

# THE MAN IN SEAT 24, OR THE UNINVITED GUEST

By Martin R. Collin

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## CHARACTERS

THE DIRECTOR—harried, nervous type. Blazer, turtleneck shirt, dark pants.

THE MAN-- (is the author of *Murder This Weekend*, Theodore R. Camp). Brooks Brothers look: Blue blazer, banker's striped shirt, bow tie, khaki pants. *Five minutes before the play begins, he is seated in the audience. He should be imbedded in the crowd. He has to appear, initially, as a member of the audience.*

MARTIN—Young nephew type, college educated. Married to Sandra. Collared shirt, jeans, and large wool sweater.

SANDRA—Young niece type, College educated. Married to Martin. Turtleneck shirt, cardigan sweater, jeans.

UNCLE NATE--Aunt Mimi's younger brother. 72 years of age, open cardigan sweater, baggy pants, loud shirt, suspenders, bushy eyebrows, nose hair, white socks. Light cloth raincoat and dumpy fedora hat.

JIM—Middle-aged nephew type. College educated, professional. Collared shirt, sweater vest, khaki pants. Parka/overcoat. Married to Norma.

NORMA—Middle-aged niece type. College educated, professional. Casual Talbot/Brooks Brothers look. Parka/overcoat. Married to Jim.

UNCLE ANDY--Aunt Mimi's older brother. Uncle Andy is Aunt Mimi's older brother. 90 years of age. Like his brother Nate, bushy eyebrows, nose hair, white socks. Light cloth raincoat and dumpy fedora hat. Thick glasses and cane. He wears a bad brown suit.

EVIE—is a young female Stage Manager. Excited, nervous, respectful. Conversationally casual. She is dressed in a black tee-shirt, black jeans, and black sneakers.

SECURITY GUARD #1—Female (could be played by male) needs to be in uniform: dark pants, white shirts, cell phones and holders/holsters on belts.

SECURITY GUARD #2—Female (could be played by male) needs to be in uniform: dark pants, white shirts, cell phones and holders/holsters on belts.

**In addition:** *The following characters need to be imbedded in the audience and have to appear, initially, as members of the audience.*

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM

2<sup>ND</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM

3<sup>RD</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM

## SET

Aunt Mimi's house is a modest home in a well-to-do suburban neighborhood.

Upstage left and right are two doors or archways separated by a central fireplace with a family portrait over the mantle. Hallway backing should complement these two doors or archways. In addition, there is a functioning closet door upstage right. Stage left center and stage right center place picture windows, and stage up left wall and stage up right wall, near the proscenium, place two functioning doors with hallway backing.

The furnishings are homey, warm, friendly, and used. Furnish with: Stage Right: angled sofa and easy chair separated by a small end table and lamp. Stage Left: angled two easy chairs and accent table with lamp. Place small decorative living room bench center before the fireplace.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Please feel free to use flexible casting. The Director, The Man, Evie, the security guards (two), and the (four) audience characters could be played by men or women with a few line/word changes and some pronoun adaptations.

While the show was originally written with THE MAN'S weapon of choice as a revolver, at the director's discretion, the revolver can be substituted for a weapon of your own choosing, or pantomimed, and still keep the integrity and tension of this scene alive. Adjust the text that follows to fit your revision. Have fun with it.

**THE MAN IN SEAT 24,  
OR THE UNINVITED GUEST**

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**ACT ONE**

***Curtain closed. Spot light up on THE DIRECTOR at center stage, at lip of stage.***

THE DIRECTOR: Good evening, ladies and gentleman. On behalf of \*The Little Playhouse and The Cuyahoga Community Players\* (*\*insert your own theater company here\**), I'd like to welcome you to tonight's performance of *Murder This Weekend*, by Theodore R. Camp.

Tonight, we are in the living room of the suburban home of ...

THE MAN: (*In the audience--Seat 24?*) Shut up already!

THE DIRECTOR: (*Pause. Looks out in disbelief.*) Mimi Wilson. Dear old Aunt Mimi putting the finishing touches on the annual family reunion. Matching paper plates and napkins and pitchers of orangeade. Potato salad, biscuits, baked beans and plenty of platters for the potato purveyors of today's meal time holiday bill of fare. (*Pause.*)

You know how a family reunion can be. Aunt Mimi with her mustaches, Uncle Joe's bad breath, everybody waiting around for Grandma to die, the cousins sneaking smokes behind the gar ...

