. Ever since he saw *The Music Man* in grade school, he knew he wanted to become a playwright. He asks people what they do for a living, because he is looking for inspiration to write his next musical. He wrote *The Mafia Queen* by interviewing Toffee Alto – “She’s a (whispered tones) gangster’s wife. But don’t tell anyone.”

ABIGAIL – She introduces herself to the tables (acting like a dumb chorus girl). She asks guests if they know the show’s producer Baxter Mallenstock or the show’s backer, Tony Alto. She says she’s heard that Mr. Alto is in organized crime. She asks people if they know what that means. She asks if anyone else here is in the same organization.

TOFFEE – She introduces herself to the tables. She thanks them for coming to see her show and remarks at how it was standing room only. “And did you hear all the applause?” “And they laughed at so many places we never thought we’d get a laugh. You know, like at places we thought were, like serious. But I guess that Eli really knows when to pull out a joke.” She tells people how hard she worked for this show, even taking private acting lessons with her co-star, that famous Broadway idol Bernie Broadhurst the third. He helped her a lot.

TONY – Tony moves from table to table, telling everyone that they “enjoyed the show.” He’s not asking them, he’s telling them. He put up the cash so his wife could star on Broadway. He knew a guy, who knew a guy, who Mallenstock owed money to. So he approached Mallenstock and made him an offer he couldn’t refuse. The rest,

as they say, is freakin' history. He recognizes a few people as owing money to him, and a few men as being regulars at his men's club Badda Bings, and a few women as being dancers from his club.

Scene One

(The characters are mingling. Lights dim out. Music begins. Lights up, everyone sings "Opening Night.")

EVERYONE.

IT'S OPENING NIGHT
SOON WE'LL BE READING ALL THE RE-VIEWS
OPENING NIGHT
EITHER WE WIN OR WE WILL LOSE
IT WAS A THRILL
ALL SEATS WERE FILLED

BAXTER.

EVEN THE CAST WAS ON TIME
CURTAIN WENT UP, THEN I UP-CHUCKED,
BUT NOW I THINK I'M DOING FINE.

EVERYONE.

IT'S OPENING NIGHT
SOON WE'LL BE READING ALL THE RE-VIEWS
WISH AS WE MIGHT
HEAR JUST PRAISE AND NOT SING THE BLUES
WHAT WILL THEY SAY?
BE YEA OR NAY?
THIS IS THE MO-MENT OF TRUTH
COULD THIS JUST BE IT?
THIS SEASONS BIG HIT?
OR A GOOSE?

(Music under as BAXTER shakes hands with audience members.)

BAXTER. Mr. Schubert, *(to another man)* Mr. Bialystock, so sorry I couldn't let you in on this great show. But, Mr. Tony Alto backed the entire thing himself. Mr. Alto?

(TONY & TOFFEE join him.)

BAXTER. *(cont.)* Tony, I'd like to introduce you to the two most famous names on the Great White Way.

TONY. What, their names are Moby and Dick?

TOFFEE. (*pulling him away*) What are you doing insulting the most famous theatrical producers of all time, you strunz!

(*ELI pulls BAXTER away.*)

ELI. I can't believe it. Opening night and a sold out house!

BAXTER. Yeah – and for only ten bucks a seat.

ELI. You sold the tickets for only ten dollars a piece?

BAXTER. Of course not, Eli. I went to the half price tickets line and gave everyone there ten bucks to come to our show. Packed the house like that (*snaps fingers*).

ELI. You – (*assuming he's joking*) you didn't! If you paid people to fill the seats, how did the box office take in so much cash. I walked by the box office window and there were bags and bags of green bills – big stuffed bags –

BAXTER. Shush – my naïve, creative friend. You just worry about writing us our next big show. After all, this room is filled with potential investors just waiting to be tapped.

ELI. But do you really think we'll get good reviews?

BAXTER. Good reviews? At ten thousand bucks a pop, we better.

ELI. Ten thousand a – what?!

(*BAXTER laughs at ELI and puts his arm on his shoulder as they sing [the music comes back up]. Everyone sings.*)

ALL.

