Employees Must Wash Hands... Before Murder (1st ed. - 07.17.06) - employeesmustwash6jr
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Cast of Characters

Employees:

SAMANTHA, Counter Girl

ASHLEY, The New Girl

TOROK, Manager

STEVE, Fry Master

CELIA, Assistant Fry Master

DEBBIE, Counter Girl

SCABBY, Janitor

ANDREWS, Disgruntled Cook

People appearing on instructional videos:

ANNOUNCER

J. TYLER, The Founder

MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM, The Founder's Mother

SQUIRMY, The Musical Tapeworm

GIRL

Others:

MOTHER

SPASTIC CHILD

HEALTH INSPECTOR (JENKINS)

HEALTH INSPECTOR'S INTERN

BIRDIE

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT

Setting

The Burgatorium. A Low-end fast food restaurant somewhere near you.

Time

The present.

Acknowledgments

Employees Must Wash Hands… Before Murder was originally performed at North Oaks Middle School in Haltom City, Texas on November 4th, 2005. The original cast was as follows:

SAMANTHA ..... Sierra Moore
ASHLEY ..... Jeanetta Lofton
TOROK ..... Dusty Tawater
STEVE ..... Ryan Ahrend
CELIA ..... Amber Thomas
DEBBIE ..... Ashton O'Reilly
SCABBY ..... Janet Mason
ANDREWS ..... Natrail Brown
ANNOUNCER ..... Lydia Bornschlegl
J. TYLER ..... Nic Groschup
MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM ..... Daily Avila
SQUIRMY ..... Jasmine Zaro
GIRL ..... Paige Hanstead
MOTHER ..... Arielle Mobley
SPASTIC CHILD ..... Alexis Ozment
HEALTH INSPECTOR (JENKINS) ..... Jasmine Hall
HEALTH INSPECTOR'S INTERN ..... Paige Hanstead
BIRDIE ..... Shelby Randall
FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT ..... Alexis Ozment

EMPLOYEES MUST WASH HANDS… BEFORE MURDER

by Don Zolidis

Scene 1

(The Burgatorium. A low-end fast food restaurant somewhere in the heartland of America. The set can be largely suggested, but there should be a counter area separated from a kitchen area upstage. ASHLEY, *the new girl, enters cautiously, accompanied by* TOROK, *the manager.)*

TOROK. All right, this here is the floor. The floor is what keeps us from falling into the earth.

ASHLEY. Oh. Good to know.

TOROK. Now you got your walls and your ceiling too. I'm in charge of those. Any questions about what they do, come to me. *(Pause.)* Any questions?

ASHLEY. No, I think I've got it figured out.

TOROK. Good. Now, in the Burgatorium team, we like to do things a certain way. Before you do something, ask yourself this question: Will someone sue me? If the answer to that question is no, then you go ahead and do it. If the answer to that question is yes, do it very quietly. And then sign your name to it. And then sign this form releasing the store of any responsibility.

(He produces a form.)

ASHLEY. Um…okay.

*(*TOROK *guides her over to the counter area.)*

TOROK. You got your counters here, this is where we talk to the customers, and then the customers eat their stuff over there and then run to the restrooms, which are located on either side of us—Behind the counter is the kitchen area, which is where the magic happens. You are gonna start out in the kitchen, and if you can handle it, you just might move up to the counter. The counter,

though, requires a whole different skill set. Like pressing buttons. And talking. But most important: listening. Because if you look at the customers, they just might tell you what they want. And then you have to press buttons. And talk some more. It's complicated.

ASHLEY. Huh.

TOROK. A lot of people go to school a long time to learn these skills. *(He stares at her.)* Perhaps this short instructional video will help you understand the history of the Bugatorium. I'm going to go play solitaire on my computer to pass the time and deaden my soul.

(He leaves. ASHLEY *sits to watch the video as the lights change. The* ANNOUNCER *walks onto the stage.)*

ANNOUNCER. The year…was 1988. *(Old civil war music plays.)* The United States was barely two hundred and twelve years old. It was a simpler time, a time when families still ate together at dinner…while secretly wishing they were somewhere else. A time without cell phones or the internet. A time of innocence. And a young man named Michael Jackson released an album named Bad and everyone started to think he was a little weird.

(Short pause. J. TYLER *enters, dressed in a t-shirt and shorts circa 1988.)*

ANNOUNCER. The Cold War was over. And one man, J. Tyler Higginbotham, thought it was a perfect opportunity to start a fast food restaurant.

*(*J. TYLER *sets up a small stand.)*

J. TYLER. Hey! Hey you! You want some food?! You want some food?!

ANNOUNCER. His first idea, the Sardine Emporium and Raw Fishery, was a failure.

J. TYLER. You want some raw fish?! Do ya?!

ANNOUNCER. So he decided to copy some other restaurants and sell burgers. But not just any burgers. Burgers that tasted good, but were also really, really cheap to prepare.

J. TYLER. You want a burger?!

ANNOUNCER. So J. Tyler started the first Burgatorium in his garage. His first employee: his mother.

*(*MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM *enters.)*

MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM. I'm so glad we can spend this time together, J. Tyler.

J. TYLER. That's Mr. Higginbotham to you, and I don't pay you for chit chat.

MAMA HIGGINBOTHAM. I'm not getting paid at all.

J. TYLER. And if you wanna keep that salary, you'll get back to work.

ANNOUNCER. He was a kind man, a visionary—

MAMA. I don't feel well…

(She slumps over.)

J. TYLER. This is the second day you've been sick this week, and I'm getting a little tired of these excuses—

MAMA. My heart hurts.

