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SF PERUSALS

Samuel French Acting Edition

Murder at Cafe Noir

A Comic Tribute to the Bogart Movies of the 1940s

by David Landau

Music & Lyrics by
Nikki Stern

SAMUEL FRENCH

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INTRODUCTION

The interactive mystery play was first invented over ten years ago as an attempt to mix environmental theater with audience involvement. The goal was to allow the audience to experience the drama as if they were extras in a movie. The entire production, from script to props, direction to location, was oriented towards encompassing the audience in the world of the mystery and not, as has become the norm today, merely with the game of solving the mystery. The latter was, and should always be, a secondary entertainment. It is the story of the characters which must always take center stage—a story of desperate people in desperate situations that are compelled to perform desperate acts. This does not mean that the show is void of comedy, but rather that the humor comes from the characters and not at their expense.

In a true mystery there can only be one logical killer, pointed out not only by the clues, but by the motivation, personality and situation the character finds himself/herself in. While there are a number of other likely suspects, this character is the inevitable culprit. The mystery has been sown well when the average of correct guesses is 10%. By the end of the play, when all is revealed, the audience should sigh with a resounding "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 very edge of 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 the most involving form of theater possible.

David Landau
September 16, 1993
Creator of the first interactive mystery play, Dec. 1982
Member of The Dramatists Guild and Mystery Writers of America.

NOTES ON PRODUCTION

PERFORMANCE SPACE. The following play has been 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 cocktail style or dining tables. Tables could be added in front of the first rows in the case of thrust or arena stages with bleacher seating. Audience members can even be seated on stage.

SCENES & BREAKS. The script is formatted into five 15 minute scenes. Between each scene is time to serve a course of a meal, serve drinks, or play dance music as desired. During these breaks the characters mingle 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 the intermission scheduled after scene 3. There should also be a musical break between scenes 4 & 5 that will allow audience members to hand in their guesses as to "whodunit."

MUSICAL NUMBERS. The musical numbers in this play have been designed to be performed to a music tape provided with the licensing of the script. Lead sheets are also provided for the actors. Some producers have hired piano players in the past, but this is not necessary and often contrary to the intent of the "surprise" musical interlude.

AWARDING PRIZES. The "Sleuth Sheets" are collected by the characters between scenes 4 & 5 and handed to the stage manager for sorting. Scene 5 is performed after all the guesses have been collected. 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 the patron by a cast member.

CAST

RICK ARCHER — A private eye who's always wanted to be Bogart or Mitchum in one of those 40s film noir movies, and has not gotten his chance.

MADAM TOUREAU — A lady who's seen it all while managing the Café Noir—where everything is for sale.

SHEILA WONDERLY — Her real name is Sheilda Schickelmeier. Once a spoiled rich girl, she took a job at Café Noir and learned about life the hardest way of all, becoming hardened in the process.

ANTHONY CAIRO — A dealer in the black market working Café Noir to avoid the St. Vincent police. He has two scars, one on either side of his face.

MARIE LARUE — The Creole illegitimate daughter of a Voodoo priestess and a St. Vincent's political figure. She sells spells and fortunes at Café Noir.

SIMON GUTTERMAN — A British barrister who lost his standing when he became implicated in a scandal of having affairs with wealthy female clients. He now caters to the clientele of Café Noir. Simon is always looking for a quick way to make it to the top.

THURSBY — A two bit gun runner.
VANGILDER — A Dutch blackmailer.
RIGFIELD — A British cop from St. Vincent.
(All three are played by the same actor.)

NOTE: ALL CHARACTERS DRESS IN BLACK & WHITE ONLY

The room is decorated to look tropical, but everything is in black and white and shades of gray. A sign hangs on one wall proclaiming "Café Noir". An old radio stands by a small bar. During cocktails the sound of the waves breaking on the beach and the sound of gulls are heard. Tables should have six to eight place settings, forcing strangers to sit with one another. Black or gray table cloths and gray or black candles should be on each table. Patrons will get their own drinks from the bar.

PRE-SHOW

As patrons enter, they are shown to their table by MADAM TOUREAU. On every table is a Sleuth Sheet asking whodunit and why and a copy of a newspaper front page, which patrons will no doubt take turns reading. It reads as follows:

• •

THE GRENADINE ISLETS INQUIRER
BODY OF ANDRE GAUVREAU
DISCOVERED BY TOURISTS

Early this morning the cold blue corpse of Andre Gauvreau was spotted washed ashore on the north beach of Tobago Cay by twenty tourists with cameras on a boat tour from St. Vincent. Clad in a white Giorgio Armani suit with a bold pink Sergio Valente tie, the body of Mr. Gauvreau was originally mistaken by the tourists for the great albino turtle. After beating off three hungry albatrosses, Kingston authorities retrieved the corpse and determined Mr. Gauvreau had died from two gun shot wounds. Andre Gauvreau, owner of the Islet Shipping Co., Grenadine Import/Exports and the Café Noir on Mustique, was a very powerful and often feared figure in the area, rumored to have been involved with smuggling, the black market and prostitution. He leaves behind no immediate family, though six women have filed claims against his estate for child support. The Café Noir will remain open tonight, drinks are half price.