IT'S OPENING NIGHT
SOON WE'LL BE READING ALL THE RE-VIEWS
OH WHAT A NIGHT
IT'S SO HARD BE-ING IN OUR SHOES

ELI.

A FEW FLUBBED LINES

CAST.

THAT'S NOT A CRIME

ALL.

'SIDES THAT THE SHOW WENT JUST FINE
THE CURTAIN ROSE, THE WHOLE CAST FROZE,
THE SHOW STILL ENDED RIGHT ON TIME

IT'S OPENING NIGHT
SOON WE'LL BE READING ALL THE RE-VIEWS
OH WHAT A FRIGHT
HOPE WE GET ON-LY THE BEST NEWS

CAST.

COULD LOSE OUR JOB

BAXTER.

UPSET THE MOB

BAXTER & ELI.

WE CAN'T GIVE BACK ALL THE CASH

ALL.

HOPE IT'S A BIG HIT

BAXTER.

OR I'LL BE THE NEXT HIT

BAXTER.

CAST.

KER-SPLAT!

THAT'S THAT!

(Lights dim, spotlight stays on BAXTER. He turns sideways. There is a photo-flash.)

VOICE. Turn front.

(BAXTER turns front, holding a number under his chin. There is another photoflash.)

You have one phone call.

BAXTER. Take a message! *(to audience)* Okay, I bet you're asking yourself, how did Baxter Mallenstock go from hit Broadway producer to felon in one evening. Well, – it was easy. Let me tell you about it.

(Lights come up. Characters are mingling, chatting, in pantomime as BAXTER walks around and "introduces" each of them to the audience.)

BAXTER. Of course, it might help if you knew some of the main characters in our little comic-tragedy. First there's my partner in this business of bright lights and lost fortunes, Eli Blaine. Eli is a playwright. That's someone with absolutely no social life, so they create their own and stick it on paper.

(He taps ELI on the shoulder. ELI spins around to talk to him, excited.)

ELI. Baxter – this is incredible. I've never been in a room with this many people before. And some of them even know my name.

BAXTER. Of course they know your name Eli. You're the playwright. You're the genius that created this fabulous success.

ELI. Thank you, Baxter. But – well – *(stage whisper)* you made me churn it out so fast – in only one month – that, it's really just not that good.

BAXTER. Good? *(laugh, slapping ELI on the back)* Why, Eli – I never said it was good.

ELI. But, you just – Didn't you just say –

BAXTER. I said it was a success. In show business, there's no relation been good and successful. They aren't even distant cousins. Sometimes they may accidentally bump into each other on a dark and stormy night, but in general, they pass on the street barely recognizing one another. Our next play, Eli – you can spend the time making that good. I'll give you a month and two weeks. Just make sure it's commercial. Now, go, Eli, and flirt with the chorus girls.

(He turns to leave, but turns back to BAXTER before BAXTER can renew talking to the audience.)

ELI. The chorus girls? They'll ignore me. Women always ignore me.

BAXTER. Not any more, my timid friend. You are Eli Blaine – composer, lyricist, book writer of a hit Broadway musical. Sure, those beautiful dancers may have done

the mambo with the producer, the director, and the producer again, just to get the part. But now that the shows a success, they'll even mambo with the writer. Come on, I'll introduce you.

(BAXTER takes ELI to a table of women.)

Hello, ladies. Allow me to introduce the man that made it all possible, the author of our fabulous show who is eagerly working on his next Broadway hit, Eli Blaine, our playwright and my partner. Eli, allow me to introduce you to our chorus line's first string. – This is Bubbles, Bambi, Bunny, and *(pointing to a man)* Boom-Boom.

ELI. A pleasure. But what – ah – unusual names.

BAXTER. Yes, well, they learned dancing at the Doll House A Go Go school of choreography, an establishment owned by our primary backer. And I must say, ladies, I have never seen anyone do such a fine dance number with brass poles on a Broadway stage before. Just do me a favor *(turning to a women patron)* tomorrow night, when the number ends, don't stand on the edge of the stage and ask the front row for one dollar bills. Eli, I leave you to your adoringly easy public. *(pulls a few singles from his pocket)* And here, these might help.