J. TYLER. Yeah well my head hurts from your constant whining.

MAMA. I love you, son…

J. TYLER. That's nice. I love burgers. Go make some.

(She exits. J. TYLER *follows.)*

ANNOUNCER. After his mother's death, J. Tyler used the inheritance money to renovate a funeral home, turning it into his very first restaurant. And from there, he continued to expand, opening restaurant after restaurant after restaurant until he had four. And then he died. Or so we think. But the body was never found. And to this day, there are rumors that… *(The* ANNOUNCER *looks around suspiciously.)* Never mind. *(He exits.)*

ASHLEY. Oh.

*(*ASHLEY *heads toward the kitchen area.* STEVE *and* CELIA *are working there.)*

ASHLEY. Hi.

(They stare at her.)

ASHLEY. My name's Ashley. This is my first day.

*(*ANDERSON *bursts out of the back room, throwing down her smock.)*

ANDERSON. You know what, you know what?! I quit! That's right, I quit! Find some other idiot to do this work! You're not gonna have me to push around any more. *(She points an angry finger at Steve.)* And you…you—you're the worst of the bunch! I hope you die! I hope your head gets stuck in the fryer and you end up boiling in your skin! I want all of you dead! I hope this whole place burns to the ground! *(She screams violently and leaves, then returns quickly.)* Can I pick up my last check on Friday? *(She leaves again.)*

STEVE. I think we got a spot for ya.

ASHLEY. Who was that?

STEVE. I don't know, someone who used to work here a couple of minutes ago. My name's Steve, I'm also known as the Fry Master.

ASHLEY. Why?

STEVE. Because I'm master of the fries.

ASHLEY. I guess that makes sense.

STEVE. And this here is Celia, my right hand man.

CELIA. I'm a woman.

STEVE. You are what I say you are. Now get back to work.

CELIA. Whatever.

STEVE. Whatever what?

CELIA. Whatever, fry master. *(She doesn't move.)*

STEVE. That's better. Okay, now what's your name again?

ASHLEY. Ashley.

STEVE. From now on you're going to be known as Brad. All right, Brad?

ASHLEY. My name's Ashley.

STEVE. First thing you gotta understand, Brad, is that this is my domain. I am king here. What I say becomes law, and I say that your name becomes Brad. Now, here is your area. Your area is small, because you have no importance. Your job is to dump the fries into the grease.

*(*STEVE *exits, snapping his fingers to call* CELIA *to follow him.* ASHLEY *gives up on the kitchen and heads to counter.* SAMANTHA *and* DEBBIE *pop around from behind it.)*

SAMANTHA. I know what you're thinking. You're thinking I'm too pretty to be working at a fast food restaurant. Sometimes it's hard to be around me because I'm so much more attractive than everyone else. It leads to a lot of jealousy.

ASHLEY. Yeah, um, I was just wondering if—

SAMANTHA. I try to warn people, but it comes up anyway.

DEBBIE. My name's Debbie.

ASHLEY. Hi. Do you know if—

DEBBIE. I have a lot of deep-seated emotional issues, but on the surface I seem normal.

ASHLEY. Right.

DEBBIE. You'll find out later. You want to be friends?

*(*TOROK *enters in a huff.)*

TOROK. All right everybody, stop what you're doing and come over here.

STEVE. No.

(The other employees emerge from various parts of the set. SCABBY, *a very strange-looking janitor with a humpback and a limp, lumbers closer.)*

TOROK. I've been informed by my informant in the government that we're going to have a surprise inspection by the health inspectors today.

STEVE. What! We're gonna have to switch out all the meat then!

TOROK. Right, well that's obviously step one.

ASHLEY. Wait is the meat not good? I had one of the burgers for lunch.

(Everyone stops and stares at ASHLEY.*)*

TOROK. She's new.

DEBBIE. Oh. *(*DEBBIE *springs into action.)* Where do we keep the pills?

CELIA. They're in the back.

*(*DEBBIE *exits.)*

ASHLEY. Shouldn't I have eaten the burger?

SAMANTHA. When you hear them say step into the light, stay away from it, okay?

TOROK. All right listen guys, we don't have time to deal with the untimely death of the new girl. After the meat switch we institute plan Alpha.

SCABBY. Okay. *(*SCABBY *gets up to leave.)*

ASHLEY. Where's he going?

SCABBY. Scabby go in hole. *(*SCABBY *exits.)*

TOROK. All right, Samantha, you hide the rats, Steve, you—

SAMANTHA. Um…excuse me?

TOROK. What?

SAMANTHA. Have you noticed me?

TOROK. Yes?

SAMANTHA. Have you noticed that I'm very attractive?

TOROK. Oh. Right. Ashley, you hide the rats.

SAMANTHA. Thank you.

*(*DEBBIE *returns with the pills.)*

DEBBIE. Here you go.

TOROK. Debbie, you flush the toddlers out of the tube slides. Take the new girl with you.

ASHLEY. I thought I was supposed to hide the rats.

TOROK. I can't be expected to remember everything I say!

*(*TOROK *and the others scatter, leaving* ASHLEY *and* DEBBIE *on-stage.)*

DEBBIE. All right let's go.

ASHLEY. Aren't we ready for the health inspectors?

DEBBIE. Stick with me, kid. And don't trust anybody. You know, nineteen dollars an hour isn't enough for this.

ASHLEY. You're making nineteen dollars an hour?

DEBBIE. It's a crime, isn't it?

ASHLEY. I'm making six.

DEBBIE. Didn't you negotiate your contract?

ASHLEY. You could do that?