RESORTS INTERNATIONAL TO OPEN CASINO

The first casino in the Grenadines will open on Tobago Cay next—

• •

ANTHONY CAIRO will enter, looking and acting the same as the patrons. His nervousness could be mistaken for shyness as he scans the faces of the people present and subtly moves

about during the seating period, carrying a stuffed, sealed envelope. He places down an envelope at a small table with a radio on it. MARIA LARUE enters as if just another patron. She sees Cairo and smiles. Cairo leaves the envelope and walks away, nursing a drink. Maria walks to the table and exchanges a small wrapped bundle for Cairo's envelope, then disappears into the kitchen. Cairo walks back, takes the bundle and heads for the front door when SIMON GUTTERMAN enters. Cairo quickly changes his direction and heads for the kitchen. On the way he stops and puts his glass down on a table—where he leaves the bundle as well. (Inside the bundle is a voodoo doll made of white cloth with two needles through the heart.) The sounds of the waves and gulls fades and the lights dim.

CAFÉ NOIR

Scene 1

(Music begins to play. A match is lit and a spotlight comes up on RICK ARCHER as he lights his own cigarette. He is dressed as a typical P.I. character.)

RICK. Have you ever wished you could just close your eyes and wake up in the past, at a point in your life that seemed a trivial decision, but turned out to be the most important and perhaps the worst mistake you ever made? Sure you have. I have lots of times. But this time it was different. This time I wished I had made a different choice, but deep down I knew that I wouldn't—that I couldn't.

Right now you're probably asking yourself, what the hell is this guy talking about? Well, I'll tell you, in all the sordid details. First we'll start with who I am. That will come in handy later. My handle is Richard Archer, but everyone calls me Just Plain Rick. I was weaned on TV reruns of Bogart and Mitchum movies and after graduating last in my class at the John Jay College of Criminology I became a private dick. You know, the sleazy guys that disgruntled spouses hire to follow their better halves. *(Music starts under.)* The snoops that cheap insurance companies hire to get snapshots of claimants playing athletic sports; the fools who think life could really be like those romantic movies of the forties.

RICK. *(Cont.)* Well, this time it was. Even the way it all started, with some tacky dressed, well-to-do drunk hiring me in a bar in Reno to find his runaway daughter. He paid me five thousand clams in advance and plied me with a picture of a dame that had more curves than the west coast highway. Daddy's little girl had been nursing a degree in Grenada when the troops took the beach away from the sun worshipers, and after hearing about her from almost every American soldier on the island, I traced the doll to a few tiny forgotten islets in the eastern Caribbean called the Grenadines. And that's what brought me here, to Café Noir.

(The lights come up over the entire audience. RICK sings "Café Noir" as he walks through the crowd.)

RICK.
HUSTLERS ON HIATUS
TOUGH GUYS OFF THE TAKE
DAMES WHO PAY FOREVER
FOR AN INNOCENT MISTAKE
BEEN ABROAD SO LONG
NOW IT'S THE ONLY LIFE THEY KNOW
DENIZEN OR DROP-OUT
THEY'VE GOT NOWHERE ELSE TO GO

AT CAFÉ NOIR,
A CHEAP ISLAND BAR
THE LONELINESS HANGS LIKE A CLOUD
MOST OF YOU
WILL BE PASSING ON THROUGH
AND THE REST WILL GET LOST IN THE CROWD
YOU'VE COME TO CAFÉ NOIR
AN ALL PURPOSE BAR
BUT DON'T LOOK FOR THE WELCOMING CREW
IF YOUR MONEY'S OKAY
THEN YOU MIGHT AS WELL STAY
THOUGH I WOULDN'T IF I WERE YOU

(Music under.)

RICK. (Cont.) It was the sleaziest club around, but then again it was the only one and the characters that hung out there were a frightening sight. *(He grimaces at the audience.)* The manager was a Madam Toureau—a lady who'd seen more of the underside of life than the motion picture rating system.

MADAM.