(BAXTER hands him the bills, pats his shoulder and steps away. He talks to the audience.)

Eli really is a good playwright, although you'd never guess it from this show. I met him when he was the manager of my favorite fine dining establishment – the hotdog cart on the corner of Broadway and 42th street. One day he wrapped my sauerkraut in a page of his play. The rest, as they say, is history.

(BAXTER walks to TOFFEE, who has her back turned – as if talking to a table.)

BAXTER. *(cont.)* Next, there is the star of our show, Mrs. Toffee Alto. I know, I know, you're thinking the only reason she got the part was because her husband put

up the cash – well – duh! Of course! That's how the theater business has been run for centuries. Who am I to change it?

(He taps TOFFEE on the shoulder. She turns to him, excited.)

TOFFEE. Oh, Baxter, Baxter, Baxter. Isn't this a dream come true? What an opening! What a show! They all loved me.

BAXTER. And who won't, my sweet Toffee. You stick in their teeth like salt water candy, so they can chew and savor you again and again. A star is born.

TOFFEE. Me? But I'm just a simple Jersey girl.

BAXTER. So was Meryl Streep, so was Whitney Houston, so was Lorraina Bobbet!

TOFFEE. Lorraina Bobbet? Wasn't she the gal that cut off her husband's –

BAXTER. Now you, Toffee Alto, will take your place in that list.

TOFFEE. Do I have to be after Lorraina Bobbet?

BAXTER. We'll put you in before her. Besides, it's her turn to be cut short.

TOFFEE. Oh, Baxter, you're so good to me. Everyone's been so good to me. What did I ever do to deserve all this!

BAXTER. You married a gangster.

TOFFEE. *(She laughs, thinking he's joking.)* Tell me honestly, Baxter – was I good? I mean, was I really good?

BAXTER. You were – *(thinking)* – like no one else!

TOFFEE. Oh, I was, wasn't I?

BAXTER. Oh, yeah. Like that moment at the beginning of the first act, when you first made your entrance, and didn't say a word for five whole minutes.

TOFFEE. I don't think anyone noticed.

BAXTER. No, I'm sure they thought you were supposed to just stand there staring straight out at them, frozen on the edge of the stage, while the orchestra kept playing the same opening stanza over, and over, and over –

TOFFEE. It was just it was the first time there was ever anyone in the seats. I wanted to count them all. I had only gotten about half way when that freakin conductor hit me with his baton.

BAXTER. It just slipped out of his fingers. I guess it got tired of doing the same swing back and forth over and over again.

TOFFEE. Yeah, well, he better not let that happen again. My husband's paying for those batons. Oh, Baxy – this is the most wonderful day of my life! I can't believe it! What did I ever do to deserve all this?

(She kisses him on the forehead and turns away.)

BAXTER. Married a mobster. Which brings us to our sole investor in the show, Mr. Tony Alto, a name familiar to everyone in the organized crime division of the tri-state area. A “legitimate” businessman with a lot of illegitimate income.

(He taps TONY on the shoulder. TONY turns to talk to him.)

(cliched, ethnic Italian) Tony –

TONY. Mallenstock – Hey, that wasn't a bad show for a front. You almost made my wife looked talented. Tell me, how long does a show usually take to “officially” turn a profit?

BAXTER. Oh, depends. On Broadway, if it's a real hit, anywhere from ten months to a year.

TONY. Well, then, my friend – you are going to become famous. 'Cause you're gonna be the first Broadway producer to turn a profit in one freakin night.

(TONY laughs, slapping BAXTER hard on the back. TONY pulls out two cigars.)

BAXTER. Mr. Alto – don't you think that might look a little –

(TONY shoves a cigar into BAXTER's mouth.)

TONY. What?

BAXTER. *(with cigar in his mouth)* Well, just a tiny bit – suspicious?

(TONY pulls BAXTER's cigar out of his mouth.)