DEBBIE. Sure, you never take their first offer. Their first offer to me was nothing except keeping the change that I found on the floor.

ASHLEY. Oh. I just kind of thought you took what they offered.

DEBBIE. Huh. No. All right go get me the can of Crisco, we have to grease the slides up so the kids will slide right out.

*(*ANDERSON *returns.)*

ANDERSON. I quit! *(*ANDERSON *leaves again.)*

ASHLEY. What's with her?

DEBBIE. She's disgruntled.

*(*TOROK *returns.)*

TOROK. All right listen up. I've become aware that I haven't been exactly fulfilling all of my "responsibilities" around here, but this isn't the time for the blame game. As far as sanitation goes we've dropped the ball, but I have this instructional video which will help us learn what to do in a crisis situation. All right? So sit down and watch the nice video.

ASHLEY. Why is everything around here a video?

DEBBIE. That way they don't have to talk to us. It makes their jobs easier.

(The lights shift. the ANNOUNCE*R returns.)*

ANNOUNCER. Welcome uneducated service worker! You have an exciting new career in the dead-end field of fast food! Look around you. This is where you will be spending the best part of the rest of your life. First, let's talk about the government. The government doesn't like you. That's why they take things from you. Like taxes. So, instead of actual cash, which could be lost or taxed, we're going to give you these payment coupons, which can be redeemed for prizes at the prize counter. If you get two thousand of them, you can have a portable CD player. Won't that be fun? And look, only five coupons gets you a tiny eraser in the shape of a soccer ball. You can show it to all your friends! Now, as far as other things like health insurance and pensions and all the rest of it, those things are for squares! Cool people live on the edge, in the now, with no need to save money—you're healthy right now, right? Sweet! We're in for extreme employment! (Burgatorium is not responsible for pre-existing conditions or conditions which exist at some point in the future.) Did somebody say safety hazard? They better not or they could be fired or sued! But I think it's time for a visit from a little friend of mine who various marketing studies have shown appeals to people with limited intellect. Here it is, Squirmy, the musical tapeworm!

(Enter SQUIRMY, *the Musical Tapeworm.)*

SQUIRMY. *(Singing:)*
I'm squirmy the mu-si-cal tapeworm

And I've got a story to tell
When I go in your intestine
Yes I live in your intestine
Things will turn out swell!

Well, not so much swell for you as swell for me. See I'm a parasite. Do you know what a parasite is kids?

*(*DEBBIE *raises her hand excitedly.)*

SQUIRMY. *(Singing:)*
A parasite is just like you and me
Except they live par-a-sit-i-cal-lee
Something you eat for you
Is now something for the two
Of you… *(*SQUIRMY *stops singing.)*

SQUIRMY. You know what gets me all a a-wrigglin' and a gig-glin'?

(A GIRL *skips in.)*

GIRL. What Squirmy?

SQUIRMY. History!

GIRL. Wow! Me too!

SQUIRMY. Really? Maybe I should jump into your mouth and live in your stomach!

GIRL. Tee hee!

SQUIRMY. But seriously kids. Did you know that tapeworm eggs were once used for diet pills?

GIRL. Yes I did!

*(*SQUIRMY *shoots her a look.)*

SQUIRMY. Because in the past, without the benefit of modern medicine, people were pretty stupid.

GIRL. They sure were!

SQUIRMY. And tapeworms would grow in people's stomach, and grow, and grow, and grow, until people wouldn't get any more food and the tapeworm would get it all.

GIRL. How large would they grow?

SQUIRMY. Well, I'm about five feet tall, right?

GIRL. If you say so.

SQUIRMY. I do! Imagine me twice as tall, and then twice as tall as that, and then twice as tall again! Forty feet tall!

GIRL. That's pretty tall!

SQUIRMY. And then imagine me as a gigantic snake coiled around in your intestine!

GIRL. Wow! That's cute.

SQUIRMY. And I'm wriggling in there, and giggling in there, and siphoning off all of the nutrients that were supposed to be going into you.

GIRL. You're like my little friend on the inside.

SQUIRMY. Except not that little! And I look like an eel! But you know what, I feel a song coming on!

GIRL. Can I sing too?

SQUIRMY. No, you have a horrible voice!

GIRL. My mommy says it makes angels cry.

SQUIRMY. She's right. So I'll sing by myself a little song about food safety. Okay?

GIRL. Okay. Can I be the rhythm section?

SQUIRMY. No. *(Singing:)*
Here's a little story about food safety
I think it might save your life
Always wash your hands! *(It stops.)*

SQUIRMY. I hope you learned something little girl.

GIRL. Maybe. Is there going to be any standardized testing on it?

SQUIRMY. Nope.

GIRL. Then no.

SQUIRMY. Well, then you'll probably contract a terrible disease and die young. See you later kids!

*(*SQUIRMY *wiggles off. Lights switch to the counter area.* DEBBIE *and* SAMANTHA *are working.)*

(A MOTHER *enters, dragging the* SPASTIC CHILD *behind her. She approaches the counter.)*

SAMANTHA. Welcome to Burgatorium. Can I interest you in one of our value meals?

MOTHER. Um…

SAMANTHA. You're probably wondering why someone so attractive is working here.

MOTHER. What?

SAMANTHA. This is just temporary for me.

SPASTIC CHILD. Mommy! Mommy!

MOTHER. What, sweetie?

SPASTIC CHILD. I want the kids' meal!

MOTHER. You just had dinner. We're here to get something for Mommy.

SPASTIC CHILD. I want the kids' meal!

SAMANTHA. Aren't you cute? What's your name?

