

Acting Edition

TOTALLY MURDER

BY **TRACY WELLS**

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CHARACTERS

- MARV/MARGE** – Security guard and amateur detective, mid-thirties, any gender
- KEN/KIM MONTGOMERY** – Owner of the soon-to-be-opened Sarrano's Italian Pizzeria, mid-forties, any gender
- TAMMY/TIM** – Montgomery's right hand/lackey, willing to do just about anything, late twenties, any gender
- NICKY VALENTI** – Former owner of Nicky's Pizza Pie, mid-fifties, any gender
- MICHELLE/MIKE** – Shy employee of Hot Dogs on Sticks looking to break out of their shell, teen, any gender
- HEATHER/HUNTER** – Employee of 32 Flavors Ice Cream who has had way too much sugar today, teen, any gender
- HARRY/MARY** – Mall walker who sees everything, older adult, any gender
- DANIELLE, TRISH & LISA** – Valley girls who, like, totally live at the mall; teen; female
- COREY** – Skater who loves to mess with authority figures, teen, any gender
- BUCKY** – Awkward guy who has a crush on the quirky girl at school, teen, male
- DIDI** – Quirky girl at school who "doesn't define herself by Society's standards," teen, female
- GILBERT/GERTRUDE** – Super nerdy teen, any gender
- BLAIR MONTGOMERY** – Wealthy child of Ken/Kim Montgomery, teen, any gender
- VERONICA/VICTOR** – Blair's rich friend, teen, any gender
- WHITNEY/WAD** – Aerobics instructor on a health kick, adult, any gender
- VIPER** – Antiestablishment punk rocker, should have a wild hairstyle with some hair falling over their eyes, teen, any gender
- STACY** – Madonna-loving material girl, teen, female
- BRIAN/BRIANNA** – Wannabe director and movie buff with a new camcorder, teen, any gender
- OFFICERS** – At least two, adults, any gender
- SHOPPERS** – Additional characters, see Note on Casting

SETTING

The food court of a 1980s mall

TIME

Mid- to late 1980s

AUTHOR'S NOTES

On Casting

Feel free to change the gender and pronouns of characters as needed and use the provided alternate names. Additionally, as this play is set in a mall, there is possibility for a much larger cast than is usual for a murder mystery. There are several “Shopper” lines throughout the play that can be used for extra cast members, reassigned to any of the characters (assuming it makes sense for them to say the line), or cut. You can add shoppers, food court employees, etc. as you see fit. They may say the “Shopper” lines or can be nonspeaking roles.

On the Set

It's a mall in the 1980s! Neon, chrome, big fake plants, pink, teal. In general, you need three areas designated for the restaurants (Hot Dogs on Sticks, 32 Flavors Ice Cream, and the former Nicky's Pizza with a “Closed” sign over it and a “Coming Soon – Sarrano's Italian Pizzeria” sign in front of it). You also need several tables and chairs and a set of automatic opening doors (which can remain open until they stop working). You could add other decor such as sale signs for stores in the mall. Have fun with it and make it your own!

On Costumes

Neon, acid-washed denim, sunglasses, big hair, headbands, shoulder pads, tennis shoes, workout gear, crazy patterns...you name it. This is a comedy, so don't be afraid to go big with the '80s references – just make sure they aren't distracting from the plot of the murder mystery itself. Viper wears a rock T-shirt that says “Somebody Got Murdered” on it. Harry wears a fanny pack.

On Multiple Endings

One of the devices murder mysteries sometimes use is the option for multiple endings, which provide alternative killers and motives. This allows theatre companies to feature different actors each night and encourages audience to come back for multiple performances. That being said, this play provides you with three possible endings. You may choose your favorite ending for all performances, or you could elect to stage different endings at each performance. Alternately, if you would like, you are free to stop the show and have one or more of the characters address the audience and have them vote on who they think the murderer is. Feel free to adjust dialogue as needed to make this work

On Logos

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ACT ONE

Scene One

*(Interior of a shopping mall food court in 1986. **HEATHER** and **MICHELLE** are working at their respective restaurants. **DANIELLE**, **TRISH**, and **LISA** are seated at a table together putting on makeup, doing their hair, etc. **VIPER** is at another table, alone, unsuccessfully flicking a lighter. **BUCKY** and **DIDI** are at another table. **BUCKY** has a Rubik's Cube. **DIDI** has headphones on and a Walkman. **WHITNEY** is in line at 32 Flavors. She has a workout bag. **STACY** is in line at Hot Dogs on Sticks. She has a boom box. Additional **SHOPPERS** may enter, exit, sit, stand in line, etc. so the food court appears to be larger than what is seen.)*

STACY. *(To **MICHELLE**, looking at the menu.)* What comes on the plain corn dog?

MICHELLE. Um, I mean, it's pretty self-explanatory.

STACY. So, like, corn?

MICHELLE. No, not corn. It's covered in dough.

STACY. Then why's it called a corn dog?

MICHELLE. I think the dough is supposed to be made with cornmeal or something. Ours isn't though.

STACY. What's it made of?

MICHELLE. Who knows? You want one?

STACY. Sure. Why not?

*(While the scene continues, **STACY** opens her purse and pays, then waits while **MICHELLE** fills her order. Then she takes her tray of food to a table near **VIPER**. She tries to look cool while eating the corn dog but can't manage. Maybe it gets stuck in her bangs or fishnet gloves.)*

WHITNEY. *(To **HEATHER**.)* Do you have any Froyo?

HEATHER. *(Really peppy, like she's had too much sugar.)*
Froyo?

WHITNEY. You know...frozen yogurt?

HEATHER. *(Chuckles.)* Oh, gosh no. This is 32 Flavors. We have thirty-two flavors of good, old-fashioned, tasty and delicious ice cream!

WHITNEY. Tasty and delicious mean the same thing.

HEATHER. That's true!

WHITNEY. So you don't have to say both.

HEATHER. *(Thinks.)* Huh. I guess you're right. Then again, the ice cream at 32 Flavors is really, really good, so it makes sense to say it's both tasty and delicious!

WHITNEY. Whatever.

HEATHER. So which of our thirty-two flavors do you want?

WHITNEY. None. I don't do ice cream. It's too heavy and I've got an aerobics class in an hour. I thought if you had Froyo, then maybe I'd have some. But you don't, so...

*(**WHITNEY** turns and crosses away, to a table.
HEATHER holds up a spoon and calls after her.)*

HEATHER. I can give you a free sample!

SHOPPER. I'll take a free sample!

(WHITNEY sits at a table and does some simple exercises, maybe using hand weights or exercise bands from her bag as the scene continues to unfold. HEATHER cheerfully helps SHOPPERS. BUCKY is fiddling with a Rubik's Cube and chatting animatedly to DIDI, who is staring off into space, absentmindedly eating Bucky's french fries.)

BUCKY. So we were talking about the Voyager 2 space probe, and Mr. Johnson was getting all geeked about it and going on and on about Reagan and the space program, so I said, c'mon Mr. Johnson, Reagan wouldn't know Uranus from, well, *(Chuckles.)* his a-

DIDI. Good one, Bucky.

BUCKY. But there's more! Then the whole class started to laugh, so Mr. Johnson got mad and was like, "Bucky, take my toupee off your head, get down from my desk, and sit back in your seat!"

(BUCKY waits for a reaction.)

'Cause I was standing on his desk and wearing his toupee the entire time.

(He waits for a reaction, gets frustrated, and starts exaggerating.)

And then this alien spaceship came out of nowhere and beamed me up, because apparently Mr. Johnson's toupee is an alien communication device.