EVERY NOW AND THEN
A FANCY SHIP MAY COME TO CALL
THEN THE PLACE GETS OF LIVELY
WHAT WITH PASSENGERS AND ALL
EASY TO BELIEVE IN LUCK
NO MATTER WHAT THE COST
TIL THE SHIP SETS SAIL
AND THEN IT'S EASY TO FEEL LOST

	CHORUS.
AT CAFÉ NOIR	HERE ON THE
A CHEAP ISLAND BAR	ISLAND
DRINKING CARIBBEAN	
BOOZE	YOU LOSE
TRYIN' TO GET STIFF	STUCK ON THE
WHILE YOU'RE WONDER-	
ING IF	ISLAND
YOU'VE GOT ANYTHING	
ELSE YOU CAN LOSE	YOU CHOSE
CAFÉ NOIR	OUT ON THE
YOUR TYPICAL BAR	ISLAND
DESIGNED TO HELP	
PATRONS FORGET	OOH

NO THE LIQUOR'S NOT SMOOTH
BUT IT MIGHT HELP TO SOOTHE
ANY LINGERING TRACE OF REGRET

(Music under, and continues.)

RICK. Here, every face had a past. Every nerve strung so tight, it was like a string orchestra, perched at that moment before the conductor's baton swung down and started that last movement. It was here that I found my runaway.

(SHEILA enters from the front door. She looks nervous.)

MADAM. Sheila, you're late!

SHEILA. I was detained.

MADAM. Detained?

SHEILA. By the St. Vincent police, Madam Toureau. They've been asking me questions for hours.

MADAM. Actually, I'm surprised you came in at all. I thought you might be in mourning.

SHEILA. And I thought you might be.

MADAM. Well then, we're both wrong, n'est ce pas? Our customers await.

SHEILA. *(Looking at audience.)* Let them wait.

MADAM. You were in such a rush to leave with André last night, you didn't even notice you dropped one of your earrings.

(MADAM holds up one earring and then tosses it at her. SHEILA catches it and sings.)

SHEILA.
ANSWERING TO NO ONE
MAKING MY OWN RULES
FREE TO CUT MY LOSSES
AND TO WALK AWAY FROM FOOLS
HEY, I MAY SOUND CYNICAL
BUT HEY, THAT'S HOW I SOUND
THE ISLAND'S NOT A HALF-BAD SPOT
AND THIS IS WHAT I'VE FOUND

	CHORUS.
AT CAFÉ NOIR	LIFE ON THE
IT'S A CHEAP ISLAND BAR	ISLAND
NO ONE CARES WHAT YOU'VE DONE	
OR WHO YOU ARE	SO FAR
YOU CAN COME, YOU CAN GO	
AND THERE'S ALWAYS THE SHOW	
THAT PLAYS OUT EVERY NIGHT AT THE BAR	CAFÉ
YOU CAN DISAPPEAR	NOIR
YOU CAN CRY IN YOUR BEER	
IT'S WHATEVER YOU WANT IT TO BE	
YEAH, WE TAKE UP SPACE	
BUT IN THIS KIND OF PLACE	
THERE'S AN ODD SENSE OF BEING FREE	WE'RE FREE

ALL.
THAT'S WHY CAFÉ NOIR
IS THE PERFECT HOME FOR ME

(SHEILA looks at her earring, then clutches it in thought. She notices RICK staring at her. He winks. She turns and starts to walk to the back door. RICK turns to the audience.)

RICK. Sheila Wonderly. At least that's the name she was going by when I found her. Her real name was Sheilda Schickelmeier. I can't say I blamed her for changing it, but I got the feeling it wasn't just her name that had done a lot of changing since Daddy saw her last. Getting her to come back home to Burning Rock Arkansas wasn't going to be an easy task, especially with the suspicious death of the club's owner—a man who went through women like Congress goes through tax relief, taking away all that's good and leaving behind a stripped framework of sorrow and broken promises. Even if

my runaway was ready to run home, the cops wouldn't have let her. To earn the rest of my clams I had to get close to her and get her out of the mess she was in deeper than even she knew. *(RICK changes his demeanor and turns to MADAM.)* Madam Toureau?

MADAM. Politer people call me that. You're fresh blood around her. What can I do you for?

RICK. A day of work. I'm an American fellow down on his luck. I just need a few more greenbacks to buy myself a ticket out of here.

MADAM. And what makes you think I could use a stranger in my place?

RICK. I read the owner passed away with the outgoing tide and figured there'd be a few faces that might decide they didn't have to show tonight.

MADAM. You're a smart guy. *(She checks her watch.)* Maybe there are a few defaults this evening. Maybe I could use an extra hand. What makes you worth the risk?