SPASTIC CHILD. Mind your own business!

MOTHER. Do you have a side salad?

SAMANTHA. Does it look like we have a side salad? I could put some of the lettuce we use for the burgers in a bag for you.

SPASTIC CHILD. I want the kids' meal with the merchandising tie-in toy from the latest hit movie!

MOTHER. Those toys are just cheap plastic, dear.

SPASTIC CHILD. I want the merchandising tie-in! I can't have a full movie experience without owning the toy!

SAMANTHA. You can buy the toys separately for 1.99.

MOTHER. We're not getting the toy!

SPASTIC CHILD. I wanna live with Daddy!

MOTHER. Sweetie, just let Mommy order.

SPASTIC CHILD. I wanna live with Daddy!

MOTHER. You live with Mommy, sweetie.

SPASTIC CHILD. I hate you Mommy!

(The SPASTIC CHILD *begins sobbing uncontrollably.)*

SAMANTHA. Um…Maybe you could just take one of the toys?

MOTHER. I don't think so.

SPASTIC CHILD. I'm gonna hold my breath till I get what I want!

(The SPASTIC CHILD *holds her breath.)*

MOTHER. Let's see, I'll take a number one meal with a coke—and could you make that large size please? And then could I get an apple pie, do you still fry those?

SAMANTHA. Yes.

MOTHER. Good. I'll take one of those then.

(The SPASTIC CHILD *is beginning to turn blue.)*

SAMANTHA. Um…is she going to be okay?

MOTHER. Oh—she'll just do that until she passes out. Don't worry. Do you take credit cards?

SAMANTHA. Uh…just Visa and Mastercard.

MOTHER. Do you take Discover?

SAMANTHA. No.

(The SPASTIC CHILD *has sunk to her knees.)*

SAMANTHA. Are you sure that's healthy?

MOTHER. Sweetheart, I never told you this, but you had an older brother. He did the same thing you're doing now. Now he's dead.

(The SPASTIC CHILD *finally takes a breath.)*

MOTHER. Good. Now remember darling, in a battle of wills, I will always win. You understand me? I will always win. Now run along and play!

(The SPASTIC CHILD *flounces off.)*

MOTHER. I love mothering.

(Lights switch to the kitchen. STEVE *and* CELIA *are cleaning up.)*

STEVE. Tell me to clean up, nobody tells me to clean up. I ought to clean him up.

CELIA. Yeah whatever Steve.

STEVE. You don't believe me? You don't think I would do something?

CELIA. What are you gonna do?

STEVE. You wanna know what I'm gonna do?

CELIA. Yeah, what are you gonna do?

STEVE. You wanna know?

CELIA. Are you gonna tell me?

STEVE. I'm gonna do something, that's for sure. And it's not gonna be nice. And it's not gonna require a thank you card when I'm done. And it might involve fry grease. And it might involve fry grease dumped on somebody's head which will give them second degree burns on their face. And then some more stuff after that that I haven't even thought of yet which are gonna be pretty nasty and probably not legal.

*(*ASHLEY *comes over, carrying the can of crisco.)*

ASHLEY. I couldn't believe there were four kids stuck in there!

CELIA. Yeah, that happens.

ASHLEY. Where does the Crisco go?

CELIA. Back underneath the counter.

STEVE. Brad, come here.

ASHLEY. What?

STEVE. Brad. Get over here. Now listen: not everybody around here is willing to just go along with Torok as manager, you know what I mean?

ASHLEY. Not really.

STEVE. He thinks he's all great and everything, with all of his managing and creating the crew schedules and doing the budget and all that, but there are forces at work, deep within the Burgatorium, that are gonna bring him down. And on that day, you're gonna have to choose sides, Brad, are you with the forces of darkness, or are you with me?

ASHLEY. Today's my first day.

STEVE. Join me, and we shall rule this restaurant together, as fry cook and assistant fry cook!

CELIA. I thought I was assistant fry cook.

STEVE. All right, fry cook, assistant fry cook, and assistant to the assistant fry cook! Are you with me?

(Pause.)

ASHLEY. I'm just trying to make some money. But actually I was wondering if—

STEVE. That's right, bury your head in the sand. Try to ignore this war. But the war will come to you, Brad. Mark my words: the war will come to you. *(He stares at her intensely.)*

CELIA. Do you want a soda or anything? You can have one free.

*(*TOROK *runs madly out of his office.)*

TOROK. They're here! They're here! Look like you know what you're doing! *(He grabs a mop and throws it at* ASHLEY.*)* Mop something!

(He runs off. The stage turns into a hive of activity as everyone immediately starts trying to clean. All the characters enter and exit at least once, vainly attempting to clean with varying degrees of success. DEBBIE *and* SAMANTHA *take up their positions behind the counter, waiting for the inspectors.* DEBBIE *spots* SCABBY *entering and runs to intercept him.)*

DEBBIE. No Scabby!

SCABBY. Friend?

DEBBIE. Yes, I am your friend, but you need to go back in the hole!

SCABBY. Hole scary.

DEBBIE. I know. I know. Just for a little bit.

SCABBY. Scabby sad.

DEBBIE. It's okay. Back in the hole.

SCABBY. Scabby go in hole.

*(*SCABBY *exits as the* HEALTH INSPECTOR (JENKINS*) and her* INTERN *enter.)*

JENKINS. This looks like a fine eating establishment.

INTERN. You know it!

*(*JENKINS *approaches the counter, where* SAMANTHA *is working.)*

JENKINS. Excuse me?