TONY. It's a freakin sold out show! Every seat was filled! No one can argue with that!

BAXTER. Without a doubt, Mr. Alto. Without a doubt. But – ah – it's just not mathematically possible, even selling every seat in the theater, to recoup two million dollars in a single night!

TONY. Why not?

BAXTER. The new math!

TONY. Listen, Mallenstock, freakin' movies – like that Hairy Porter thing and that Tit-tanic where everyone's swimmin with the ice cubes at the end, racked in over thirty mil on their first day.

BAXTER. Granted. But we only have one theater while movies open in many at the same time.

TONY. But we got more seats than any freakin' movie theater.

BAXTER. But we only have one showing a night while movies have several a day.

TONY. So we add more showings. One in the morning, one at noon, after work, after dinner, then the midnight show. My kids love those freakin midnight movie shows – that Rocks of Horror thing.

BAXTER. Who'd come! The theater would be empty!

TONY. Hey, every ticket will be bought and paid for, on the books. If people just missed showing up for some reason – well – theater tickets are non-refundable, right?

BAXTER. Well, yes, of course – but to make the cast and orchestra show up –

TONY. You said the theater would be empty. Why would we have them show up? Use your head, Mallenstock. We'll turn a freakin profit by the end of the week and by the end of the month, we'll show quadruple the return on my investment, right?

BAXTER. Well – (*notices TONY's glare*) absolutely right, Mr. Alto.

TONY. Freakin' right I'm right.

(*TONY slaps BAXTER on the back and pushes the cigar back into BAXTER's mouth. TONY walks away. BAXTER continues to talk to the audience as TONY exits.*)

BAXTER. I would never disagree with Mr. Alto. He's our backer. And the last guy that disagreed with him ended up having a disagreement with an engineer – of a freight train while crossing the meadowlands. Not only does Tony Alto have deep pockets, but they're filled with brass knuckles and spare bullets. He did manage to get us some real sweetheart deals with the unions. But his interest in legit show business is strictly limited to showing that bags of mysterious cash are from a legit business.

So why am I, the great Baxter Mallenstock, theatrical producer extrodinaire, involved with this guy? Well, first there's the fact that I haven't had a square meal for months and I'm sleeping under my office desk. Why, I can't remember the last hit play I produced. Maybe that's because I've never produced a hit play. And when you've built up that kind of track record, investors don't come knocking. Only loan sharks (*slapping a male patron on the back*) and ex-wives (*handing a check to a female patron*) and I'm not sure which is scarier. You see, there's a catch in this business. You need to have a hit show to raise money for a hit show. And tonight, at long last, and with a little help – or should I say a lot of help – from the underside of New Jersey, Baxter Mallenstock finally has a hit Broadway opening. And to help celebrate with the cast at the after show party were not only the gossip makers of the Great White Way, but also the theater worlds most promising potential investors. All with eager checkbooks and pens itching to write my name after “pay to the order of.” Getting the financing for my next play would be as easy as – a desperate actress.

(turning to a female patron)

BAXTER. So, how badly do you *really* want to get into show business?

(Suddenly, BERNIE makes his grand entrance, dressed in a smoking jacket, scarf and sunglasses, a drink already in his hand. On his arm is MIMI SHERATON.)

BERNIE. Alright – we’re here. Now the party can really begin!

BAXTER. Well, if it isn’t beauty and the beast.

BERNIE. *(to MIMI)* You beast.

(MIMI fake laughs. TOFFEE dashes up to BERNIE and the three exchange “air” kisses.)

BAXTER. *(to audience)* And that is perhaps the most pompous lead Broadway actor in musical history – Bernard Broadhurst, the third – Broadway Bernie to friend and foe alike, and God help the producer that’s fool enough to have him in their play. *(looking up, praying)* Oh, God, Help me! Help me! Help me!

(BERNIE walks up to BAXTER, leaving TOFFEE and MIMI to whisper.)

BERNIE. *(throwing arm around his shoulder)* Baxter, Baxter, Baxter – I was wonderful tonight. I felt it, tonight! I was centered tonight! I was human tonight! I was –

BAXTER. Not yourself tonight!