RICK. No risk. At the end of the night, you can pay me what you think I've been worth.

MADAM. Sounds fair, and foolhardy. What are you running from?

RICK. I'm not running from anything.

MADAM. A lot of people say that. They're just trying to fool themselves. We all have our little something to hide and protect. Something we don't want anyone else to get too close to. *(She turns to a patron.)* You know what I'm talking about, don't you?

(If the person says "Yes", Madam answers "Of course you do, we already know all about you." If they say "No", she gives a small laugh and replies, "Oh, but I know you do.")

MADAM. *(Cont. To RICK.)* Let me explain something to you, Mr.—ah—

RICK. Rick. Just plain Rick.

MADAM. Alright, Mr. just plain Rick. This is the Café Noir. It may look like a dump at times but it's a very important place in these parts. It's a middle ground where the dishonest can be honest about it. Where everyone is entitled to their secrets and everyone else is entitled to find them out. It's a place where anything and everything is for sale, and there's always a buyer. It's the only place like it in the world, Rick, because the shadows here offer total acceptance, no matter who you are or what you've done. Take our friend over here.

(MADAM walks up to a young woman patron.)

MADAM. *(Cont.)* Once the debutante of the decade, until it was discovered she had been running a prostitution ring out her dormitory room at Radcliffe. You should have never given discounts to the professors, dear. It may have improved your transcripts but *(MADAM motions to her escort.)* look at where it got you. And another loyal patron—

(MADAM walks to a man patron.)

MADAM. *(Cont.)* He collected on nineteen life insurance policies, in nineteen different states in just four months—drowning deaths each time. Too bad the insurance company went bankrupt before you could finish collecting. If ever you try it again, sweetheart, try nineteen different insurance companies. And here's another regular—

(MADAM walks to another woman.)

MADAM. *(Cont.)* Such an innocent face. Who would have thought that as a teenager she carved up her stepparents with a Remco electric knife on the night before Thanksgiving and served them to their relatives the next day? You would have gotten away with it too, if your stepfather's gold tooth hadn't somehow gotten mixed in with the stuffing. *(Back to RICK.)*

You see, Rick, everyone has secrets, until they come to Café Noir.

RICK. *(To the last woman picked out.)* Remind me never to come to your place for dinner.

MADAM. She's the chef at the Grenadine Hyatt. But we were talking about you, Mr. Rick.

RICK. I wasn't.

MADAM. What are you running away from?

RICK. I'll tell you a secret, Madam Toureau. I never run away, from anything. That's my problem.

MADAM. Could be a very dangerous one around here. You're hired, Rick—for tonight. I like to live dangerously—lets you know you're still alive. You can start by taking drink orders and we'll have to get you a white jacket.

(MADAM starts for the kitchen, but GUTTERMAN intercepts her.)

GUTTERMAN. Do you think that wise, Madam? Especially with the St. Vincent police looking so closely into—

MADAM. I'm still the manager here.

GUTTERMAN. Perhaps you've managed more than just André's cafe.

MADAM. You amuse me, Gutterman.

(MADAM exits to kitchen. GUTTERMAN looks suspiciously at RICK and then goes after her. RICK turns to the closest table.)

RICK. Would anyone here care for a drink?

MARIA. *(To RICK.)* Is it true what I heard you say?

RICK. Depends on what you heard me say.

MARIA. *(She walks to him.)* That you never run away, from anything?

RICK. Yeah. I seem to have a problem with that. I'm like that stupid Scottish terrier we had when I was growing up.

One day it decided to chase the neighbor's car. Unfortunately, that day the neighbors were moving to Alaska.

MARIA. I love a man with conviction.

SHEILA. *(Stepping forward.)* Most of the men around here have been convicted several times. I guess that explains why you've made love to so many of them.

MARIA. At least I don't go for the highest bidders. I just love to love—not to make money.

(SHEILA tries to slap MARIA, but RICK catches her hand before it lands on MARIA's cheek. SHEILA pulls her hand away from him, angry. THURSBY suddenly enters through the front door. He is dressed in a black leather jacket.)

THURSBY. Maria, baby—I think we've hit pay dirt.

(THURSBY gives RICK a cold stare and starts to approach.)

THURSBY. Who are you?

SHEILA. Someone new your girlfriend's taken a liking to, Thursby. *(To RICK.)* Oh, this is Thursby—he's a three time offender wanted in Jamaica, Barbados, and the Bahamas for gun smuggling, manslaughter and being a public nuisance. Thursby, meet Rick. He's a total stranger that the Madam just put on for the night and your Voodoo queen has got the evil eye for. *(Back to RICK.)* Perhaps I should leave the three of you alone.