SAMANTHA. Welcome to the Burgatorium, where we follow all guidelines distributed from the federal government. If you notice my hands, they are clean, and they are also lightly scented.

JENKINS. Could I have a deluxe burger please?

SAMANTHA. Of course. And you should know that all of our burgers are heated to one hundred and eighty degrees and use only real cow. I mean beef. Beef cow. Without Mad Cow Disease because we keep our cows happy with things like grass and sunshine and water and stuff. And we keep the cows in the back which is why we don't need to refrigerate the beef, cause you order something, and

we just take a knife and just slice it off the cow and that's pretty much how you get your food.

DEBBIE. Stop it!

SAMANTHA. Sorry. Would you like something to drink with that?

JENKINS. I'll have an iced tea.

SAMANTHA. We don't have iced tea.

JENKINS. It says right there you do.

SAMANTHA. The sign lies!

JENKINS. O-kay.

INTERN. Why you got it on the sign when you don't serve it? What up with dat?

SAMANTHA. Um…

INTERN. What kinda place you runnin' here?

DEBBIE. A store in full compliance with federal health guidelines?

SAMANTHA. How about a Diet Pepsi?

INTERN. Man, Diet Pepsi is for suckers!

JENKINS. Fine, I'll have one.

INTERN. I mean, word.

JENKINS. Enough of this charade. I shall now appear before you as I truly am. *(*JENKINS *puts on a hat.)* My name is Inspector Jenkins, from the Department of Health…and Human Services—

INTERN. What-what-what Human Services!

JENKINS. And this is my intern.

INTERN. Straight up!

JENKINS. And I'm here to inspect this restaurant.

INTERN. Word! We here to kick it Department of Health and Human Services style! *(He makes the sign for Department of Health and Human Services.)* What-what-what-what yeah!

JENKINS. You can all come out now.

*(*ASHLEY, STEVE, CELIA, *and* ANDERSON *emerge from various parts of the stage.)*

ANDERSON. I quit! Y'all can take this job and shove it! I spent five years of my life here and what do I have to show for it? Nothing! Nothing! I hate you all!

*(*ANDERSON *storms off in a rage.)*

JENKINS. Intern, make a note of that.

INTERN. Noted.

JENKINS. Now we're going to take a quick tour of this facility, and for every violation we discover, you will receive a demerit.

INTERN. De-Merit!

JENKINS. Okay, could you stop doing that?

INTERN. What?

JENKINS. Being like that.

INTERN. Man, this is who I be. The man can't change me.

JENKINS. Fine. But…so you know, you work for the government, so now, officially, you are a part of the man.

INTERN. You just blew my mind with that.

JENKINS. If you receive ten demerits, your store will be closed down and you will all be fired. All right?

DEBBIE. Got it.

JENKINS. Now…um…where is your manager?

(Everyone looks around.)

JENKINS. Do you have a manager?

DEBBIE. I'm the manager.

STEVE. What!

DEBBIE. In the event the manager is unable to fill his or her duties, the counter girl with the most experience will fill in as manager, it's in our by-laws.

STEVE. What by-laws?!

JENKINS. Manager not present. One demerit.

INTERN. One De-Merit!

JENKINS. Let's have a look at the kitchen, shall we?

*(*JENKINS *and the* INTERN *head toward the kitchen.)*

STEVE. The kitchen is spotless.

INTERN. Ooh it's hot in here!

JENKINS. Everything looks in order.

STEVE. Thank you.

JENKINS. Oh wait, what's that on the floor? Is that a fry?

STEVE. These are not the fries you're looking for.

*(*STEVE *waves his hand to no effect.)*

JENKINS. Fry on the floor. Two Demerits.

INTERN. Two De-Merits!

JENKINS. Flies. Two more Demerits.

INTERN. De-Merit! De-Merit!

JENKINS. No hair nets. Two Demerits.

INTERN. De-de-de-de-De-merit! And one.

*(*STEVE *sneaks up next to* JENKINS *and produces a one-dollar bill.)*

STEVE. Um…Perhaps a little conversation with Mr. Washington would help change your mind.

JENKINS. What?

*(*STEVE *searches in his pockets and finds a dime and a quarter.)*

STEVE. Maybe he could bring along his friends Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Washington…again.

(He slips the change into JENKINS*' pocket.)*

JENKINS. Are you trying to bribe me?

STEVE. If I was, would it work?

JENKINS. Bribery. One demerit.

INTERN. Deeeeeeeeee-merit.

JENKINS. Let's have a look in your meat freezer, shall we?

INTERN. What's cooler than bein' cool? Meat freezer!

*(*JENKINS *steps off-stage into the meat freezer.)*

CELIA. Nice going Steve.

STEVE. Shut up.

*(*JENKINS *returns, dragging the dead body of* TOROK.*)*

JENKINS. Manager. Dead in freezer. One demerit.

(She lets the body fall in the middle of the employees.)

INTERN. Whoa.

SAMANTHA. Aaaah! *(She faints. Everyone looks at her.)* What? I thought we were fainting now.

JENKINS. This man was killed in the last hour. And all of you…are suspects.

SAMANTHA. Dun dun dun!

(Everyone looks at her again.)

SAMANTHA. Well I didn't do it.

(Lights down. End scene one.)

Scene 2

(Scene two. Later. ASHLEY, SAMANTHA, DEBBIE, STEVE, CELIA, *and* ANDERSON *are sitting in various parts of the restaurant.*

JENKINS *stands in the middle of them. The* INTERN *hovers near the back.)*

JENKINS. What we are looking for is someone who not only had a motive, but also had the opportunity, to kill the manager Torok.