THE MAN: Hey! Why don't you tell the whole story? Come on! Let's get on with it.

THE DIRECTOR: Anyway, this little get together will prove to be more than what they bargained for. (*Pause.*) Well, it sounds like you're ready.

THE MAN: Do we have to say please?

THE DIRECTOR: Just a reminder to refrain from using flash photography or recording devices during tonight's performance. Now is the time to turn off those cell phones, beepers, and pagers. And, oh yes, there will be a ten minute intermission after Act One. There. *Are we ready?*

THE MAN: (*Sing-songy annoyance.*) Yeh-ess, we are!

THE DIRECTOR: Sit back then, and enjoy the show.

*(Spot light out.)*

THE DIRECTOR: (*Grumbling. In blackout.*) Holy Moley! I've never ... in all my years ...

*(Play: one minute of recorded opening music here. Curtain rises. Lights on Living Room---Aunt Mimi's House)*

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 5

MARTIN: Everybody will be here soon. So where's Aunt Mimi? Mimi!

SANDRA: She's upstairs shaving.

MARTIN: She doesn't have to shave for us.

SANDRA: She's very sensitive about her mustache. And with the whole family getting together, and her big announcement, she wanted everything to be just right.

MARTIN: Her big announcement. We always gather for her big announcements. Fourth of July, Easter, Christmas ... Valentine's Day, for heaven's sake. Remember Valentine's Day? (*Mimicking MIMI.*) I'm taking up bowling, she says. And last Christmas (*Mimicking MIMI.*) we could all make snowmen and snowwomen in my backyard, one to represent each member of the family, and watch them all melt together as spring comes. What a glorious way to usher in the renewal of springtime ... (*End mimicking MIMI.*) Come on! And to think we actually made those snowmen ...

SANDRA: Martin, look. My Aunt Mimi is a dear old thing and everyone loves her ...

MARTIN: I love her!

SANDRA: I know. But we have to humor her.

MARTIN: And we all do!

SANDRA: But this is important to her. She said this was her most important announcement, more important than the snowmen or the bowling. She wants to tell us something. And frankly, Aunt Mimi is eighty-seven years old. The least we could do is hear her out one more time and respond as we have always done. With love and respect. My family means a lot to me, Martin, and Aunt Mimi is very special.

(*NATE enters. AUNT MIMI's younger brother.*)

NATE: Hey kids, how's it goin'?

SANDRA: Hello Nate. (*Greetings and hugs.*)

MARTIN: Natey. (*Greetings and hugs.*)

NATE: (*Takes off his coat and hangs it in closet.*) And the Wilson clan gathers again to hear of Mimi's latest pronouncements. What is it this time? (*Hand raised in newspaper headlines.*) Bowling Sweeps the Nation. Suburban Snowball Family Moves Uptown? How about Dairy Queen Sundaes Make for Healthy Skin?

THE MAN: (*In the audience.*) Hey! How 'bout, Audience Dies of Boredom? Hey, where did you go to acting school? Wal-Mart? Come on! What does she have to say already?

(*ACTORS noticeably distracted but remain in character.*)

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 6

JIM: (*Off-stage.*) Aunt Mimi? We're here!

(*JIM and NORMA enter.*)

NORMA: Yoo hoo, Mimi!!

THE MAN: (*In the audience.*) Yoo hoo? What is this yoo hoo?

(*Lights dim down as UNCLE ANDY, AUNT MIMI's older brother, arrives too with JIM and NORMA, slowly with cane, a few steps behind. FAMILY gathers and pantomimes greetings and coat taking off, still in character, talking, shaking hands, kissing, sitting-, -while stage right, off-stage but visible to the audience, in spotlight THE DIRECTOR and Stage Manager [EVIE] confer as if they are back stage.*)

THE DIRECTOR: Hey Evie, who the heck is that Yoo-Hoo guy out there?

EVIE: (*With headphones, clipboard/pencil.*) I don't know boss, but I tell you one thing: he's a pain in my ...

THE DIRECTOR: Call Security.

EVIE: Call Security? You gonna eject him from the show in the middle of the act? You can't do that boss; he's near the front of the house. It could get worse. Remember those two drunks last summer?

THE DIRECTOR: That's what I'm afraid of. (*Pause.*) Okay. Call Security and tell them to watch him. Just have them sit on the aisle and keep an eye on him.

EVIE: Will do.