(THURSBY pulls out a switch blade. As SHEILA starts to walk away, RICK grabs her hand and twirls her into his arms.)

RICK. Going? Without a good-bye kiss?

(RICK swoops her into a heavy kiss. MARIA looks angry. THURSBY looks confused. As the kiss lingers on, MARIA storms off to the kitchen. THURSBY, perplexed, closes his knife and goes after her.)

THURSBY. Maria? Maria, I found something that's gonna make us rich.

(Once they're gone, RICK ends the kiss, bringing SHEILA back up for air. She immediately slaps him.)

RICK. Well, you got me into it. I figured the least you could do was get me out of it.

SHEILA. Smart guy, huh? Well, smart guys aren't my type.

(SHEILA exits to the kitchen. CAIRO, still observing from the corner applauds.)

CAIRO. Very good, Mr. Rick. Yes—it's always nice to meet a man who knows how to handle a truly volatile situation. Perhaps your talents in that area might extend beyond just domestic troubles?

RICK. Perhaps. Mr—?

CAIRO. Cairo, Anthony Cairo. A dealer in the black market. I can get you anything, for a price.

RICK. What is it you can't seem to get for yourself?

CAIRO. Insightful as well? You're a man of many surprises, Mr. Rick—yes! Freedom, to answer your question. Freedom to leave this time forgotten islet. Have you noticed that everything and everyone here seems to have set foot out of a 1940s movie? Have you ever been to a tropical island where everything was so—gray? And just look, look at the name of this club—Café Noir.

RICK. Then you fit right in here. Why would you want to leave?

CAIRO. I have more than enough reasons, Mr. Rick, let me assure you. Wouldn't my wanting to leave fit right in as well?

RICK. With the murder of the club's owner, your wanting to leave may fit in all too well. What I don't get is what's stopping you.

CAIRO. *(A slight laugh.)* Gauvreau's death. He was to supply me with not only the passport, but the passage upon one of his ships. You see, Mr. Rick—

RICK. Just plain Rick.

CAIRO. Yes, yes—Mr. just plain Rick. I am a man without an identity. A citizen of no country. A fugitive with a new face—courtesy of the talents of a doctor friend of M. Gauvreau, whom I've had to pay dearly. *(He turns to a patron.)* I just wish you had used some anesthesia.

RICK. A little trouble with the law?

CAIRO. If only it were that simple. I once had the folly to redirect a certain shipment of black market goods in order to affect a higher personal profit. Shall we say the supplier of these goods did not appreciate my entrepreneurial instincts. A change of facial scenery became a necessity for life. My new passport and the ticket are in a gray envelope in M. Gauvreau's office. As an associate of M. Gauvreau's I am being watched closely by the St. Vincent police. But you are a stranger, a face they would easily forget if they noticed at all.

RICK. Thanks a lot, fellah.

CAIRO. I am prepared to make this small gesture worth your while.

(CAIRO pulls a few bills of foreign currency and pushes them into RICK's pocket.)

RICK. Breaking into a deceased man's office doesn't sound like that small of a gesture to me.

(RICK pulls the bills out of his pocket. CAIRO pulls a key on a gray ribbon out of his pocket and dangles it.)

CAIRO. Even if one were to have a key?

RICK. I suppose that might make it a little easier, but—

CAIRO. The office in question happens to be behind the kitchen.

RICK. Then why don't you just do it yourself?

CAIRO. The walls have eyes, my friend. Yes—the walls have eyes.

(CAIRO drops the key into RICK's hand, on top of the bills, and leaves for the kitchen. He stops as he passes the bar. In the shadows behind it lurks GUTTERMAN. CAIRO exits quickly. GUTTERMAN laughs to himself and raises a drink in toast to RICK. RICK turns his back to GUTTERMAN and looks at the key, then pockets everything.)

RICK. *(To audience.)* Okay folks. What would you have done? This is the audience participation portion of the show. By a show of hands you will determine what I do next. How many think I should sneak into the deceased's office for Mr. Cairo's gray envelope? *(There will be a show of hands.)* And how many for ignoring Mr. Cairo and just pursuing the dame with a set of parabolas that would send a construction crew into double overtime—Sheila Wonderly that is.

(Another show of hands. RICK will do whatever the majority rules, with the appropriate response.)
*(**VERSION A**—If they vote for him to get the envelope:)*

RICK. Sending me into the back room. Not a very safe way to play things, but who wants to live long when life's a bore. Thanks a lot. Okay, majority rules—but if I don't come back in the same condition, it'll be on your heads.