*(*DEBBIE *raises her hand.)*

JENKINS. What?

DEBBIE. How did he die, anyway?

INTERN. Aw no you didn't!

JENKINS. I'm asking the questions here.

DEBBIE. But how do we know he was murdered? Maybe he had a heart attack or something.

STEVE. Maybe he ate some of the food.

*(*JENKINS *looks at* STEVE*.)*

STEVE. I mean the food here is really good.

JENKINS. I examined the body, miss, and I discovered several things: One: That this was not an accident. Two: That he was dead. Three: That he was murdered. And Four: That one of you did it.

CELIA. Oh that helps.

JENKINS. But I already know who the murderer is.

SAMANTHA. Dun dun dun!

(Everyone looks at her again.)

SAMANTHA. What?

JENKINS. But I plan on keeping you in suspense for a little while because by the time I'm done, the murderer will confess and we won't have to go through all the boring business of a trial.

CELIA. I did it! It was me! *(Short pause.)* Just kidding.

JENKINS. And as part of our health department training program, I will now allow my intern to handle the first part of the investigation.

INTERN. I don't know what to do.

JENKINS. First look like you know everything.

INTERN. A'ight. Y'all are goin' down. And no one's goin' nowhere.

(Thunder. The lights flicker.)

SAMANTHA. Aaaah!

*(*CELIA *runs to check the door.)*

CELIA. Oh my gosh! The bridge has been washed out! We're separated from the mainland!

STEVE. Wow that storm came up quick.

ASHLEY. I didn't even know we were on an island.

JENKINS. Nice work, intern. Nice work.

(The INTERN *approaches* ANDERSON.*)*

INTERN. First up: You.

ANDERSON. You can't talk to me like that! I'm a person! I didn't do anything! I'm outta here!

*(*ANDERSON *runs off.* CELIA *watches her go.)*

CELIA. Boy she's a good swimmer. Oh. Whoops. Sharks.

INTERN. A'ight. She didn't do it.

SAMANTHA. How do you know that? Maybe she killed him because she was angry with the manager.

INTERN. She seemed normal to me.

CELIA. Oh wait she's coming back. Oh wait, no, sharks again. Ooh. Wow.

(The INTERN *approaches* SAMANTHA.*)*

INTERN. So then we gets to you. The counter babe.

SAMANTHA. Thank you.

INTERN. Where were you on the night of tonight?

SAMANTHA. Um…right here?

INTERN. Right heah! You heah that?! Right heah! Aw, snap!

SAMANTHA. But I didn't do it. First of all, I'm very attractive. Everyone knows that killers are ugly people, who have self-esteem issues based on oily skin and bad acne. They are also frequently fat. I work out three times a day, okay? And I watch my fat intake very carefully, so I'm guaranteed a fine life married to an older man with a six-figure salary. And I've already picked out the color of my Hummer, which will be banana yellow.

INTERN. Oh you got it goin' on, huh? Aw you got it all planned out! Ain't it true, though, that you is a vegetarian?

(Everyone gasps.)

INTERN. And in addition to bein' a vegetarian, you do not eat meat?

CELIA. Vegetarian? Isn't that some kind of commie thing?

STEVE. Yeah! Real Americans can't even spell vegetarian!

ASHLEY. I can't believe I've been working next to a vegetarian.

DEBBIE. I thought you were my friend.

SAMANTHA. Fine, fine, I'm a vegetarian! I'll come clean! What's so wrong with that?

STEVE. Nothing, if you're a commie.

INTERN. I rest my case; she be the killer. I will now recreate the scene in a flashback.

STEVE. Ooh, I love recreations.

INTERN. Here's how it went down.

(Lights change. Everyone backs up except for SAMANTHA *who moves downstage.* TOROK *enters.)*

CELIA. Isn't he dead?

STEVE. It's a recreation. Shhh!

INTERN. So check this out.

*(*SAMANTHA *and* TOROK *enter from opposite sides of the stage.)*

SAMANTHA. This looks like a fine day to spread my message of peace and love and kindness to animals.

STEVE. *(Upstage in darkness.)* What's wrong with her?! That's commie talk!

CELIA. Quiet, Steve!

STEVE. That's Fry Master to you!

DEBBIE. Shhhh!

TOROK. Greetings, employee. I enjoy hip hop music.

SAMANTHA. I hug trees.

TOROK. Have you listened to Tupac's newest album? It kicks.

SAMANTHA. Tupac died like ten years ago.

TOROK. They just want you to believe that.

SAMANTHA. I disagree with your musical preference. Therefore I must kill you. Hi ya!

*(*SAMANTHA *karate chops* TOROK*, who falls over instantly.)*

SAMANTHA. Now I'm going to eat a veggie burger.

(Lights change back to normal.)

INTERN. Case closed.

STEVE. Veggie burger?! You eat veggie burgers?! Do you know what they put in those?

SAMANTHA. Veggies?

STEVE. Yeah! Veggies and no cows!

ASHLEY. You know kung fu?

SAMANTHA. That was actually a yoga move. But I didn't do it!

JENKINS. Nice try, intern, but I'm afraid that this commie is only guilty of bad taste, not murder.

INTERN. Dang!

JENKINS. Because the real murderer is…Celia!

(Crash of thunder. The lights flicker, then go out.)

SAMANTHA. Aaah!

(Lights come back up. CELIA *is dead.)*

JENKINS. Did I say Celia? I meant Steve.

INTERN. She dead!

(She gets up.)

DEBBIE. She's a zombie! Kill her!

CELIA. Wait, no, I just fainted.

DEBBIE. I don't believe you! We have to cut off her head! She's here to eat our brains!