(*Spotlight out. Stage lights come up again on pantomime family schmoozing. Pantomiming becomes show again. THE DIRECTOR and EVIE depart in darkness.*)

UNCLE ANDY: (*Slowly and painfully seated.*) So I get off the train and who's standing there? Jimmy and Norma. And here we are.

NORMA: And we come up behind him, and we pinch him ...

UNCLE ANDY: Dolly, I ain't been pinched like that in years.

JIM: So, where's the lady of the hour? (*Calls upstairs.*) Aunt Mimi, get down here!

NATE: (*Calls upstairs.*) Mimi. I'm getting hungry. (*To SANDRA.*) Let's go out to the kitchen. I hope she made soup.

SANDRA: Let's go. (*Turns to OTHERS as SHE's leaving*) She's shaving.

(*TWO SECURITY GUARDS move into the house and stand on the aisle near THE MAN. [Reserving seats would be too obvious. You need THE MAN imbedded in the crowd]. THE MAN has to appear, initially, as a member of the audience.*)

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 7

THE MAN: Well, look who's here, The Office of Homeland Security.

UNCLE ANDY: Natey, go up and get her.

NATE: (*Turns back. Does not go with SANDRA.*) Why should I go up and get her?

UNCLE ANDY: Because I told you to, that's why.

NATE: I'm not going. You get her.

UNCLE ANDY: (*Insisting.*) You get her.

NATE: I always have to get her.

UNCLE ANDY: You do not.

NATE: I do too.

UNCLE ANDY: Oh please.

SANDRA: (*Amused. Re-enters with bowl of soup, napkin, and a spoon.*)

Boys, boys, you're still fighting like you are fourteen years old.

UNCLE ANDY: Well, I *am* older, and you got to do what I say.

NATE: Mom's been dead since 1962. Who are you going to run to you big crybaby?

UNCLE ANDY: Who you calling a crybaby?

NORMA: Look, I'll go get her.

UNCLE ANDY: (*To NORMA.*) Dolly, make the big lummox go. You don't have to go.

THE MAN: Listen, you want I should go? I could send one of these Mounties, if you like.

(*ACTORS noticeably distracted but remain in character.*)

JIM: Natey, Andy. Stop it. We are all here for the same reason. We love your sister Mimi more than all the chocolate milkshakes in Boston, Massachusetts. We are not here to fight. We are here to eat, and to laugh, and to ...

UNCLE ANDY: Jimmy, you are right. I'm sorry. I really am.

NATE: Me too. (*Yells to offstage.*) Mimi, get your big, fat pastrami on rye down here right now.

UNCLE ANDY: That's no way to talk to your sister.

NATE: Give me a break. She's your sister too. What would you say, old wise one?

UNCLE ANDY: (*Yells to offstage.*) Mimi, *please* get your big, fat pastrami on rye down here right now.

(*TWO SECURITY GUARDS unobtrusively exit the house.*)

SANDRA: You know, this soup is pretty good. It's hot, though ...

NATE: Ooooooooh. Good soup. I'm going to ...

UNCLE ANDY: Suit. You like this suit? I bought this suit ...

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 8

NATE: Not suit. Soup, you moron. Good Soup.

UNCLE ANDY: Down on Public Square ... at ...

NATE: Mimi's soup!

SANDRA: Andy, it's a great soup.

UNCLE ANDY: I bought it in brown, and it also comes in a green and a nice dark blue ...

MARTIN: (*interrupting and pointing at NORMA's soup bowl.*) Hey, that's some sharp suit. Andy, how about we get something to eat? Would you like some soup?

UNCLE ANDY: (*A beat.*) Soup? Mimi's soup? You know, I could go for a good bowl of soup. Mimi's soup?

(*MARTIN leads UNCLE ANDY off to the kitchen.*)

NATE: (*to NORMA and SANDRA, pointing to MARTIN*) I knew all that college would pay off.

SANDRA: Four years of waiting tables. I am sure he could find a bowl of soup for his uncle. He was a classics major.

THE MAN: At least he has a future. The rest of you should be so lucky.

(*ACTORS again noticeably distracted but remain in character.*)

JIM: (*Pause.*) So, where's Mimi?

NORMA: I can't believe the woman of the hour has ditched us.

SANDRA: Her great announcement ...

JIM: Her special day ...

NATE: Mimi, it is always something with that Mimi. I remember when we were kids: always the grand entrance, always the special effects, always the preliminary bouts before the main event, the background music, the bottle rockets and the big balloons.

NORMA: Are you sure? Are you saying she's upstairs? She invited us over and said ...