*(**VERSION B**—If they vote for him not to go for the envelope:)*

RICK. Not a very curious crowd, are we? I know where your minds are at. You want me to tail Ms. Wonderly's tail. Okay, majority rules—not that I mind. Maybe there'll be a few fringe benefits I'll owe you some thanks for later.

(BOTH versions continue here.)

MADAM. *(Entering.)* Ladies and Gentleman, and I use the term indiscriminately—this evening's next course is a little specialty from the kitchen of the Grenadine Hyatt.

(EVERYONE enters. During the serving, characters will interact with the patrons.)

CAIRO asks various people at different tables if they have seen the small bundle he misplaced earlier. If asked, he says it contained a present he bought for his mother. He will also ask people if they might want to buy anything on the black market—caviar, Russian vodka, electronic goods? As he asks, Cairo pulls from one pocket a small jar of caviar, a small bottle of vodka from the other pocket and then opens his coat to reveal an electronics catalogue. CAIRO will reveal that the police questioned THURSBY about the murder. If questioned, he will admit to being questioned himself. "Why pay legal prices? Whatever you want, I can get it for you. Duty free. The market is always in the black when you deal with Cairo Imports.

GUTTERMAN asks people if they know what it was RICK and CAIRO were discussing. He will ask patrons if they need legal counsel, his specialty being criminal defense. He will also flirt with the ladies, suggesting a romantic rendezvous later this evening. He will reveal that the police questioned MARIA about the murder. If asked, he will admit to being questioned himself. "Legal counsel for questionable legal activities, criminal defense and untraceable tax free investments my specialty. It's such a lovely island, certainly we can't have dirty money spoiling the view."

MARIA asks people if they know anything about the stranger Rick. She offers to sell people spells of attraction, success, to ward off the evil eye and just about anything else. She reveals that the police questioned CAIRO about the murder. If asked,

she'll admit the police questioned her as well. "Candles, potions, incense and spells for all purposes and occasions. 24 hour service, just dial 1-800-Voodoo. House calls available, birthday parties my specialty."

THURSBY asks people whether RICK came on to his girl MARIA, or if she came on to him. He also tries to get people interested in buying weapons. He pulls a high tech weapons catalogue from his jacket and points out what he can get wholesale. He reveals the police questioned Gutterman about the murder. If asked, he will admit they questioned him as well. "Don't get mad—*(Opens his coat to reveal guns of various sizes and grenades.)*—Get even. The latest in high tech extermination tools—new and used. Remember your trip always with a grenade from the Grenadines. Got a special on scud missiles and anti-personnel devices."

MADAM asks people if they are enjoying their visit to the Grenadines. She warns them about the sand-flies on the beach and that the sharks come in around sunset every night this time of year. If there's anything they wish to know about the islets, they can ask her. She reveals the police questioned Maria about the murder. If asked, she'll admit she was questioned as well.

SHEILA flirts with the men and suggests that she could show them a good time for the right price. She insists her men have a gold card, though she only accepts cash. She reveals that the police questioned MADAM TOUREAU about the murder. If asked, she'll admit she was questioned as well. RICK will follow her to the table and try to get her to talk with him, but she will ignore him and walk away. "Special discount for gold and corporate card members. Wonder-lay—the name says it all."

RICK will ask people if they've learned anything about the other characters. He will catch up to SHEILA at her table after she's been there a while and is about to leave. He tries to tell her that her daddy hired him to find her and bring her home, but she keeps walking away, ignoring him. If the vote

was for him to get the envelope, he will eventually disappear into the kitchen and come out again later and wink at the crowd. If the vote was the other way, he'll just follow SHEILA, trying to get her to listen to him.

Scene 2

(Music intro. Lights up. Depending on which version was voted on earlier, RICK either displays a grey envelope to the audience or is following SHEILA as she exits.)

*(**VERSION A**—To get envelope. RICK shows the audience he has the Grey envelope then pockets it. Skip to bottom of next page.)*
*(**VERSION B**—To tail SHEILA. RICK catches her alone before she can exit.)*

RICK. Actually, I'm not surprised to find you in a place like this.

SHEILA. Where would you be surprised to find me?

RICK. A convent for one, but certainly not in a dead man's café.

SHEILA. Some men, even when they're dead, can control a woman.

RICK. And you like it that way.

SHEILA. Why would I?

RICK. Because then you can blame whatever trouble you're in on someone else, someone who isn't around to say otherwise.

SHEILA. *(Leaning in, her lips almost touching his.)* You're such a smart guy, aren't you, mister Rick? Always knowing what to say—how to say it—who to say it to. What do you want, a medal?