(Still no reaction; BUCKY waves a hand in front of DIDI's face.)

Hello! Earth to Didi! Hilarious alien toupee story going on over here.

(DIDI takes off one headphone.)

DIDI. Oh sorry, I was just thinking and listening to this song on my Walkman.

(BUCKY pops the tape out and looks at it.)

BUCKY. “Every Breath You Take” by The Police. Isn’t that song a little stalker-y?

DIDI. It’s my favorite song!

(STACY leans in.)

STACY. Have you heard “Crazy for You” by Madonna? *(Sighs.)* She is sooo legit.

DIDI. Right. Yeah.

STACY. Your loss.

(STACY turns back to her food as GILBERT enters.)

BUCKY. You know, Didi, you’re harder to figure out than this Rubik’s Cube.

(BUCKY holds up the Rubik’s Cube, a perplexed look on his face. GILBERT notices and crosses to BUCKY.)

GILBERT. Need some help? I love those things!

(BUCKY hands GILBERT the Rubik’s Cube.)

BUCKY. Take it. It’s all yours.

(GILBERT excitedly takes it to another table and fiddles with it. DIDI is staring off into space, and BUCKY looks at her.)

Now if only Didi would be all mine...

DIDI. What was that?

BUCKY. Oh, nothing. So what were you thinking about while you were listening to The Police?

DIDI. The usual...

DIDI. *(Sighs romantically.)* **BUCKY.** *(Sighs annoyed.)*
Trey... Trey...

BUCKY. What a stupid name...Trey.

(BUCKY picks up his food tray.)

This is a tray.

(He picks up Didi's tray.)

This is a tray.

DIDI. Hey!

(DIDI grabs her tray, annoyed.)

BUCKY. But a high school kid named Trey? *(Scoffs.)* That's just ridiculous.

(BLAIR and VERONICA enter carrying lots of shopping bags, unseen by DIDI but within BUCKY's line of sight.)

DIDI. *(Annoyed.)* Trey is not ridiculous!

(Swooning a little.) He's kind and he's smart and he has a great sense of humor.

(BLAIR and VERONICA stop nearby. They listen and snicker. BUCKY sees and tries to get DIDI to stop talking, unsuccessfully.)

And his hair!

(She can hardly stand it; she swoons.)

Have you seen his hair?

BUCKY. Yeah, um, it's great. Listen, Didi, we should probably go.

(BUCKY stands.)

DIDI. Oh, Bucky, don't get your feelings hurt just because we're talking about Trey.

BUCKY. I'm not. I swear. Let's just go.

DIDI. But I haven't even told you about Trey's smile! It's so –

BLAIR. Shiny?

VERONICA. Sparkling?

BLAIR. Full of teeth?

(BLAIR and VERONICA start snickering.)

DIDI. *(Quickly, embarrassed.)* Oh, hey there, Blair... Veronica... I didn't see you guys.

BLAIR. Of course you didn't.

VERONICA. How could you have? You're invisible.

(VERONICA and BLAIR start snickering.)

BUCKY. If she were invisible, then wouldn't it mean you guys couldn't see her? I'm pretty sure she'd still be able to see you.

BLAIR. Whatever, Plucky.

BUCKY. It's Bucky.

BLAIR. As if I care. And speaking of not caring, I'd forget Trey if I were you, because there's no way he'd ever be interested in a girl like you –

VERONICA. A girl from the wrong side of town.

BLAIR. A girl from the other side of the tracks.

VERONICA. A girl with very, very questionable fashion sense.

(BLAIR and VERONICA snicker and walk away, finding a table nearby and talking, looking at their purchases, getting food, etc. as the scene continues.)

BUCKY. It's called being unique, you know! Something three spoiled rich kids like you would never understand!

DIDI. (*Urging him to sit.*) Stop, Bucky. It's not worth it.

BUCKY. They're not worth it!

DIDI. That's right.

(**BUCKY** smiles at **DIDI**.)

BUCKY. You're worth it though.

DIDI. (*Smiles.*) What would I ever do without you?

BUCKY. I don't know.

(*He slides a container of french fries closer to her.*)

For one thing, you'd actually have to start ordering your own french fries.

(**DIDI** smiles and takes a fry. *They continue to share fries and talk as the scene continues.*
DANIELLE, TRISH, and LISA are doing their hair and makeup.)

TRISH. Like, oh my gosh, Danielle, that new lipstick is to die for!

DANIELLE. Thanks, Trish.

(*She looks at the bottom of the tube.*)

It's called Really Radical Red.

TRISH. That's a good name for it then, 'cause it's really rad!

DANIELLE. I know, right?

(**LISA** holds up an eye shadow palette.)

LISA. Which shadow should I use? The blue or the teal?

DANIELLE. I like the blue.

TRISH. Me too.

LISA. Okay.

(LISA starts applying eye shadow.)

Do you think Gary would like it?

DANIELLE. Don't tell me you like Gary again?

TRISH. Barf! Gary is grody to the max.

LISA. He is not! He's super cool and nice. You just don't know him.

TRISH. He might be nice but he's butt ugly.

LISA. No way!

DANIELLE. Remember when he picked a scab off his elbow in second grade and ate it?

TRISH. Yuck! Gag me with a spoon!

LISA. You guys are, like, so mean!

DANIELLE. C'mon, Lisa, you know you can do so much better than Grody Gary.

TRISH. Grody Gary! Nice!

TRISH & DANIELLE. Grody Gary! Grody Gary!

LISA. Stop it guys!

TRISH & DANIELLE. Grody Gary! Grody Gary!

(LISA stands and starts throwing her makeup in her purse.)

LISA. If that's how you're gonna be, then I'm outta here.

DANIELLE. We're just kidding, Lisa.

TRISH. Yeah, Lisa, don't have a cow.

DANIELLE. Stay. We'll stop teasing you about Gary.

LISA. You will?

TRISH. (*Putting up the Vulcan salute.*) Scout's honor.

DANIELLE. That's, like, a *Star Wars* thing, not a Boy Scouts' thing.

(**LISA** *sits.*)

LISA. Actually, that's from *Star Trek*.

TRISH. Oh my gosh, did, like, Gary tell you that? He's such a dweeb!

LISA. You're doing it again!

DANIELLE. She won't do it anymore, right, Trish?

TRISH. I don't know why she's getting so bent out of shape about it. She needs to chill out.

(**DANIELLE** *holds up her pinkie finger.*)

DANIELLE. C'mon, Trish. Pinkie swear.

TRISH. (*Rolling her eyes.*) Fine.

(**TRISH** *holds out her pinkie.*)

I pinkie swear.

(**TRISH** and **DANIELLE** *link pinkies, followed by TRISH and LISA.*)

DANIELLE. So where do you guys want to go after this?

LISA. I dunno. Maybe the arcade?

TRISH. The arcade's for lame-os and losers.

LISA. How about Contempo Casuals?

DANIELLE. Oh yeah! They have some new blazers I want to check out. Let me just touch up my hair and we'll go.

(**DANIELLE** *sprays her hair vigorously with tons of hair spray. VIPER, who is sitting nearby, starts coughing and choking.*)

SHOPPER. *(Coughing.)* Too...much...hair spray!

VIPER. Hey! Watch it with the toxic haze, man.

DANIELLE. Oh, sorry.

TRISH. *(Leaning over.)* She's not a man, she's a chick.

VIPER. I can see that.

TRISH. I'm surprised you can see anything with hair like that.

VIPER. *(Holds up lighter.)* Keep it up, airhead, and I'll light this baby the next time you pick up that can of hair spray.