BERNIE. I know you love me, Baxy – I saved your play! If I hadn’t agreed to help coach Little Miss Mafia over there, even her husband would have pulled the money out. Either that, or he would have just lined us all up against some garage wall, like in Chicago and – well – it’s just too exciting to think about.

BAXTER. Bernie, you are a conundrum.

BERNIE. Ooooo – Baxy, I never knew you cared.

BAXTER. One moment you’re waltzing around with three dreamgirls from the chorus line on your arms and then next, it’s three Jersey boys.

BERNIE. You know what they say, Life is a Cabaret. One should never limit where one gets ones inspiration. Take Mimi for instance.

BAXTER. No – you take Mimi.

BERNIE. Oh, I have, many times.

(BAXTER puts the cigar in his mouth. BERNIE takes it out.)

BERNIE. Ugh. Remember, you never know where it's been. Remember Monica? *(taking a drink from a near by table)* Are you going to finish that?

(As BERNIE takes the drink and finishes it, BAXTER turns to the audience.)

BAXTER. *(to audience)* We only cast Bernie because some people think he looks a lot like Tony Alto, which is the character he plays in the show, although personally, I don't see it. The gypsy he dragged in with him was none other than Mimi Sheraton – the number one gossip columnist of Broadway, a patron of the arts and a royal –

(MIMI walks up.)

MIMI. Baxter, Darling – what a play – what a night – what a waste of talent – the cast's darling, not yours. You have no talent to waste.

BAXTER. I'm crazy for you too, Mimi.

MIMI. Of course you are. Everyone likes to grease Mimi Sheraton. My column can make or break a show. I need a drink. A dry martini.

BAXTER. You're never dry, Mimi.

MIMI. Of course I am – after my bath, when I have the pool boy pat me down. *(She pats a man in the audience.)* And he always does such a good job. I even loaned him to my friend here, as a Christmas present. *(to the woman with him)* Tell me, has been naughty or nice? *(Who knows what she'll say.)* Oh, Bernie, dear, could you be a doll and fetch Mimi a little ittsy bittsy dry martini? If I don't have one in ten seconds, I'll be so le miserable.

BERNIE. Of course, my one and only. Do you like to it shaken or stirred?

MIMI. Surprise me.

(They growl at each other. BERNIE exits to bar.)

MIMI. *(to BAXTER)* I just love a man who knows how to come back for more.

BERNIE. Mimi – you just love a man who –

MIMI. *(quickly interrupting)* So, Baxter, darling, how on earth did a man of your low caliber ever fool someone in to putting up two million for a show? Oh, that's right, his wife wanted to make her Broadway debut. Still, there must be other producers, with much more experience and talent, that would stoop that low. As a matter of fact, I don't think there's any producer who wouldn't stoop that low. So how did Tony Alto get stuck with you?

BAXTER. Mimi, you are always a breath of fresh air – right off a manure heap.

(ABIGAIL rushes in with a few newspapers as BERNIE returns with two drinks.)

ABIGAIL. It's here! It's here! The first review is out.

(Everyone crowds around her. She hands out papers.)

BAXTER. *(to audience)* And that's Abigail, the only chorus girl our backer didn't personally hire – and the only one that can actually sing. She's from Oklahoma and some day she's gonna make some man a most happy fellow.

ELI. *(getting very close to her)* Which paper, Abigail?

ABIGAIL. *The Post.*

MIMI. Well, Baxter, looks like its time to see if you're going to be hearing the sound of music or coming down with a Saturday night fever. Oh, and look, the reviewer from the paper is even here tonight! Why don't we have him/her read their own work – aloud?

ELI. Maybe you could help read them, Abigail. You have such a heavenly voice – er – ah, it might soften the blow.

ABIGAIL. Well, alright. I'll read with them.

(MIMI goes to the table with The Post mad-lib and selects someone to stand. The patron will read off the words from the list the table made, filling in the blanks as ABIGAIL reads the review.)