SANDRA: Maybe we should check on her. I'm getting worried ...

NATE: Listen Dolly, it's Mimi. She's been pulling this kind of stunt for years. If you want, I'll go get her.

NORMA: It's okay, Natey. Jim, you go get her.

JIM: Okay ...

THE MAN: You want I should go?

(*ACTORS again noticeably distracted but remain in character. A beat. UNCLE ANDY enters from kitchen with MARTIN. HE is carrying a spoon and a napkin and moves to and sits in a chair. MARTIN, with bowl of MIMI's soup, pulls up a tv table so UNCLE ANDY can eat.*)

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 9

MARTIN: (*Sensing the distracted ACTORS plight—not in character.*)  
Something wrong?

THE MAN: What? Are you here to save the day?

(*ACTORS again noticeably distracted but remain in character. Awkward pause as:*)

UNCLE ANDY: (*Adjusting himself, napkin, spoon tastes the soup. Coughs, gags, sputters.*) Soup? You call this soup? You gotta be kiddin' me. This tastes like, like, like ... a suit ...

NATE: (*Irritated. Annoyed.*) Yeah, like a filthy brown suit you bought down on Public Square ...

(*FAMILY comes to UNCLE ANDY's rescue. THEY wipe him off. Calm him down. UNCLE ANDY gets up with assistance from FAMILY.*)

UNCLE ANDY: What are you ...? Mimi! Mimi, you call this soup?

NATE: Andy, sit down.

UNCLE ANDY: Sit down yourself, Natey. Maybe you should get your own bowl of soup. Mimi! Mimi ...! (*Walks to window Stage Right, opens the window, and dumps the soup outside.*)

NATE: Andy, please sit down. You're an old man.

UNCLE ANDY: I'm not an old man.

NATE: Yes, you are an old man.

NORMA: Jim, go get Aunt Mimi.

JIM: Okay. (*Exits though upstage archway.*)

UNCLE ANDY: I'm not an old man. You sir, are an old man. A fossil. You are a fossil. Mimi, *what in the name of a baked potato kind of soup is this?*

SANDRA: Please sit down, Andy.

UNCLE ANDY: She almost killed me! My own sister! That soup probably killed that grass out there and the azalea bush too.

NORMA: Andy relax.

UNCLE ANDY: I am relaxed. I wanted soup, I don't get soup. The grass got soup. The azalea got soup ...

NATE: Relax, relax, relax you moron. Sit down. You got blood pressure, you spilled the soup all over Mimi's carpet.

SANDRA: It's okay, Andy. It's okay.

THE MAN: Listen, I know where you can get a suit ...

(*ACTORS again noticeably distracted but remain in character. As the FAMILY tends to UNCLE ANDY, JIM returns through the archway and whispers to NORMA.*)

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 10

NORMA: (*Upset.*) What do you mean she's not there?

JIM: She's not there. I looked. I was upstairs, I looked outside. I went out to the garage, down to the basement ...

MARTIN: Who's not there?

NATE: Mimi?

JIM: Yeah, Mimi. I can't find her. I looked and ...

MARTIN: I'll go. What do you mean you can't find her?

JIM: She's not here.

UNCLE ANDY: Mimi's not here? Of course, she's here. She called me up. She invited me ...

SANDRA: Maybe we should call somebody.

MARTIN: Who are we going to call?

UNCLE ANDY: (*Yells out.*) MIMI?

SANDRA: A neighbor? A friend? Who lives next door?

NATE: Andy, calm down. Mimi's gone. We'll find her.

UNCLE ANDY: She's not gone. She's here. Don't be an idiot, Natey. You know she's here.

THE MAN: (*Getting up. Rising out of his theatre seat.*) All right. All right ...

*(ACTORS again noticeably distracted. This time, however, the action of the play on stage stops.)*

*(Walks out of the audience.)* We're through killing people with suits.  
*(A beat.)* I mean soup. This is all wrong. All wrong.

*(THE MAN walks out of the audience and gets up to center stage. Takes Control.)*

UNCLE ANDY: *(No longer in character.)* Wait a minute, wait a minute ...

NATE: *(No longer in character.)* Sir, you just can't come up on sta ...