TRISH. Is that a threat?

(DANIELLE intervenes, drawing TRISH back in.)

DANIELLE. No one's threatening anyone, right...

(To VIPER.) Sorry, I didn't catch your name.

VIPER. Viper.

TRISH. *(Scoffs.)* Of course it is.

DANIELLE. Viper was just joshing. Right, Viper?

VIPER. Why don't you get back to worshiping consumerism and leave me alone?

(VIPER turns back to their table. DANIELLE turns TRISH back to their table.)

DANIELLE. What's with you today? You're being a major pain right now.

(DANIELLE, TRISH, and LISA resume talking, eating, putting on makeup, etc. as the scene continues. STACY leans over to VIPER.)

STACY. You looked pretty cool back there with those valley girls.

VIPER. *(Pretending not to care, but they do.)* Whatever.

STACY. *(Pointing to lighter.)* Does that thing really work?

VIPER. Yeah! It's just sticking right now, that's all. What's it to you?

STACY. Nothing. Just wondering.

(STACY turns back to her table, a little hurt, and eats as BRIAN enters, with a camcorder on his shoulder and a camcorder bag. As he moves between groups, they each react, in character, either acknowledging the camera and thinking it's cool, or not.)

BRIAN. Just another day in the life at Valley View Mall, where one day blends into the next as the monotony of corporate greed takes its toll on society. Here in the food court, people from all walks of life come together to share a table, a meal, and maybe a laugh or two as all around them commerce and materialism run rampant.

(BRIAN crosses to BLAIR and VERONICA.)

And there's no better example of that than in these two young people who care more about the labels on their clothes than they do about the people sitting at the table next to them.

BLAIR. Got that right!

(BLAIR and VERONICA snicker as BRIAN crosses to STACY and VIPER.)

BRIAN. But for others, price tags take a back seat to making a statement...a fashion statement, that is.

(VIPER holds up the lighter.)

VIPER. Get out of my face or the camcorder gets it.

(BRIAN crosses quickly to DIDI and BUCKY.)

BRIAN. And for others, it isn't fashion that is foremost in the mind, but love. Take these two young lovers for example –

DIDI. (*Quickly.*) Oh, we're not, like, going out or anything. We're just friends.

BRIAN. Oh, sorry. I just thought –

BUCKY. (*Quickly.*) You saw it too, huh? That little spark? That little extra something between us?

DIDI. (*Chuckling, indicating BUCKY.*) Don't mind him. He's a jokester. He's just messing with you.

BUCKY. I'm really not. I feel like I've been pretty clear, here, but maybe not.

(**BUCKY** takes a deep breathe, resolute.)

This is it, Bucky – time to lay it all on the line.

(*He turns to BRIAN.*)

You're going to want to get this on video.

(**BRIAN** turns the camera back to them.)

BRIAN. What is this? Is something exciting about to happen for once at the Valley View Mall?

(**BUCKY** takes **DIDI**'s hand.)

BUCKY. Didi, I've been waiting forever to tell you that I lo–

(**BUCKY** is interrupted as **COREY** enters on a skateboard, followed by **MARV**, who is running after him.)

MARV. Come back here, you hooligan!

(*A SHOPPER is almost hit by COREY.*)

SHOPPER. Hey, watch it, dude!

BRIAN. Now *this* is exciting! A real *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* moment, only this time Spicoli's got a skateboard instead of a surfboard! Look out, director coming through!

(BRIAN follows the action with his camcorder.)

COREY. You're looking winded there, Marv.

(He stops to grab WHITNEY's exercise band.)

Maybe you should get a little more exercise.

(COREY throws the exercise band at MARV then skateboards away laughing. MARV picks up the band and returns it to WHITNEY.)

MARV. Sorry about that. That kid's a punk.

WHITNEY. You know, you are looking a bit out of shape. I teach a beginner's aerobics course on Friday mornings at Valley's gym on the first floor near Sears if you want to work on that.

(She takes a card out of her bag and hands it to MARV.)

MARV. Um, thanks, but I think I'm okay.

WHITNEY. Suit yourself.

(MARV pockets the card as WHITNEY returns to her workout and COREY shouts from across the room.)

COREY. Come and get me, old man!

MARV. When I catch you, Corey, you're going to be sorry.

COREY. Fat chance!

(COREY laughs and skates around the food court as MARV chases him. COREY nearly crashes into KEN, who enters followed by NICKY and TAMMY. KEN has a briefcase, and TAMMY carries an overstuffed bag and is furiously taking notes on a notepad.)

KEN. Watch it!

TAMMY. Yeah, watch it, punk!

VIPER. (*Scoffs.*) That kid is *so* not punk.

(**KEN** turns to **NICKY** as they cross to Nicky's Pizza Pie.)

KEN. Anyway, as I was saying, Sarrano's menu offers both a variety of pasta dishes as well as several flavors of pizza. So I'd be more than happy to purchase your pizza oven and some of your pizza-making tools as part of the buyout package. I assure you, I can make a fair offer. (*Turning to TAMMY.*) Tammy, run the numbers for me.

TAMMY. Yes, boss.

(**TAMMY** pulls a calculator out of her bag and starts crunching numbers as **NICKY** crosses behind the counter and pulls out a wooden pizza paddle. The **VALLEY GIRLS** look up, interested.)

NICKY. (*Holding up the paddle.*) I can't imagine why you would want my old pizza paddles, Mr. Montgomery.

(**KEN** crosses behind the counter and puts an arm around **NICKY**.)

KEN. I'll tell you why, Nicky, my old boy... It's the history! Those paddles are well loved and well seasoned from decades of making one of the most beloved pizzas in town.

LISA. No duh. Nicky's pizza is choice!

GILBERT. It's a geometrically perfect circle

SHOPPER. His sauce is amazing!

SHOPPER. And the crust!

TRISH. It's the best!

DANIELLE. *Was* the best.

LISA. Don't remind me.

KEN. I've got a few issues to work out with mall management, but my assistant, Tammy, can go over the offer and the details of the buyout.

(KEN crosses out from behind the counter and starts to leave. TAMMY pulls out a contract.)

TAMMY. I've got everything right here, ready for you to sign, Mr. Valenti.

(NICKY rushes out from behind the counter, brushes past TAMMY, and stops KEN.)

NICKY. I really think we should talk about this.

KEN. There's nothing to talk about, Nicky. The deal is done.

NICKY. Not until I sign.

KEN. That's only a technicality, I'm afraid. The management at Valley View Mall increased their rental fees for the restaurants here in the food court, and you haven't been keeping up with the payments.

NICKY. I'm only a couple of months behind. I'll make that up this summer, no problem.

KEN. Sorry, Nicky, but mall management was well within their rights to cancel your lease and offer it to me.

NICKY. There's gotta be something I can do!

KEN. It's too late. I've already signed contracts to lease this space and have been more than generous by offering to buy your equipment. It's time you accept that Nicky's Pizza Pie is a thing of the past and Sarrano's Italian Pizzeria is the future.

NICKY. You can't do this, Mr. Montgomery!

(ALL CHARACTERS start to watch the fight between KEN and NICKY.)

KEN. I just did.

NICKY. You think I'm just some small-time pizza shop owner, but I know things.

(KEN stops and turns.)

KEN. Is that right? And what is it you think you know?

NICKY. I know you go from mall to mall, paying off management so they'll raise rents and then force out small shops like mine so you can muscle your way in and open a Sarrano's.

KEN. I have no idea what you're talking about.