RICK. I can think of something I'd like a whole lot more. Something a lot softer—wetter—sweeter.

(SHEILA licks RICK's lips.)

SHEILA. Something like that?
RICK. Something like that? And something like this.

(RICK kisses SHEILA. She bites his lip. He yells and steps back.)

RICK. But not that.
SHEILA. I thought you were a tough guy.

(SHEILA starts to leave.)

RICK. You think all guys are tough guys so you can be heartless towards them before they can be heartless towards you.
SHEILA. What do you know?
RICK. I know you're running away but never getting anywhere. Because what you're really running away from is always right behind you, like your shadow, only deeper.
SHEILA. Don't pretend to know me, Mr. Just Plain Rick.

(SHEILA turns to leave again.)

RICK. I never pretend.

(SHEILA exits. RICK rubs his lip.)
*(**BOTH** versions continue here.)*

(MARIA comes up behind RICK and startles him with the next line.)

MARIA. I hear you came to take little miss love-for-sale back to Daddy.

RICK. Where'd you hear that? *(Glaring at audience member.)* Did you tell her that?

MARIA. Forget about her. She's bad karma. She left with André last night—part of their deal was he got her once a week. The rest of the week he got her the biggest spenders in the Caribbean. She won't be going any further away than St. Vincent Prison.

RICK. What if she didn't do it?

MARIA. A lot of people in St. Vincent Prison didn't do it—or at least not with the right people.

RICK. You sound like you know what you're talking about, Maria.

MARIA. I should. My mother died in that prison and for no other crime than that she loved the wrong man.

RICK. Your father?

MARIA. He was a politician—white bread and British to the hilt. Then one day on a tour of the outer islets he saw my mother and was possessed by her magic. Odd match—he an Oxford appointee of the Queen, she a voodoo priestess and descendant of a runaway slave. It was a time of political upheaval. Both the French and the African factions wanted more voice in the government. But the rich British minority feared a loss of control. For the love of her people, my mother became their voice and my father began to lose favor. After a bombing of a police station my mother was arrested, even though she had been in the arms of my father at the time. My father was transferred by the British parliament to the Falkland Islands. I was born in St. Vincent Prison, the same cell my mother died in. Soon after it was discovered the bombing was the work of the radical Liberté French party.

(MARIA is on the verge of tears.)

RICK. I'm sorry Maria. Nothing can make up for the raw deal life hands some of us. Your father?

MARIA. He doesn't even know I exist.

(MARIA folds into his arms in tears and just then THURSBY enters. He pulls out his knife.)

THURSBY. Let go of her.

(MARIA turns as THURSBY approaches menacingly.)

RICK. *(Raising his hands.)* You got things a little wrong, fellah.

THURSBY. Yeah, sure. Like I got it wrong with that frog André.

MARIA. *(Meaning shut up.)* THURSBY!

RICK. *(Beginning to back up.)* You mean André Gauvreau?

THURSBY. He was always groping after her as if he didn't have enough already.

(THURSBY takes a jab at RICK, who jumps back.)

MARIA. Thursby! No—

THURSBY. Now you come in here, nosing around.

(THURSBY takes another jab at RICK, who avoids him. THURSBY continues to back RICK at knife point around the room.)

RICK. Thursby, didn't your mother ever tell you not to play with sharp things?

MARIA. Thursby, please—*(to RICK.)* He's insanely jealous. He doesn't know what he's saying.

RICK. It's not what he's saying that's got me worried.

(THURSBY takes another jab at RICK, who jumps back. By now RICK is standing near the table with the radio, where there is a glass of liquid. RICK grabs the glass and throws it in THURSBY's face. THURSBY staggers back, raising his arms in shock. RICK grabs the hand with the knife and pulls it down, twisting THURSBY's arm around his back. MADAM enters.)

MADAM. What's going on here?

RICK. Thursby was just showing me some of the dance steps he learned from West Side Story.

(RICK pulls the knife away from THURSBY and shows it to MADAM.)

MADAM. I see—You just met his girl named Maria.

(RICK releases THURSBY, who rubs his hand and then storms off. MARIA goes after him.)

RICK. *(To audience member who got wet from the thrown drink.)* Sorry about getting you wet like that. But I had a choice, you get wet or I get stabbed. It wasn't a tough choice.

MADAM. Well, you really do liven a place up, just plain Rick.

(MADAM takes knife from RICK.)

RICK. Tell me about André, Madam. I'm sure you know more about him than anyone else, even the police.

MADAM. Are you the police?

RICK. No Madam. I'm my own man—*(To woman in audience.)* which is the loneliest kind of all.

MADAM. Then why should I tell you anything?