TOFFEE. Was that a good or a bad review?

MIMI. Not every review is going to be a nine. Just be thankful you haven't gotten sunk like the Titanic yet. So far, you're still footlose and fancy free. But soon you'll be going deeper into the woods. The toughest critics are yet to come, so watch out. *(holding out her empty glass)* Bernie, darling, my glass is empty!

TOFFEE. *(holding up her glass)* Bernie, dear, I waited all this time to toast the opening of our show with you.

(BERNIE, holding his own glass, looks back and forth between the women, who glare at each other.)

ABIGAIL. *(to ELI)* Oh, I can't wait to see how he's going to get out of this one.

(BERNIE pours part of his drink into MIMI's glass, then walks over to TOFFEE and raises his glass to hers.)

BERNIE. To the Mafia Queen!

ALL. *(lifting their glasses)* To the Mafia Queen!

(As they start to drink –)

MIMI. And all who sail in her. *(She downs the glass.)*

(Black out. Mingle.)

PRE-SCENE 2 MINGLE

BERNIE – Introduces himself to all the tables, flirting with the women, telling them that he gives exciting private acting lessons. He talks about all the shows he's been in *Titanic* - he was the understudy for the iceberg, *Phantom* – he was one of people that dies, *Jekyll & Hyde* - he was one of the people that dies, *Civil War* - he was one of the people that dies. He's toured as one of the leads in the musical *Frankenstein* – what a monster of a show that was. “Well, enough about my career, lets talk about me.”

MIMI – Introduces herself to the tables, flirting with all the men, telling them that she gives private Manhattan tours – the drink not the island, darling. She knows they are all fans of her column – who isn't. She just hated the show *The Mafia Queen* and can't believe her good friend Bernie agreed to be in it. But then, he is always desperate for money. “But then again, who isn't? (laugh).” She can't believe that Toffee Alto – what a no talent. She talks about all the affairs she's had with famous men, but won't mention their names. You remember that Senator from, you know. And there was that New York real estate tycoon who dropped his second wife for her – he got tired of blonds. And then there was that famous Russian ballet dancer – she showed him a few steps.

TOFFEE – She hates Mimi. She tells people Mimi is a leech, that clings onto poor Bernie. She won't let him go and doesn't know when she's lost. She kept showing up at rehearsals, throwing everyone off. She adores – I mean admires, Bernie. What a talent. He's been so wonderful and she never could have gotten through all the pressure with out his help and support. Her husband doesn't understand her like Bernie does. Maybe that's because he's another creative type like her.

ABIGAIL – She tells people that the shows backer, Mr. Alto, makes her nervous. He's very intimidating. She knows that he put up the money and needs to look after it, but he seems to be the only one with the keys to the box office. She asks people if they may have overheard any conversations Tony may have had with Baxter.

ELI – He tells everyone what a wonderful guy Baxter is. He took him from selling hotdogs on the corner of 42nd street to being a Broadway Playwright. Baxter is his only friend since he's gotten off the bus in New York. He also tells people that he thinks Abby is the best chorus girl Broadway ever created. Isn't she dreamy? But, he's too nervous to talk to her. He asks people for their advice.

BAXTER – He confides that he was surprised that Toffee Alto wasn't a disaster on stage, although any actress put next to Bernie she would look like Betty Buckley. He's sure the next reviews will be great and he has the paperwork for the limited partnership for his next production all ready.

Scene Two

(Just before the scene begins, ABIGAIL and TOFFEE recruit two men from the audience and take them out. Outside, all four are draped in fake minks and given blond “big Jersey hair” wigs to wear. The audience chorus girls are instructed on how to strut and told to imitate whatever ABIGAIL does, staying behind her. They should just hum along with the music, “which is easy” and when cued by ABIGAIL to sing “The Mafia Queen.”)
(Black out. “Mafia Queen” music begins. Spotlight hits TOFFEE, singing “The Mafia Queen.”)

TOFFEE.