*(*SCABBY *enters.)*

SCABBY. Brains?

DEBBIE. No Scabby!

JENKINS. All right all right all right quiet! This is my show! Got it?! Everyone? And I was just about to make a wild accusation with no proof whatsoever. And then I'll get to the freaky guy!

SCABBY. Scabby love brains.

JENKINS. Quiet you. You see, Steve, or should I call you by your real name, Steven?

CELIA. Oh my gosh! You're Steven!

STEVE. I haven't gone by that name since before you were born.

CELIA. I thought that he was just a myth.

STEVE. Oh, he is very much real. Or was real.

JENKINS. Anyway, I've been on to you since the moment I walked in this door.

STEVE. You dare to challenge the Fry Master?

JENKINS. You wanted to be manager, didn't you? You wanted to be manager so bad you'd kill for it.

*(*STEVE *stares at* JENKINS.*)*

STEVE. You think you're pretty smart, don't you? Coming in here with all your…badges…and your interns.

INTERN. Straight up!

STEVE. But there's one thing you didn't count on.

JENKINS. What's that?

STEVE. My defense attorney.

*(*STEVE *claps his hands and the* DEFENSE ATTORNEY *bursts through the door. The* DEFENSE ATTORNEY *carries a bo staff and aggressively parries the questions posed by the inspectors with martial arts moves.)*

INTERN. Dang!

JENKINS. Who are you?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. I don't have to answer that question.

JENKINS. How did you make it to the island?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. Objection! Not germane to the case!

INTERN. Man, that's some kinda vocab word! Germane?

DEBBIE. Wasn't that one of the Jackson Five?

JENKINS. All right, Steven—

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. Leading the witness!

JENKINS. Why can't I even say anything?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. If you do not stop badgering my client, I will be forced to countersue you into the fires of heck. It's a kid-friendly place.

*(*JENKINS *tries to get around the* DEFENSE ATTORNEY.*)*

JENKINS. All right, listen, where were you when Torok was murdered?

(The DEFENSE ATTORNEY *breaks in.)*

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. That depends on what when means.

JENKINS. Fine! You know what, you're innocent.

*(*JENKIN*S turns to* ASHLEY.*)*

JENKINS. So that brings us to the new girl that nobody likes.

ASHLEY. Hey!

*(*JENKIN*S spins on* STEVE *once again.)*

JENKINS. But it was you, wasn't it Steven?!

(The DEFENSE ATTORNEY *leaps in once again.)*

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. My client doesn't have to answer that.

JENKINS. Fine.

INTERN. You gotta admit, he got game.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. Once again, our criminal justice system works perfectly to weed out the people who don't have enough money to hire good lawyers.

JENKINS. All right, that leaves us with three suspects: The universally hated Ashley—

ASHLEY. What?

DEBBIE. Sorry kid, it's true.

JENKINS. That other girl over there with the deep dark horrible secrets that nobody knows about, or the weird hunchback in the corner.

SCABBY. Scabby?

DEBBIE. You leave Scabby alone.

SCABBY. Scabby ugly.

SAMANTHA. Well finally someone said it. It was about time.

DEBBIE. No Scabby, you just don't have very good skin tone.

SCABBY. Scabby love you.

DEBBIE. That's nice, Scabby. Quiet. We're friends.

SCABBY. Friends?

DEBBIE. That's right, friends.

SCABBY. Friends eat brains?

DEBBIE. No Scabby, quiet!

SCABBY. Scabby go in hole.

JENKINS. Not so fast, Scabby.

INTERN. Man I think I finally got this!

JENKINS. What?

INTERN. I know what's goin' on! Dang! It's so obvious! This dude is this chick's Daddy—and this dude robs graves and takes the brains and mashes them up into the burgers, which is why they taste so dang good! And check this, the manager finds out, he gets mad, and he wants to axe Scabby, but instead, the chick kills him. And now they took his brain and they made burgers out of it! It's so simple!

(Pause. EVERYONE *looks at the* INTERN.*)*

JENKINS. Man, that's messed up.

STEVE. You're sick, you know that?

ASHLEY. And I used to like you.

INTERN. That's not what happened? Dang!

JENKINS. So Scabby, if that is your real name, why don't you tell us where you were when Torok was murdered?

SCABBY. Scabby scared.

JENKINS. It's okay, Scabby, I'm your friend.

SCABBY. No!

JENKINS. Tell me Scabby.

SCABBY. Fire bad! *(*SCABBY *begins to moan piteously.)* Leave Scabby alone!

JENKINS. Tell me!

*(*DEBBIE *jumps in.)*

DEBBIE. That's enough! Leave him alone! Can't you see that within that twisted and hunchbacked exterior lies an equally twisted and hunchbacked heart? And can't you see that within that horribly twisted heart lies a soul? And in that soul is the man I love!

(Shocking gasps from the assembled characters.)

SAMANTHA. Oh Debbie. You gotta pick better boyfriends. I mean, if you're not judging somebody by their appearance, what have you really got to go on?

DEBBIE. I don't care that he smells bad! I don't care that he doesn't even know my name! Look at him, I mean, look at him! He's really ugly.

INTERN. Man, you buggin'.

DEBBIE. I am buggin', I'm buggin' for this man! And no one can stop me!

SCABBY. Debbie?

DEBBIE. What Scabby?

SCABBY. Scabby not attracted to you. Scabby want to be friends.

SAMANTHA. Oh. Diss.

DEBBIE. What?

SCABBY. Sorry.

*(*DEBBIE *sinks to her knees as* SCABBY *limps off.)*

DEBBIE. Noooooo!