NICKY. Oh, yeah? Then how do you explain the opening of five new Sarrano's Italian Pizzerias in the tri-city area alone?

KEN. I can't help it if Sarrano's is the fastest-growing pizza chain in America's malls.

(He turns and indicates all seated
CHARACTERS.)

The people have spoken, and they love my product.

BUCKY. Your pizza is trash!

SHOPPER. It's the worst!

GILBERT. It's mathematically impossible to eat.

STACY. It tastes like cardboard!

WHITNEY. There's not an ounce of nutritional value in a Sarrano's pizza!

SHOPPER. And not an ounce of flavor either!

HEATHER. Nicky's pizza is the best!

(ALL cheer.)

NICKY. *(With a smirk.)* The people have spoken alright.

KEN. Who cares? These people are nothing! They're kids, punks, troublemakers, losers... They don't know what they want.

(**VIPER** *stands.*)

VIPER. What did he just say?

BLAIR. He's just telling it like it is.

(**KEN** *turns quickly.*)

KEN. Blair, what are you doing here?

BLAIR. I'm just hanging out with my friends. What's the big deal?

KEN. The big deal is that you were supposed to be interning at the home office today.

VIPER. Another example of nepotism in the corporate establishment.

BLAIR. (*Dismissively.*) I can intern anytime, Dad. I want to hang out with my friends today.

KEN. I'm not asking, Blair. I'm telling.

(*He grabs the phone from **TAMMY** and hands it to **BLAIR.***)

Here's my cell phone. Call yourself a car to take you to the office.

BLAIR. But Dad –

KEN. I don't want to hear another word, Blair. Just do it!

VIPER. Ooh, better do what Daddy says before you get in trouble. Wouldn't want to upset the patriarchy.

BLAIR. Shut it, spike face!

KEN. Don't talk to him like that, Blair.

VIPER. Wow – wasn't expecting your dad to come to my defense.

KEN. Oh, I'm not coming to your defense. You're just not worth it.

(He looks around.)

KEN. No one here is. For the most part, the customers at the Valley View Mall live tiny little lives in their tiny little homes with their tiny little incomes. They look to rich, successful people like me to tell them what they want and where to get it.

TRISH. That's bogus, man.

LISA. Heinous, dude. Real heinous.

KEN. Facts are facts. All I have to do is run a special giveaway or hand out a coupon and they'll be clambering for my pizza. *(Taking a coupon out of his pocket.)* Here, let me demonstrate.

(He crosses to DIDI.)

Hello there, miss. Can I interest you in a ten percent off coupon for any menu item of your choice at Sarrano's Italian Pizzeria, opening right here in the Valley View Mall next month?

(DIDI takes the coupon and looks KEN square in the face.)

DIDI. I'd rather die.

(She tears the coupon in half and lets the pieces fall to the floor.)

SHOPPER. No one wants your coupon, man.

KEN. *(Annoyed, to NICKY.)* I don't know how you found the spare change, Nicky, but it's obvious you've paid these people to disrespect me.

NICKY. Unlike you, Mr. Montgomery, I don't have to pay people off to earn their support.

BRIAN. Yeah, we love Nicky!

SHOPPER. He's the best!

KEN. Fine. You can have your admiration, but I've still got the restaurant.

*(He crosses to **TAMMY** and grabs the contract.)*

And as far as my offer to buy out your equipment...

*(He looks **NICKY** in the eye and tears the contract in half.)*

Consider it rescinded.

*(**KEN** turns and starts to exit as **TAMMY** quickly stoops to pick up the pieces of the contract.)*

NICKY. I'm gonna find a way to stop you, Mr. Montgomery!

KEN. *(Chuckles.)* I highly doubt that.

NICKY. I'll get my restaurant back if it's the last thing I do!

*(**KEN** stops and turns.)*

KEN. *(Coldly.)* You'll get your restaurant back over my cold, dead body.

BRIAN. And the tension mounts! It's like Maverick and Iceman all over again as these two face off to see who will be the Top Gun of the Valley View Mall food court.

*(**HARRY** enters, walking briskly for exercise, pumping his arms and wearing wrist weights. He stops when he sees **KEN** and **NICKY** staring one another down.)*

HARRY. Hey there, Nicky. What's going on?

NICKY. Nothing that concerns you, Harry.

HARRY. It looks like you and this gentleman are about to have a showdown.

NICKY. Oh, he ain't no gentleman.

KEN. Now, Nicky, there's no reason to get mean.

HARRY. I've seen a lot of things go down in this mall over the years. Not hard to, when you walk it every single day.

*(He leans into **KEN**.)*

Good exercise and you never have to worry about the weather.

KEN. *(Couldn't care less.)* And you assume I care, why?

HARRY. Yes siree, I've seen employees get fired, shoplifters get caught, couples arguing over money... Heck, I've even seen good ole Marv have to defibrillate a ninety-three-year-old man after he went into cardiac arrest.

*(He points toward **MARV**.)*

Shout-out Marv!

COREY. Way to go, Marv!

MARV. Can it, Corey!

HARRY. So I know a tense situation when I see one, and this situation is mighty tense.

NICKY. He started it when he stole my restaurant right out from under me.

KEN. Everything I did was perfectly legal and by the book. You need to get over it, Nicky.

*(**NICKY** steps toward **KEN**.)*

NICKY. Don't tell me what to do, Ken.

*(**KEN** steps toward **NICKY**, but **TAMMY** blocks him.)*

TAMMY. Maybe there's some way we can bring the temperature down a little here.

*(**TAMMY** looks around as **HEATHER** holds up two cups of ice cream with a spoon in each.)*

HEATHER. (*Peppy, with a big smile.*) I've got just the thing to bring down the temperature when things get a little too warm!

BRIAN. Good idea, Heather.

(He takes the ice cream cups and crosses to NICKY.)

Here, Nicky.

NICKY. (*Tense.*) No thank you.

BRIAN. But it's ice cream! It's not like I'm trying to serve you monkey brains like they did in *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.

NICKY. (*Tense.*) I'm fine, really.

HEATHER. But it's chocolate fudge ripple!

KEN. Chocolate fudge ripple? My favorite. I'd love some.

(He holds out his hand for ice cream, which BRIAN hands him.)

See, Nicky, that's how business contacts are made. Mutual respect for each other's products. Maybe if you'd been nicer to the folks at 32 Flavors, you wouldn't be going out of business.

(KEN sits down at a nearby table and takes a bite of the ice cream.)

Delicious.

DANIELLE. If you like that, maybe you should try a hot dog on a stick. They're totally tubular!

LISA. Like, totally!

VERONICA. Hot dogs are literally tubular... As in, they're tubes of processed meat.

DANIELLE. Oh yeah! That's so brill!

LISA. Like, fer shur!

MICHELLE. I have one ready if you want it.

KEN. (*Squeamish.*) Um, no.

(**MICHELLE** holds a corn dog out to **DANIELLE**, who gets up to take it but stops when **VIPER** gets to it first.)

DANIELLE. Hey!

VIPER. (*With a snarl.*) I got it.

DANIELLE. Fine. I have to fix my hair anyway.

(*She crosses back to her table to get her hair spray. VIPER crosses to KEN.*)

VIPER. Here, Montgomery – try it. You’re a big-time corporate slave and this is how business contacts are made after all, right?

(*During the next several lines, things get chaotic. People are up and moving and descending on KEN for a variety of reasons.*)

KEN. I don’t think so.

(*He stands and backs away a step.*)

(*Indicating DIDI.*) Give it to that freak over there with the bad attitude.

(**BUCKY** angrily stands and loosens his bolo tie.)