I WISHED TO BE ONE
A MAFIA QUEEN
A BLOND WHO AIN'T DUMB
A MAFIA QUEEN
I THOUGHT IT'D BE FUN
TO BE MORE RICH THAN MY FRIENDS
MEAN GETS ALL IN THE END
SO I SNAGGED A MADE MAN

I WORKED TO MAKE IT

(ABIGAIL enters with “chorus girls.”)

ABIGAIL & CHORUS GIRLS.

THE MAFIA QUEEN

TOFFEE.

SO ME, THE RIGHT FIT

ABIGAIL & CHORUS GIRLS.

THE MAFIA QUEEN

ABIGAIL.

REFUSED TO BE A LOSER

TOFFEE.

MY TIME TO BE THE CHOOSER

ABIGAIL.

NO ONE CAN STOP HER
THIS MAFIA QUEEN TODAY!

TOFFEE. Come on girls – lets show them what we’ve got!

(Music break as the “girls” do a dance number, lead by TOFFEE, which looks a lot like a stripper number.)

ABIGAIL.

SHE IS WHAT YOU SEE

TOFFEE, ABIGAIL & CHORUS GIRLS.

THE MAFIA QUEEN

TOFFEE.

THEY WISH THEY WERE ME

TOFFEE, ABIGAIL & CHORUS GIRLS.

THE MAFIA QUEEN

ABIGAIL.

SHE DON’T CARE IT’S BLOOD MONEY

TOFFEE.

YOU WISH YOU HAD IT, HONEY

ABIGAIL.

NO ONE CAN TOP HER

TOFFEE & ABIGAIL.

THIS QUEEN IS HERE TO STAY!

(Lights out. TOFFEE and ABIGAIL take wigs and minks from audience chorus girls and send them back to their seats. After applause ends, spot light up on BAXTER.)

BAXTER. That was the show’s big Act One finale. Okay, Okay, so the Scarlet Pimpernel it ain’t – which gives you an idea why I slipped ten thousand greenbacks to every reviewer that showed up. And while everyone at the after show party was reminiscing about that number and how the entire audience stared wide eyed and open mouthed at the stage during it, no one seemed to notice a small encounter not far from the front door.

(Lights up as a THUG enters, dressed in leather jacket, cap and sunglasses, chewing on a toothpick and clutching a gun in his jacket pocket. He walks up to TOFFEE, ABIGAIL, MIMI, and BERNIE who are talking about the song “The Mafia Queen.” The THUG pulls BERNIE aside. BAXTER has exited.)

THUG. Psssst?

BERNIE. I beg your pardon.

THUG. I says, Psssst!

BERNIE. The restroom is out the door and to the left.

THUG. Is that where's you want I should put it?

BERNIE. It would probably be the most appropriate place,
don't you agree?

THUG. I won't know, boss – if you says so.

*(THUG turns to exit as BERNIE turns back to the ladies
– but then THUG turns around again.)*

Pssst again!

BERNIE. Now what?

THUG. Your wife was looking freakin' good up there on dat stage. I think yous might have a hit.

BERNIE. Ah – praise from the little people. Now my life is complete. It could only be improved by one small thing.

THUG. What's that?

BERNIE. If you would stop calling me “boss” and disappear.

THUG. Oh – right, boss – I mean – good plan.

(They start to part.)

(puzzled) The restroom?

BERNIE. Out the door and to the left.

THUG. Hey, it's your party.

BERNIE. Yes – it is, and you're invited – to leave.

THUG. Right – gotcha. And leave it in the restroom.

BERNIE. Go away.

(BERNIE turns away as THUG exits.)

TOFFEE. Oh, Bernie, dear, we were just having a disagreement as to which got the bigger reaction. The Mafia Queen or our love song.

(They look into each other's eyes. The music “Me and You” begins.)

MIMI. Oh, no – I feel something coming on! I think I'm gonna be sick all over again.

TOFFEE. *(love in her eyes for BERNIE)* The audience was on the verge of tears.

MIMI. Who could blame them?

BERNIE. *(love in his eyes for TOFFEE)* So was I.

MIMI. So was every non-deaf person within a six block radius.