THE MAN: I just did! Because *(Pause.)* we need to talk. *(Pulls out revolver.)*

***[While the show was originally written with THE MAN'S weapon of choice as a revolver, at the director's discretion, the revolver can be substituted for a weapon of your own choosing, or pantomimed, and still keep the integrity and tension of this scene alive. Adjust the text that follows to fit your revision. Have fun with it.]***

*(Pantomime pandemonium as THE MAN takes the ACTORS and the set hostage while stage right, off-stage, but visible to the audience, in spotlight THE DIRECTOR and Stage Manager (EVIE) confer as if they are back stage. All ACTORS are now no longer in character.)*

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 11

THE DIRECTOR: Evie, what's going on out there?

EVIE: He's out there.

THE DIRECTOR: What?

EVIE: Boss, he's on stage.

THE DIRECTOR: Who's on stage?

EVIE: The Yoo-Hoo guy.

THE DIRECTOR: No. He can't come up on sta ...

EVIE: Boss, he's hijacking your play (*Pause.*) with a gun!

THE DIRECTOR: Evie, noooooooo ...

EVIE: The Yoo Hoo guy is on stage with a gun.

THE DIRECTOR: Where's Security?

EVIE: They followed him up on stage ...

THE DIRECTOR: They what? Let me see. (*Peers out past EVIE to the hostage situation.*) They didn't stop him?

EVIE: I told them to keep an eye on him ...

THE DIRECTOR: Holy Moley, what am I ...? (*Breaks through the "backstage area/spot light" and enters the action of the play. Pantomime discussion/hostage taking ends.*) Sir ...

THE MAN: (*Lecturing the ACTORS and SECURITY GUARDS.*) You've got this all wrong, all wrong, do you understand me? Every last one of you—you just don't know what's ... who are you?

THE DIRECTOR: Sir, I am the director of this play, and I am going to have to ask you to leave. We have a show ...

THE MAN: You're just the guy I want to talk to. Can we try this again, from the top?

THE DIRECTOR: Excuse me? Sir ...

THE MAN: Can we try this again, from the top? You see, there are some things. Your cast and I have been talking, discussing, analyzing, and

...

THE DIRECTOR: What? Are you out of your mind? You can't be serious. You can't just stop a show while it is going on. This is not a rehearsal. This is an actual show. We have an audience, we have ...

THE MAN: I am very serious. (*Turns to the audience.*) Please accept my apologies folks. (*Turns back to THE DIRECTOR and the CAST.*) Do you realize what you've done? You have ruined this play. You have wasted these peoples' money. You have embarrassed yourselves. You've wasted your time. Oscar, don't get wild with me. You've wasted your lives.

UNCLE ANDY: Sir ...

THE MAN: Call the box office; you are giving back every red cent you stole from these good people tonight. Unless ... Can we try this again, from the top? There are just little things.

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THE DIRECTOR: Look, we can get you some help. Let's go for a walk.

We can talk about the show, your vision of the show ...

THE MAN: Help? I'm not the one who ...

NORMA: Sir, can we get you a cup of coffee?

UNCLE ANDY: Please, sir ...

THE MAN: Look here you. We are going to have to start at the beginning. Get down on your knees and beg for a part. You're one of the things we can fix.

UNCLE ANDY: I ... I ... What am I? What am I suppose to ...?

THE MAN: Mother of Sophocles! What am I supposed to do he asks?

SANDRA: Sir ... come on ...

UNCLE ANDY: I really don't know ...

THE MAN: GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES!

UNCLE ANDY: (*Gets down on his knees.*) Please. I ...

THE MAN: Holy Aeschylus! Act one, scene one. You're an actor? Start acting.

UNCLE ANDY: But I ...

THE MAN: This is your audition. Showtime.

JIM: Wait a minute!

THE MAN: (*To JIM.*) Oh ho? Shut up you. You'll have your chance to audition. (*Turns to UNCLE ANDY.*) Give me your audition monologue. Give me Act One. And if you destroy and insult a great playwright, I'll kill you right here.

THE DIRECTOR: (*Shrugs his shoulders. Pause.*) Go ahead. Give it your best shot. (*Pause.*) Sorry.

NATE: (*A Beat.*) Now, that was in really poor taste.

THE DIRECTOR: I know!

THE MAN: Finally, I'm not alone. Thank you. Thank you. (*Shakes NATE's hand.*) Someone who understands bad taste. (*Pause.*) And speaking of bad taste, let's go, Barrymore.

UNCLE ANDY: Well I ...

THE MAN: I am not going to ask you again. Mr. Director, give him some direction. Please.