(The DEFENSE ATTORNEY *approaches.)*

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. If you'd like to sue for emotional distress, here's my card. Seriously. You can clean that guy out in court. Juries hate ugly people.

JENKINS. Well, in case there aren't any other random surprises, that leaves…

(Everyone turns to look at ASHLEY. *Thunder. The lights flicker.)*

ASHLEY. But I'm new!

*(*BIRDIE, *complete with flying goggles and pigtails, bursts in through the door.)*

BIRDIE. Phew! That's some storm out there! *(She stops.)* Oh wait. Do I have the right place? *(She takes out a help wanted ad torn from a newspaper.)* Wanted: Lovable cartoonish character to be mascot for low-end fast food restaurant. Previous experience a plus. Is this the Burgatorium?

STEVE. Um, we're a little busy, lady.

BIRDIE. Name's Birdie. You might have seen me on TV. Although I've been getting less and less air time since that evil clown took over.

STEVE. We're busy.

BIRDIE. Did I tell you I can fly? I mean, not well, I kind of wobble a little bit, but sheesh—some place you got here. I used to be a star, you know? I used to be featured in all the happy meals, man! Back in the day. And then they got this thing that no one wanted to see a flying chicken any more, and I mean, like, they got that stupid clown with his face paint and his big shoes and like he's the big shot, you know? And that big purple guy—is he supposed to be a shake? I don't know. And let me tell you, you want drama—

INTERN. *(Overlapping:)* We don't want no drama!

BIRDIE *(Continuous:)* You go behind the scenes over there—the fry guys are stabbing each other in the back, the hamburgler's on probation, and the big purple fat thing, all he does is sit in a corner snorting sugar! It's a mess! I'm so glad I'm outta there!

(The FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT *flies in through the door.)*

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGMENT. Okay, that's enough, Birdie. Time to go home.

BIRDIE. Who are you?

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. I'm the Fairy of Copyright Infringement. And you're not allowed to appear in this play.

BIRDIE. What?

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. No way, she's public domain!

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. I'm afraid not. Birdie is a registered trademark of my client, whom I can't even name, but whom I will refer to as the arches.

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. We all know who that is!

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. Don't make me wave my wand of punitive lawsuits—

DEFENSE ATTORNEY. Oh. She's serious.

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. Come along, Birdie.

BIRDIE. I'm not your slave!

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. Oh but we own you, Birdie. We own you.

BIRDIE. I'm not going back!

FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT. Tough. Get in the van.

BIRDIE. No! Please help me!

(Everyone mumbles their lines at once.)

STEVE. Not my problem.

CELIA. Don't like chickens.

INTERN. Man, that's whack.

SAMANTHA. You're not all that pretty.

BIRDIE. Don't eat the nuggets! Whatever you do, don't eat the nuggets! The nuggets are me! The nuggets are me!

(The FAIRY OF COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT *drags* BIRDIE *off.)*

STEVE. Suddenly I'm hungry.

JENKINS. Well I guess that's that. I just don't know who the murderer is. *(*JENKINS *starts to leave, reaching the door before turning around.)* You know, there's just one thing that's been bothering me. It's probably nothing.

SAMANTHA. What's that?

JENKINS. It probably doesn't mean anything, but Ashley—why'd you kill him?

ASHLEY. I didn't.

JENKINS. Oh I'm sure you're right. *(*JENKINS *leaves, then returns.)* Oh just one more thing. And this has been troubling me just a little bit. Why'd you kill him, Ashley?

ASHLEY. I didn't!

JENKINS. You're probably right. Or not.

INTERN. Aw, snap!

ASHLEY. Shut it.

INTERN. Aw no you di'in!

ASHLEY. Seriously, shut it.

INTERN. Why you up in my grill? Don't you know I be the intern! Whoah! Yeah! Health and Human Services, yo!

ASHLEY. You better step back.

INTERN. Aw, now you all street! I come from the Suburbs, yo! You don't wanna know how crazy we get up there! With our large houses and SUV's and good school districts!

JENKINS. All right, all right, look—

*(*SQUIRMY *wiggles on to the stage, carrying a help wanted ad from a newspaper.)*

SQUIRMY. Hey kids! It's me! Squirmy, the Musical Tapeworm!

*(*SQUIRMY *breaks into song.)*

You see I saw this little ad in the news-pa-per!
It says you need a brand new mascot!
(oh-yeah)
And what could be better than a cute tape-worm?
Who can love each and every tot!
(oh-yeah)

Cause you see, this way, kids can eat and eat and eat, and they can super-size everything, but the only thing they'll be supersizing is the friendly parasite in their stomachs!

SAMANTHA. That thing's gross!

SQUIRMY. You know what's really gross? You, on the inside! I've been there.

SAMANTHA. Ew.

SQUIRMY. I laid eggs!

*(*SAMANTHA *looks like she's going to throw up, then runs off.)*

SQUIRMY. Don't throw up, you'll hurt my babies! This calls for a new song: The birthing song. It goes like this.

JENKINS. All right that's enough!

SQUIRMY. Don't you want to hear my song?

JENKINS. No you're disgusting.

SQUIRMY. You know what's really disgusting?

JENKINS. No! No! I don't want to know!

SQUIRMY. Hookworms!

JENKINS. Stop it!

SQUIRMY. Boy, I don't like hookworms one bit. They're not very nice neighbors. See, they live in the lower intestinal tract, which runs—

JENKINS. Shut up!

SQUIRMY. Why is everyone so mean to me? You and Torok both.

JENKINS. You know Torok?

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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