(She downs her drink as the couple breaks into singing.)

TOFFEE.

ME AND YOU

AND YOU AND ME AND YOU

ME AND YOU

YOU AND ME AND ME AND YOU

(There is the sound of a gunshot from the lobby. Only ABIGAIL wonders if she heard something. The couple keeps singing.)

BERNIE.

YOU AND ME

AND ME AND YOU AND ME

YOU AND ME

ME AND YOU AND YOU AND ME

(Another two gunshots. ABIGAIL and MIMI notice, puzzled.)

TOFFEE & BERNIE.

YOU AND ME AND ME AND YOU

(Another three gunshots. ABIGAIL starts towards the front door, putting her hand in her purse [for her gun].)

ME AND YOU AND YOU AND ME

AND YOU AND ME AND –

ME AND YOU

AND YOU AND YOU AND ME

ME AND YOU

YOU AND ME AND ME AND I

(**TOFFEE** and **BERNIE** embrace and kiss passionately.
Music ends abruptly.)

MIMI. Bernie! The show is over. You don't have to act like you like her now!

(**ELI** comes in, looking nervous.)

ABIGAIL. Eli – I thought I heard gun shots out there!

MIMI. Probably a music lover shooting her ears off.

(*She indicates shooting herself, then goes off to the bar.*)

ELI. I have to find Baxter.

ABIGAIL. Is something wrong, Eli?

(**TOFFEE** and **BERNIE** stumble past them, kissing madly.
They kiss and fumble their way out the back door.)

ELI. Wow. How dedicated you actors are. Always rehearsing.

ABIGAIL. Eli, when you came in here you looked worried about something. Is anything wrong?

(*She touches his hand. He virtually melts and stares into her eyes, almost in a dream state.*)

ELI. No – yes – well – I'm not sure.

ABIGAIL. Eli, are you feeling alright?

ELI. Heavenly.

ABIGAIL. What did you need to see Baxter about?

ELI. Oh – it's nothing really. Just – well, do you remember that actor that played the kidnap victim in the show? He was so authentic, struggle, desperation, that look of fear on his face. (*He tries to imitate it.*) God, what an actor – so real. Odd, I don't remember ever seeing him at the rehearsals –

ABIGAIL. Eli, what about him?

ELI. Well, I guess he got carried away with the celebration. He's sick in the men's room, red wine all over his shirt. This nice man trying to help him – one of the stage hands –

ABIGAIL. What makes you think he's a stage hand?

ELI. He was wearing gloves. You know that guy that always wears a baseball cap, sunglasses, and a leather jacket? I saw him backstage during the show. Though I've never seen him at rehearsal either.

(ABIGAIL takes a newspaper off a table and shows ELI the photo of the missing witness.)

ABIGAIL. Did he look like this?

ELI. Oh, no, I don't think so. He was wearing sunglasses and –

ABIGAIL. I'm sorry, Eli, I meant the guy with the red wine all over himself. Did he look like the person in this picture?

(She takes his hand and hands him the paper. He sighs and just looks at her hand touching his.)

Eli?

ELI. *(looking deep into her eyes)* Yes?

ABIGAIL. The picture. Does it look like the actor in the men's room who spilled the wine on his shirt?

ELI. Oh – *(looking at photo)* As a matter of fact – I don't know. I didn't really get a good look at him and, well, he wasn't smiling like in this picture. He was more like – *(He imitates a dead man's face.)*

ABIGAIL. *(facetious)* Thank you, Eli – that was most helpful.

ELI. Oh, anything for you, Abigail.

ABIGAIL. Now think, Eli. This is really important –

ELI. Oh – if it's important to you – it's important to me. *(smiles at her)* You know you have the most perfect eyes?

ABIGAIL. Okay. I want you to remember, did the nice stage hand see you?

ELI. No. They were both in the bathroom stall. I was going to offer to help but –

ABIGAIL. Do you think he's still there?

ELI. Well, I don't know – I guess he could – You think I should go back and –

(ABIGAIL pulls out a gun and starts to dash out.)

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