(*THE DIRECTOR nods.*)

UNCLE ANDY: (*As Shakespeare's Henry IV.*)

So shaken as we are, so wan with care,  
Find we a time for frighten peace to pant,  
And breathe short-winded accents of new broils  
To be commenced in stronds afar remote:  
No more the thirsty entrance of this soil  
Shall daub her lips with her own children's blood;  
No more shall..

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 13

THE MAN: Please *no more!* You got that right, Henry Bolingbroke. Bill? Can you hear me, Bill? I am filling the River Avon with my tears here, Bill. Who's next? Who wants a part?

UNCLE ANDY: But I ...

THE MAN: (*Fake polite sing-songy voice.*) Thank you for your time, sir. We really appreciate you coming out here today. We'll be posting call-back times, let me see now, hmmm ... how about, never? (*A beat.*) Who's next?

NORMA: Wait a minute. Wait a minute right there ...

THE MAN: (*To NORMA.*) You want to act? Splendid. Belle of the Ball, you're next. Down on your knees, kind lady. And you (*To UNCLE ANDY.*) get in that closet. (*Points with revolver.*) For heaven's sake, practice your lines. Project. Enunciate. Make a statement.

UNCLE ANDY: But ...

THE MAN: (*Pointing revolver and advancing toward UNCLE ANDY.*) No buts. Get in the closet. Follow directions. Nobody follows the directions. Nobody follows the script. (*To THE DIRECTOR.*) Did you even *work* with these people?

(*UNCLE ANDY looks to THE DIRECTOR, who nods, acquiesces, and then proceeds to open the door and get in the closet. THE MAN checks the closet door and returns.*)

(*To NORMA.*) Now then, please forgive me. Sorry for the interruption. Details to take care of, you understand. Now, please proceed. Your monologue? Your audition piece?

THE DIRECTOR: (*Interrupting.*) Sir, we can't do this. We are going to have to ask you ... Security?

(*THE DIRECTOR motions to SECURITY GUARDS to step in and intervene. SECURITY GUARDS begin to walk toward THE MAN in a non-threatening assisting way.*)

THE MAN: (*To THE DIRECTOR.*) What? You called in the cavalry and the Pacific Fleet on me? (*Pointing revolver at SECURITY GUARDS.*) Listen Colonel Sanders and Sergeant Friday, I'm directing this show now. You work for me. And if you don't want to find out about the health insurance and the workmen's compensation package, you stand over there.

(*SECURITY GUARDS take one step closer to THE MAN.*)

Listen, Mister Director, call off your dogs. Who do I look like, the daughter of Aristophanes?

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 14

(*SECURITY GUARDS back off, apologetic, and look to THE DIRECTOR.*)

MARTIN: I protest.

JIM: Wait a minute, kid.

MARTIN: No. Really. This has to stop. This is ...

THE MAN: (*Points the revolver at MARTIN.*) Protest all you want. Join the union. Get a picket sign. Take a number, kid. She's first. You'll all get your turn. She's first. You will *all* get your turn. Good lady?

NORMA: What am I suppose to ...

THE MAN: A born protester ... (*Sings. Begins insincere protest march.*)  
We shall overcome ...  
We shall overcome ...

SANDRA: You don't have to do anything ...

THE MAN: (*Still singing.*) We shall overcome ... (*Singing abruptly stops.*)  
This is your audition, ma'am. If you want to be in the next scene (*Points the revolver at NORMA.*), give me a great performance. And you (*To SANDRA.*), you're really not a team player, are you?

SANDRA: What do you ...?

THE MAN: Listen, I saw your performance tonight. I was sitting right there in the audience. You were wretched. A hideous rash. A filthy band-aid. A disgrace. You might have made a great Dolly Levi when you were a ninth grader at Roxboro Junior High School, but honey, take it from me. Young Horace Vandergelder moved on, and so should you.

SANDRA: (*Verge of tears.*) Well, I ...

NATE: Don't, honey ...

THE MAN: Nice pout. Expressive face. Animated. Intense. The visage of broken dreams and disappointment.

NORMA: Listen sir ...

THE MAN: (*To NORMA.*) We'll get to you. Lady, I know ...

JIM: I think we have had enough ...

THE MAN: I agree with you. You are correct! (*To THE DIRECTOR.*) Listen, call Alistair Cook. This woman (*Points revolver at SANDRA.*) needs The Masterpiece Toilet contract. Madame, right this way. (*Dramatically leads SANDRA and points to the closet.*) You will be working with a team of unknowns and has-beens, but you should feel right at home.