BUCKY. Nobody talks about my girl like that!

(*He crosses toward KEN.*)

DIDI. I’m not your girl, Bucky.

(**BLAIR** stands and crosses to **KEN**.)

BLAIR. Dad, I really need to talk to you about this internship.

KEN. Later, son.

(*To **TAMMY.***) Come on, Tammy, we have business to attend to.

TAMMY. Coming, boss.

(*As **TAMMY** gathers her materials, she spills the contents of her bag at **KEN**'s feet, including a huge phone book.*)

Oh, dear!

KEN. What is the matter with you, Tammy? You are incompetent. First you cancel all of my appointments today, then you drag me to this disgusting food court for a last-minute meeting with Nicky, and now this! I don't even know why I allow you to work for me when you can't even walk two feet without spilling everything like a buffoon!

TAMMY. Sorry, boss.

WHITNEY. She's doing her best. You don't have to be so mean!

(*Still holding an exercise band, **WHITNEY** rushes over to help **TAMMY** pick up the contents of her bag.*)

KEN. Stay out of this, Jane Fonda.

(***(NICKY crosses to KEN.)***)

NICKY. I wasn't finished with our conversation, you know?

KEN. Yeah? Well I was.

(***(BRIAN follows NICKY with an ice cream cup.)***)

BRIAN. Are you sure you don't want this ice cream, Nicky?

NICKY. No thanks. (*Looking pointedly at **KEN.***) I've lost my appetite.

KEN. *(With a smirk.)* Why? Did you have a slice of Nicky's Pizza Pie?

COREY. Hey! No one makes fun of Nicky's Pizza!

(COREY jumps on his skateboard and skates toward KEN. He's followed by MARV, running after him.)

MARV. Come back here, you! I'm not finished with you yet.

(As COREY passes by DANIELLE, he knocks the hair spray can out of her hand. It rolls toward KEN and the others.)

DANIELLE. My hair spray!

(DANIELLE rushes toward the group to retrieve her hair spray. Things have really descended into chaos now, with several CHARACTERS circling KEN.)

KEN. Would you hurry up, Tammy?

TAMMY. I'm doing my best, boss!

KEN. Well your best isn't good enough.

WHITNEY. *(To KEN.)* You really need to learn to shut your mouth.

VIPER. C'mon, Captain of Industry, try the corn dog.

BUCKY. No one talks to Didi like that!

BLAIR. Dad, I need to talk to you.

BRIAN. Are you sure you don't want this ice cream?

STACY. This is bogus! I can't even hear my music.

(She turns up the volume.)

HARRY. Everyone just calm down.

NICKY. I will get you for this, Montgomery!

DANIELLE. I found my hair spray! Wicked!

*(DANIELLE holds up the hair spray bottle and starts spraying. Perhaps a cloud of spray envelops the assembled **GROUP**, making it difficult to see. There is commotion, shouting, further chaos.)*

COREY. I can't see!

VIPER. My eyes!

MURDERER. I'm going to kill you!

KEN. *(Screaming.)* Ahhhhhh!

WHITNEY. Wait just a minute!

BLAIR. What is that?

BUCKY. Stop!

HARRY. What the –

NICKY. Ow!

BRIAN. Don't!

TAMMY. Hey!

*(When the spray/smoke clears, **KEN** is lying on the floor with a spoon sticking out of his mouth and a discarded cup of ice cream at his side. Standing around him are **BUCKY**, holding his tie; **DANIELLE**, holding the hair spray; **WHITNEY**, holding an exercise band; **TAMMY**, holding a phone book; **NICKY**, holding a pizza paddle; **BLAIR**, holding a cell phone; **VIPER**, holding a corn dog with a large bite taken off the top; **BRIAN**, holding his video camera, **COREY**, holding his skateboard; **HARRY**; and **MARV**. **TAMMY** sees **KEN**.)*

Mr. Montgomery!

MARV. *(Rushing over.)* What happened?

BRIAN. He collapsed!

(WHITNEY bends down to assess him.)

WHITNEY. I can't find a pulse.

(MARV bends down to help.)

COREY. That dude is dead.

BLAIR. *(Concerned.)* Dad?!

DANIELLE. That's warped, man.

MARV. Someone get the defibrillator.

(HEATHER runs out from behind the counter with a defibrillator.)

HEATHER. I've got it!

(HEATHER hands it to MARV. MARV opens it and places the defibrillator paddles on KEN's chest.)

HARRY. Don't worry, guys, Marv's a pro at this.

MARV. Everyone stand back.

(Everyone encircling KEN takes a big step back. MARV holds up the paddles.)

Clear!

(MARV places the paddles on KEN's chest. KEN's chest rises as if shocked, but he doesn't revive. WHITNEY checks for a pulse.)

WHITNEY. Still no pulse.

MARV. *(Holding up the paddles.)* Clear!

(WHITNEY scoots back as MARV places paddles. The same happens. WHITNEY checks for pulse, but for longer this time.)

MICHELLE. Well?

BUCKY. Do you feel anything?

WHITNEY. *(Shaking her head, solemn.)* Nothing.

MARV. I'm afraid he's dead.

(TRISH stands.)

TRISH. There's like...a dead body in the Valley View Mall?

(She grabs her purse.)

I am so gonna split!

(TRISH starts running for the automatic doors. Just before she gets there, they suddenly slam shut. TRISH stops.)

No!

NICKY. What happened?

TRISH. The doors...they just, like shut! Let me outta here!

(She starts pounding on the doors. MARV stands and starts crossing to TRISH.)

MARV. There's nothing we can do. The automatic doors are shut. We're stuck.

SHOPPER. Stuck? Like, for real?

GILBERT. This is not good. This is not good at all!

TAMMY. Aren't you mall security? Don't you have a key or something to unlock the door?

MARV. Usually I do, but when I went running to apprehend this delinquent, I left my keys in my office.

BRIAN. Nice going, Corey.

COREY. Thanks!

DANIELLE. So we're just, like, trapped in here with a dead body?

GILBERT. I'd say that hypothesis has proven to be accurate.

MARV. Not just a dead body. Mr. Montgomery was perfectly fine when he arrived at the food court, and yet here he lies, dead.

VIPER. Yeah, so... What are you getting at?

MARV. *(Looking everyone over.)* A lot of people in this room had reason to dislike Mr. Montgomery. In fact, some might say many of you had reason to want him dead.

DIDI. You don't mean –

MARV. We aren't just stuck in the Valley View Mall with a dead body.

(He steps forward and looks out toward the audience.)

We're trapped in the food court...with a murderer!

(ALL look around, scream, etc. Blackout.)

Scene Two

*(Interior of a shopping mall food court, as before. A garbage bag, or maybe sheets of paper towels or other humorous makeshift sheeting is draped over **KEN**'s body. **ALL OTHERS** are seated or standing around.)*

COREY. Well, this sucks.

WHITNEY. That's an understatement.

DANIELLE. Like, totally!

LISA. To the max.

STACY. I kind of feel like we should call the cops.

BUCKY. How are we going to call the cops? We don't have a phone.

DIDI. *(Pointing to **BLAIR**.)* He does!

BLAIR. *(Tapping buttons on the phone.)* It's not working.

VIPER. It was working before, when your dad gave it to you.

BLAIR. Well it's not working now, alright?

BUCKY. *(Pointing to **GILBERT**.)* He's a nerd. Maybe he can fix it.

GILBERT. I don't know anything about electronics. But I can recite over one thousand digits of pi if you'd like!

NICKY. How is that going to help?