RICK. Because the longer André's murderer is loose, the longer the St. Vincent police have to dig deep into this place and get evidence that would close you down forever. Something they didn't do before because of André Gauvreau's connections, I suspect.

MADAM. You're a very intuitive man, Mr. Rick. But why do you want to find André's murderer? Not for the preservation of Café Noir.

RICK. I have my reasons. Were you and André a team?

MADAM. Once, yes. For a while I was his partner in life.

I was your typical radical college student, longing for a worthy cause to jump behind—to make sacrifices for. You know the standard fool-hearted romantic that colleges put out with as much volume as these islands grown bananas. Then I met André and his radical French political party. *(She begins running her hands through a male patron's hair, thinking only of André.)* He was a mature, handsome and sexy man, with piercing eyes and a hypnotic voice. The kind of man girls fall in love with easily. *(She finally notices the man is not André and looks disappointed. She walks away.)* He was everything I dreamed of and I gave him everything. I joined him and his fight for French liberté and found myself doing things I never thought I ever could or would do. Slowly politics gave way to smuggling. The black market was much more profitable than politics, and his political connections helped his enterprise flourish. Women have a weakness for dangerous men and he was mine. You can even surprise yourself at how far you'll go when you're hopelessly in love with someone. I never stopped loving him.

RICK. But he stopped loving you.

MADAM. Not stopped, just changed.

(GUTTERMAN enters.)

GUTTERMAN. Madam? It is imperative I speak to you. Someone has been in M. Gauvreau's office.

(MADAM looks very nervous. She quickly exits. GUTTERMAN glares at RICK and exits.)

RICK. *(To audience.)* The motives for André Gauvreau's murder were coming fast and furious. Unfortunately, the gal I had to clear was the last person seen with the deceased before he washed up on a beach with two slugs in him. But the violently jealous Thursby looked like a pill even the St. Vincent police would swallow. *(Suddenly two gunshots ring out.*

Through the front door staggers THURSBY—shot in the chest.) Although suddenly it looked like Thursby swallowed some lead. *(RICK runs to catch THURSBY.)* Who was it Thursby? Who?

(THURSBY leans against the radio.)

THURSBY. *(Dying.)* Too late—

RICK. Come on Thursby—cough it up—*(THURSBY coughs. RICK shakes his head disappointed.)* Spit it out—*(THURSBY spits. RICK looks even more annoyed.)* Sing—

(THURSBY turns on the radio. Tango music starts as THURSBY sings "IT WAS". He alternates from dying in RICK's arms to dancing with him. The rest of the cast enters to see what's happened.)

THURSBY. It was—it was—
THE CLICK OF THE BARREL
THE CRACK OF THE .22
YOU TURNED AT THE SOUND
AND FOUND IT WAS MEANT FOR YOU

I HAD A PLAN THAT COULD NOT FAIL
FINGER THE KILLER AND THEN TRY BLACKMAIL
BUT I WAS CARELESS AND THE KILLER DIDN'T CARE
I TOOK A HIT
NOW WAS THAT FAIR?

RICK. But who was it, Thursby?

THURSBY. It was—it was—

EVERYONE. *(Singing chorus in hushed tones.)*
THE CLICK OF THE BARREL
THE CRACK OF THE .22
YOU TURNED AT THE SOUND
AND FOUND IT WAS MEANT FOR YOU

THURSBY.
I SHOULDA SEEN IT COMING FROM THE START
YOU TRUST A KILLER
YOU GET SHOT IN THE HEART
BUT I KNOW WHO PLUGGED ME
I CAN PROVE IT AS WELL
OKAY, I DIE
BUT WHAT THE HELL
(Cough.)

RICK. *(Impatient.)* WHO WAS IT?
THURSBY. It was—it was—
EVERYONE.
THE CLICK OF THE BARREL
THE CRACK OF THE .22
YOU TURNED AT THE SOUND
AND FOUND IT WAS MEANT FOR YOU

THURSBY.
I WANTED TO TAKE MARIA FAR FROM THIS
HOW COULD I KNOW THE KILLER WOULDN'T MISS
HONESTLY. WHAT I DID
I DID FOR LOVE
BUT NOW I'M ICED
COURTESY OF ...
RICK. *(Irritated.)* Of who, Thursby? Who was it?
THURSBY. It was—it was—

(As the cast sings the chorus, THURSBY pulls a gray envelope(s) out of his coat and slips it to RICK. (If crowd decided for RICK to get CAIRO's envelope, THURSBY will give him only one. If the crowd decided for RICK not to go for the envelope, THURSBY will give him two gray envelopes.)

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