THE DIRECTOR: Sir, are you finished?

THE MAN: No, we're not finished. (*THE MAN closes the closet door with SANDRA inside. SHE joins UNCLE ANDY.*) This woman wants to be auditioned next. And audition, we shall. Next it is. Madame ...

NORMA: I'm not really sure what you ...

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 15

THE MAN: What do you want, madame? Do you want to just expire in obscurity in this ten-cent production, or do you want to show this audience what you are really made of?

JIM: Sir, we just want to go home. I'm sorry you didn't like the play ...

THE MAN: (*Agitated.*) Not like the play? Not like the play, you say ...

JIM: Sir, calm down, sir. All we want to do is get off this stage. Get you some help. Go home ...

THE MAN: Get me some help? I'm giving you an opportunity. I'm giving you a chance ...

MARTIN: You're giving me a migraine.

THE DIRECTOR: You are scaring us sir ... and you are scaring the folks in the house.

THE MAN: Not like the play ... Can you imagine ...? Don't you people see? You have an opportunity here. A chance. This isn't just a play in some cornpone theatre in the middle of a field in the middle of the week in the middle of your life. This is ...

NORMA: Fine. (*A pause.*) I'll go.

MARTIN: You don't have to do this ...

NATE: Really, no ...

JIM: Wait ...

NORMA: No. It's time. I'm ready.

THE MAN: Madame, I am all ears. Please ...

NORMA: (*Takes a breath. As Shakespeare's Lady Macbeth.*)

He brings great news, the raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. Come you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe, top-full  
Of direst cruelty!

(*ALL noticeably moved by her powerful emotion.*)

THE MAN: Madame, bravo. That was acting. Such bile, such vinegar, such evil. Wow! Was that directed at me? Come on, tell me? Was I your muse? Do I anger you? Did I get under you skin? You can't leave, I need you. (*As Macbeth.*) We will speak further.

THE DIRECTOR: What ...?

THE MAN: (*To THE DIRECTOR.*) You have really cast this woman incorrectly, Zebco. When these auditions are finished, you and I are going to sit down, go over this play, and put these folks where they need to be. Use their strengths, support or hide their weaknesses, and not parade them around the stage like our dirty laundry flapping in the breeze. We can fix this. Not like the play? Do you even know this play? (*To NORMA.*) Madame, to the closet. You have just raised

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the quality of my closet company five hundred percent. Bravo!  
Bravo!

*(Now HE acts out his own Lady Macbeth speech.)*

Yet I do fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way.

*(Ends Lady Macbeth speech.)*

Right this way please. We need to rehearse and we are wasting way too much time here.

*(Points the revolver at NORMA and leads her dramatically to the closet door.)*

You there *(To one of the SECURITY GUARDS)*, open the door for a lady. For a star.

*(The SECURITY GUARD opens the door, NORMA enters the closet, joins the OTHERS, and the SECURITY GUARD closes the door.)*

MARTIN: *(Rushes toward the closet door to try and free the OTHERS.)*  
You can't do this. I am not going to stand here anymore. Where do you get off?

JIM: Kid ...

*(SECURITY GUARDS stop MARTIN.)*

THE MAN: Glory be, it's the lost and lonely son of Popeye The Sailor man. It's all I can stands I can't stans no more? Very heroic. I am impressed with your gumption. *(To NATE.)* This boy's got gumption, Gramps. *(TO MARTIN.)* Stand back from that door. If you want to audition, fine, it's your turn. Just say so ...

MARTIN: I don't want to audition. You're going to let these people go.

THE MAN: Like I said before, a born protester. *(Sings.)* When Israel was in Egypt's land, let my people go ...

NATE: Okay mister ...

THE MAN: No, we are going to let the boy audition. He has protested from the first. I like his gumption. It's his time to talk. You have the floor, young man. You have the stage. You have the microphone. It's time for an old fogie like me to take a backseat and let ...

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 17

NATE: (*Angry.*) *Stop already.* What is it you want? You want attention? You got it, sir. You want to lock us in the closet? Ha, ha, ha! You got it, sir. You want to tell us how to do this show? You got it, sir. You want to make an idiot out of the director? You got it, sir. You want to make an idiot out of me? You got it, sir. *You want to kill me? You want to kill the kid? You want to kill us? You got that too.* You have a captive audience here, sir. Lots of witnesses. Tell us what you want. Nobody is sending you to the backseat. You, sir, are the one who has the floor. You sir, are in the driver's seat. You have the best seat in the house. Please, tell us what you want.