*(**GILBERT** shrugs. **BRIAN** puts his camera down.)*

BRIAN. Let me see it. I'm a director.

BLAIR. And that makes you an expert, how?

BRIAN. I know my way around electronic equipment.

HARRY. I can help! I always come prepared. Got my mall walker fanny pack right here. *(Pats his fanny pack.)*

(**BRIAN** and **HENRY** take the phone and look at it, tap a few buttons, etc. then look up, resigned.)

BRIAN. Yeah, it's pretty much toast.

WHITNEY. There's gotta be a pay phone around here somewhere.

HARRY. It's on the other side of the automatic doors.

TRISH. (*Annoyed.*) Of course it is.

HEATHER. We'll just have to wait until help arrives. I'm sure it will be here quick as a flash!

DANIELLE. We can't just wait it out. There's, like, a murderer in here!

VERONICA. And I have a nail appointment in an hour.

LISA. Me too!

VERONICA. French tips?

LISA. Hot pink with diamonds.

VERONICA. (*Disgusted.*) Tacky.

BUCKY. We can't just sit around and wait. We have to do something!

MARV. (*Stepping forward.*) I agree. And the thing we need to do is find the murderer!

(**BRIAN** picks up the camcorder and brings it to his shoulder.)

BRIAN. Now *this* is exciting! It's like we're in the movie *Clue* and it's up to us to find out who killed Mr. Boddy.

MICHELLE. Only this time it's who killed Mr. Montgomery.

BLAIR. I can't believe he's gone.

VIPER. Sorry about your dad, man.

BLAIR. (*Angrily.*) Sorry you're going to get caught is more like it!

VIPER. I didn't kill him!

BLAIR. Yeah, right. Look at you. You've got murderer written all over you!

HARRY. (*Reading VIPER's shirt.*) "Somebody Got Murdered."
(*Nods.*) I'd say that's pretty accurate.

VIPER. It's a Clash song.

MARV. What's a trash song?

VERONICA. Anything by The Clash!

(**VERONICA** *laughs with* **BLAIR**.)

VIPER. You'd better shut your mouth or somebody *else* is going to get murdered!

HARRY. Settle down. It's just a song... A song with a very bad name, at least for our current predicament.

STACY. If you want to hear a better song, I've got a great one from the Queen of Pop herself!

(**STACY** *starts to turn the music on but is stopped by* **TRISH**.)

TRISH. Not the time.

STACY. But her music is so good! And it really calms me down in times like these.

WHITNEY. Well, if it wasn't Viper, then who was it?

(**DIDI** *points at* **NICKY**.)

DIDI. Nicky threatened Mr. Montgomery! I heard him.

NICKY. It wasn't me, I swear!

(**VERONICA** *points at* **BUCKY**.)

VERONICA. Trucky threatened him too!

BUCKY. My name's Bucky, and no I didn't!

HARRY. Everyone just calm down. We don't even know how he died.

TAMMY. He's got a spoon hanging out of his mouth, which must mean –

DANIELLE. (*Screaming.*) He's been gagged...with a spoon!

TAMMY. I was going to say maybe the ice cream was poisoned, but whatever.

(**WHITNEY** *uncovers KEN's body and looks into his mouth.*)

WHITNEY. Or maybe he choked on the piece of corn dog in his mouth.

(**BLAIR** *points at VIPER.*)

BLAIR. See! I told you he did it.

VIPER. Or maybe someone tripped him, or hit him over the head, or strangled him or –

COREY. Bro, you just came up with tons of ways to kill a guy, like, right off the top of your head. That totally makes you look guilty.

VIPER. I'm not guilty. I'm just saying, we have no idea how this guy was murdered.

(**HARRY** *bends down and looks at the body.*)

HARRY. The ice cream and the corn dog are definitely possibilities. (*Looking at KEN's head.*) However, he does appear to have a large wound on the side of his head, so he could've been hit over the head by a blunt object.

TAMMY. Like a pizza paddle, perhaps?

(**NICKY** *tucks the pizza paddle behind his back.*)

HARRY. And he does have some red marks around his neck.

VERONICA. Such as a bolo necktie?

(BUCKY quickly puts the tie in his pocket.)

BUCKY. Have you all lost your minds? We're wasting time bickering when we should be focusing on the fact that we're trapped in this food court with a murderer!

MARV. Which means we need to find out who that murderer is.

NICKY. And how are we going to do that?

MARV. By using good old-fashioned detective skills.

GILBERT. Is anyone by chance a detective?

(No one answers.)

Anyone?

(No one answers.)

Anyone?

(No one answers.)

It does not appear that we have a detective.

MARV. Oh, yes we do!

(He pulls out his wallet and flips it open.)

BRIAN looks at it closely.)

BRIAN. Blockbuster Video Superstar Renter card, twenty video rentals per week.

(BRIAN looks up.)

Dude, that's a lot of video rentals.

LISA. Yeah, man, like, get a life!

MARV. Not that!

(MARV flips through his wallet, pulls out a badge, and holds it up proudly.)

DIDI. (*Reads.*) Marv Benson, mall security guard.

(**DIDI** *looks up, unimpressed.*)

And?

MARV. That means I'm law enforcement.

VERONICA. You enforce the laws at the mall. That's not the same thing.

COREY. Yeah, you're basically a rent-a-cop, bro!

(**COREY** *laughs.*)

MARV. Can it, Corey! I may be a mall security guard, but I'm the closest thing we've got to a detective, so I'm taking over this investigation, effective immediately.

HEATHER. (*Excitedly.*) Ooh! How exciting! An investigation!

TAMMY. Alright, where do we start, then?

MARV. Back at the academy –

BUCKY. (*Wryly.*) AKA the employee break room.

(**MARV** *gives him a pointed look, then continues.*)

MARV. We were taught that the best way to start any investigation is by asking questions.

MICHELLE. (*Nervously.*) What kind of questions? I get nervous when I'm put on the spot.

MARV. (*Getting in her face.*) I'll ask any question necessary to find out who murdered Mr. Montgomery. Got that?

MICHELLE. (*Shrinking away.*) Yes, sir.

BLAIR. Can we just get this over with? I'm not trying to be rude here, but I don't exactly *relish* the thought of sitting around here all day talking about my dad.

MARV. Relish? As in the popular hot dog condiment?

WHITNEY. Looks like we have ourselves a new suspect!

VIPER. Man, that's cold-blooded, killing your own dad with a corn dog.

BLAIR. I wouldn't be caught dead with a corn dog!

VIPER. Yeah, well, your dad was.

BLAIR. (*Rushing at VIPER.*) Let me at him!

(**BRIAN** and **BUCKY** jump up and hold **BLAIR** back.)

VIPER. Security!

MARV. Alright, everyone just calm down so we can get this investigation underway.

(**BLAIR** calms down, smooths his clothes, and sits. **MARV** walks around, looking at all the potential suspects.)

Now, where to start?

(*In addition to the characters onstage, **MARV** can question audience members, asking things like, "How about you?" and "You look guilty." or "Is that mustache even real?" "Where were you on the night of February 12, 1985?" etc. Have fun with it. Be silly and humorous.*)

(*Eventually **MARV** makes his way to **LISA**.*)

You.

LISA. Me?

MARV. What's your name?

LISA. Lisa.

MARV. Pisa? As in the leaning tower?

LISA. No, Lisa. Like Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam?

MARV. Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam...

(MARV leans in, accusingly.)

MARV. So does that mean you're in some kind of cult? Like a murder cult?

LISA. No! It's a group!

STACY. They're okay. She's no Material Girl, but like, who is?

MARV. *(Aggressively, to LISA.)* What were you doing at the time of the murder?

LISA. Tight rolling.

MARV. What's that? Some sort of attack method?

LISA. No. Like, my jeans. It's totally rad. See?

(She stands and holds out one leg to show him.)

MARV. Oh, right.

LISA. I'm not super good at it yet, so it takes me a while. I didn't even know anything was going on until the smell of Aqua Net hit my nose. *(Sighs.)* Nothing like Aqua Net to really make you feel alive.

MARV. Okay, fine. What about you?

(MARV turns to MICHELLE.)

MICHELLE. Um, I was working, right over there.

(She points at Hot Dogs on Sticks.)

MARV. What's your name?

MICHELLE. Michelle.

MARV. Michelle, I have an important question for you.

VERONICA. Yeah, why would you work someplace that makes you wear such a stupid costume?

(VERONICA and BLAIR laugh.)

MICHELLE. Well, you see, I'm sort of shy and I just thought maybe wearing something like this would get me out of my shell a little and help me meet people...

WHITNEY. Help you murder people is more like it!

MICHELLE. I didn't do it!

MARV. Then how did one of your corn dogs end up inside Mr. Montgomery's throat?

MICHELLE. I don't know! I was right behind the counter the entire time.

DIDI. No you weren't. I saw you step away from the counter to hand Viper a corn dog.

(DIDI points to VIPER. MARV crosses to them.)

MARV. So you were the one with the murder weapon!

BLAIR. I told you!

VIPER. I didn't do anything. I have no idea how the corn dog ended up in his mouth.

HARRY. Maybe the corn dog didn't kill him.

MARV. Then what did?

(MARV crosses to STACY.)

STACY. I...I don't know!

MARV. *(Getting in her face.)* Maybe you did it!

STACY. No!

NICKY. You can't just go around accusing everyone, Marv.

WHITNEY. This is a mall food court. There are a ton of people here. It would take way too long.

MARV. You have a point there.

BUCKY. Besides, you don't even know our names or anything about us.

MARV. You know what, Mucky, you're right.

(BUCKY shakes his head.)

We need to narrow down the possible list of suspects, and the best way to do that is to get to know one another a little. Everyone line up.

HEATHER. How fun!

VIPER. No way, man.

VERONICA. Do we have to?

MARV. Yes. Now let's get moving. Time is of the essence.

(ALL start to line/clump up. They bicker a bit, shove, etc. Those that are in established groups/pairs stay together. MARV walks down the line, assessing.)

Alright, here's how it's going to go. We need to determine two things in order to narrow down our list of suspects... Your location during the time of the murder and any potential motives you might have.

BRIAN. Mind if I record your interrogation on my camcorder? It could come in handy later if you want to review the footage.

MARV. Great idea.

(BRIAN gets the camcorder ready to film as MARV crosses to the start of the line. HARRY is first.)

Alright, let's start over here. What's your name?

HARRY. You know my name! I've been walking this mall every day for years.

MARV. I know, Harry, but I need you to follow the format so I can conduct my investigation.

HARRY. Fine. My name is Harry and I am a mall walker.
At the time of the murder, I was standing right over there, along with most of the people here.

MARV. Thank you, Harry. You can have a seat.

DIDI. That's it? That's all you're going to ask him?

BUCKY. You didn't even figure out if he had a motive!

MARV. Harry and I go way back. How long have you been walking this mall, Harry?

HARRY. Why it must be going on five years now... Five years since I retired.

MARV. Yep. Five years. See? So I know Harry can't be the killer.

TAMMY. Retired...must be nice.

NICKY. What line of work were you in, Harry?

HARRY. Same as you, Nicky. I was a restaurateur. Pizza, in fact.

NICKY. No kidding! Was your place around here?

HARRY. (*A little evasive.*) No. A couple of cities over.

NICKY. What was it called? Maybe I know it.

HARRY. I doubt it. It was just a little mall pizza joint. Harry's. You probably never heard of it.

DANIELLE. Harry's?

TRISH. We know Harry's Pizza!

HARRY. You do?

LISA. We, like, loved that place!

MARV. How did you know Harry's?

DANIELLE. It was in the Lakeside Mall food court. We totally went to that mall all the time!

TRISH. Until Harry's bounced.

MARV. Bounced?

TRISH. Shut down. Left the mall.

DANIELLE. That's why we split on Lakeside and started coming here. Wasn't worth it to go all the way to Lakeside if Harry's was gone.

LISA. Most definitely.

MARV. That must've been when you retired, huh, Henry?

HENRY. (*Evasive.*) Oh, yeah. Sounds about right.

MARV. Okay, so Harry is cleared. Now, let's stick to the task at hand and eliminate the side chatter or I'm going to be retired before this investigation is over.

GILBERT. By my calculations, you have thirty-three point four years before you can retire, Marv.

MARV. Well, that's depressing.

(**HARRY** sits as **MARV** makes some notes then crosses to **GILBERT**.)

What's your name, human calculator?

GILBERT. Gilbert Gumphrey Egbert the Third.

COREY. That cannot be his real name!

GILBERT. It is! My mother, Eugenia Edwina Egbert, and my father, Nelson Norman Egbert, gave me that name on January 18th, 1971, at approximately 3:40 a.m.

MARV. You're a real numbers guy, eh, Gil?

GILBERT. It's Gilbert. And there's nothing I love more than numbers.

(*He holds up the Rubik's Cube.*)

Except maybe this Rubik's Cube.

MARV. I have a question for you, Gilbert, and I'm hoping you can answer it for me.

GILBERT. Ooh, like a test? I love tests!

MARV. Can you tell me where you were when the victim was killed?

GILBERT. That's an easy one.

(He crosses to the table.)

I was right over here, approximately ten feet, eight inches from the victim when he died. That's three point two five one meters if you wanted to use the metric equivalent.

MARV. So there's no way you could be implicated as the murderer.

GILBERT. That is correct!

MARV. Go ahead and have a seat then.

(MARV crosses to DIDI.)

And what is your name?

DIDI. I'm Didi. I'm unique and a little misunderstood, but if a certain someone would only give me a chance, I just know he and I would fall in love!

BUCKY. Not this again!

MARV. And where were you at the time of the murder?

DIDI. I was nowhere near the guy when he got wrecked. I was sitting right over there, listening to The Police.

LISA. *(Looking around.)* The police are here? Then, like, why is this guy bugging us? *(Indicates MARV.)*

BUCKY. There's no way Didi did anything. She has a kind and gentle soul. *(Dramatically.)* She'd never hurt anyone...unless of course you count breaking my poor, tortured heart which beats only for her!

MARV. No, I was pretty much just referring to the dead body over there.

BUCKY. Then you can cross Didi off your list, 'cause she didn't do it.

MARV. I agree. Didi was nowhere near the victim when he was killed, so it's unlikely she could have been involved in his death. *(To DIDI.)* You can have a seat.

(BUCKY puts his arm around DIDI and they step out of line on their way back to their table.)

BUCKY. Great! Good call there. Focus on the real suspects.

MARV. Not so fast.

(He stops BUCKY and guides him back into line.)

Your girlfriend might be off the hook –

DIDI. I'm not his girlfriend!

MARV. But I haven't questioned you yet.

BUCKY. Fine. My name's Bucky and the only thing you need to know about me is that I live and breathe to worship at the feet of Didi.

MARV. And where were you at the time of the murder?

BUCKY. I was with Didi, of course.

BLAIR. No, you weren't! You ripped off that monstrosity you call a tie and went running after Mr. Montgomery when he insulted your girl.

DIDI. I'm not his girl!

MARV. A bolo tie, eh?

(He holds out his hand and BUCKY hands him the tie.)

Looks like the perfect weapon if you wanted to strangle someone...especially someone who disparaged your one true love.

BUCKY. I'll have you know that tie is a fashion statement, not a weapon.

MARV. We'll see about that.

BUCKY. So can I sit down now?

MARV. No way. You're still a suspect.

(He crosses to MICHELLE.)

Michelle, right?

MICHELLE. Um...yes?

TRISH. Was that a question?

MICHELLE. *(Flustered.)* No... I mean, yes... I mean –

(She takes a deep breath.)

Yes, my name is Michelle. You already know I'm a little shy and that's why I work at the hot dog stand. And that's where I was at the time of the murder.

MARV. And that's where you were the entire time? You never stepped away from your post?

MICHELLE. Never. I don't even know Mr. Montgomery. I just came here today to do my job and that's it.

(MARV picks up the corn dog from the floor.)

MARV. So what's in the corn dog batter?

MICHELLE. I have no idea.

MARV. You work at Hot Dogs on Sticks and you don't know what's in the corn dog batter?

MICHELLE. I just fry the hot dogs. I don't ask questions.

MARV. So the batter could be poisoned, then?

MICHELLE. If it is, then it wasn't by me. I dipped that corn dog into the pre-prepared batter, sent from the warehouse, just like I always do.

MARV. So you're telling me I'll be perfectly fine if I take a bite of this corn dog?

MICHELLE. As far as I know.

MARV. Let's give it a try then.

(He takes a bite.)

TAMMY. Is that wise?

BRIAN. Probably not. It's a mall corn dog after all. I hope he has a bottle of Pepto-Bismol ready.

HARRY. Well?

MARV. *(Swallows.)* Tastes like an ordinary corn dog to me.

MICHELLE. So can I sit down, please? I really hate having everyone stare at me like this.

MARV. Go ahead and take a seat.

(MICHELLE hurries over to a seat as MARV crosses in front of DANIELLE.)

And who are you?

DANIELLE. My name is, like, Danielle, and these are the two most radical chicks in this whole entire mall.

TRISH. My name's Trish.

LISA. And I'm Lisa! And we're all best friends.

DANIELLE. Like, totally!

TRISH. Fer shur.

MARV. We've already determined that during the murder, Lisa was over at that table tight lipping.

LISA. Tight rolling.

MARV. Right. But since you were nowhere near the body at the time of the murder, it's safe to eliminate you as a suspect. You can have a seat.

LISA. But what about my friends? They totally didn't kill that guy. That would be, like, too heinous for words.

MARV. Well that remains to be seen.

(MARV turns to TRISH.)

Trish, where were you during the murder?

TRISH. *(Twirling her hair.)* Like, what's it to you?

MARV. I want to see if you have an alibi.

(TRISH starts rifling through her purse.)

TRISH. I'm not sure if I have this alibi thing or not, but if you give me a minute, I'll check.

LISA. If Trish had an alibi, I would know, and trust me, she doesn't. But if it helps, she was with me the entire time.

MARV. Good enough for me. Have a seat, Trish.

(TRISH crosses to her seat.)

TRISH. But I haven't found the alibi yet!

MARV. And what about you, Danielle? Were you with your friends at the time of the murder?

DANIELLE. Like, no way!

MARV. Then what were you doing?

DANIELLE. I was fixing my hair! In all the excitement, it had deflated a little and there's nothing more oogly than deflated hair.

LISA. *(Using her hands to show height.)* It's gotta be six inches tall, minimum.

TRISH. Eight to ten if you have enough Aqua Net.

MARV. And where were you when you were fixing your deflated hair?

DANIELLE. Like, right over there, near the dead dude.

(**DANIELLE** *points to* **KEN**.)

MARV. Which is very suspicious. Stay put.

DANIELLE. No way, dude! This is totally bogus!

(**MARV** *crosses to* **VIPER**.)

MARV. We already established you were near the victim at the time of his death and you had a motive. Everyone can see you have an issue with authority.

VIPER. I'm antiestablishment. That's part of the punk movement. You'd know that if you stepped foot outside this mainstream den of consumerism every once in a while.

MARV. And maybe those antiestablishment beliefs led you to harm Mr. Montgomery.

VIPER. It's called anarchy, man. It doesn't mean I murdered the guy.

MARV. That remains to be seen. For now, you're still a suspect, Viper.

COREY. (*Chuckles.*) His name is Viper? Like the snake?

VIPER. Like the kind of guy you don't want to mess with.

STACY. I don't think that's helping.

(**MARV** *crosses to* **STACY**.)

MARV. You know what would help? Your name.

STACY. My name is Stacy. And I already told you I didn't do it! I was right over there, trying to decide which Madonna song is my favorite when suddenly everyone started shouting and I couldn't hear the music anymore, so I turned up my stereo.

VERONICA. The only crime that girl committed is being a Madonna wannabe.

STACY. (*Proudly.*) Guilty as charged.

MARV. (*To STACY.*) I don't see any obvious motives and you were nowhere near the victim at the time of his death. I think it's safe to assume we can clear you as a suspect.

(**MARV** turns to **BLAIR** and **VERONICA** as **STACY** sits.)

Now for you two. (*To VERONICA.*) What's your name?

VERONICA. Veronica.

MARV. (*To BLAIR.*) And you're Blair...son of Ken Montgomery, right?

BLAIR. Unfortunately.

MARV. Seems to me you'd have plenty of motive to commit this crime.

BLAIR. Sure, my dad was a jerk. That doesn't mean I wanted him dead.

MARV. Your dad was more than a jerk. He was cold and cruel and took very little interest in anything other than his restaurant empire...including his only child.

BLAIR. (*Upset.*) He didn't even know I was alive! He totally ignored me...that is unless he was putting me down or forcing me to work in his corporate office. It's a nightmare being his son. A living nightmare!

VERONICA. Whoa, Blair. I never knew he was that bad.

BLAIR. I don't like talking about it. Some things are better kept hidden.

MARV. Like your plans to murder your father?

BLAIR. That is absurd! How would I do such a thing in the middle of a shopping mall?

MARV. (*To VERONICA.*) With the help of an accomplice.

VERONICA. Help Blair commit murder? I don't think so. This is a brand-new, one of a kind Gucci blazer. There's no way I'm getting blood on this baby. (*Scoffs.*) As if. That's why I stayed clear of all the chaos surrounding his dad.

MARV. Fine. Veronica can have a seat.

(**MARV** turns to **BLAIR** as **VERONICA** sits.)

But Junior here is staying put.

LISA. Actually, Blair's not a junior. He's a sophomore.

TRISH. Yeah, he's in my English class.

(**MARV** shakes his head then crosses to **COREY**.)

COREY. Hey there, Marv. How ya doin' there, buddy?

MARV. Don't mess with me, Corey. This isn't some stupid mall prank, here. This is murder.

COREY. I know I mess with you from time to time –

MARV. Try every single day!

COREY. But you can't honestly think I would kill a guy!

MARV. Your love for chaos and mayhem knows no bounds, Corey. You're staying in the lineup.

COREY. Not cool, Marv! Not cool at all!

MARV. Now what do you have there?

WHITNEY. (*Looking at exercise band in her hand.*) Oh this? This isn't mine.

(**WHITNEY** throws down the exercise band;
MARV picks it up.)

MARV. This is an exercise band and you clearly just came from an aerobics class.

WHITNEY. What gave you that idea?

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