THE MAN: I was (*Pause.*) mistaken! You sir, are the one with gumption. Such emotion, such a slice of life. Your background's in improv, I guess. Your reaction to me and the situation I've presented to you on the spot was (*A beat.*) natural, fluid, and the building of emotion was powerful (*Mimicing NATE.*) : *You want to make an idiot out of the director? You got it, sir. You want to make an idiot out of me? You got it, sir. You want to kill me? You want to kill the kid? You want to kill us? You got that too.* Powerful. I am going to tell you what I want. First, this boy is going to audition. Second, that young man is going to audition (*Points to JIM.*). And finally, you're going to audition. I am on a mission. I can fix this show. Son?

MARTIN: And if I say, no?

THE MAN: (*Points the revolver at MARTIN.*) I like your gumption, kid. But if I have to do the show without you, I guess we will.

(*THE DIRECTOR nods and silently pleads with MARTIN to do as THE MAN directs.*)

Perhaps you should listen to direction, kid.

MARTIN: (*Acquiesces. As Shakespeare's Prince Hal in Henry IV, Part One.*) And I will call him to so strict account,  
That he shall render every glory up,  
Yea, even the slightest worship of his time,  
Or I will tear the reckoning from his heart.  
This, in the name of God, I promise here:  
The which if He be pleased I shall perform,  
I do beseech your majesty may salve  
The long-grown wounds of my intemperance:  
If not, the end of life cancels all bands;  
And I will die a hundred thousand deaths  
Ere break the smallest parcel of this vow.

(*ALL noticeably moved by his powerful emotion.*)

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 18

THE MAN: (*Cupped hand, polite theatre clapping. Toned down, respectful.*) Bravo. Bravo. Son, you nailed that speech. That was beautiful. You, young man, have a part in this show.

MARTIN: I know, in the closet. (*Moves to closet*)

THE MAN: (*Frustrated. Turns to THE DIRECTOR.*) It's gotta be you. You do have some talented folks here. I've heard 'em. I first heard them bad, and now I've heard 'em good. I was sitting right there. You got a nice little theatre. You got plenty of good folks out in the audience. It's got to be you.

THE DIRECTOR: Now, wait a minute ...

THE MAN: Defensive?

THE DIRECTOR: (*Increasingly agitated.*) Who the ...?

THE MAN: Yes? Afraid of a little criticism?

THE DIRECTOR: (*Increasingly agitated.*) You walk into this theatre threatening us with a gun during a performance and jump up on this stage like a deranged cowboy in a bad western ...

(*This argument/song between THE MAN and THE DIRECTOR performed simultaneously.*)

THE MAN: (*Sings.*) Home, home on da range ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Increasingly agitated.*) Then, you have the nerve to criticize the show and to force these actors to audition for you at the end of a gun barrel ...

THE MAN: (*Sings.*) Where the deer and the antelope play ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Increasingly agitated.*) You badger and harass people and lock them in a closet.

THE MAN: (*Sings.*) Where seldom is heard ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Increasingly agitated.*) And take the audience, for gosh sakes, hostage.

THE MAN: (*Sings.*) A discouraging word ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Increasingly agitated.*) Then, you have the moxie to point the finger at me ...

THE MAN: (*Sings.*) And the skies are not cloudy all day.

(*End simultaneous argument/song.*)

THE DIRECTOR: Telling me it's my fault that the play is lousy.

THE MAN: Lousy? Not like the play? I've never said ...

THE DIRECTOR: Yes, you ...

THE MAN: No. I never ...

NATE: (*Approaching/confronting THE MAN.*) Okay mister, I've had enough of this. You leave these kids alone. You give me that gun and shut your ...

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 19

*(Blackout.)*

THE MAN: Why you never ...

*(Woman screams. Sounds of struggle. Three gun shots in blackout— Bam, bam-bam. Dead silence. Ad libbed panicked pandemonium from cast and crew until the end of the act.)*

THE DIRECTOR: *(Panic.)* Where are the lights? Evie, call the booth, get the lights. Evie, get the lights on!

EVIE: *(Panicked.)* Yeah. Yeah, I'm working on it. *(Exits.)*

THE DIRECTOR: Are you okay? Is everyone okay? *(Pause.)* Evie, are you okay? *(Longer pause.)* Evie?

*(Silence.)*

EVIE?

*(Silence.)*

Evie?

EVIE: *(From off stage)* I'm okay.

*(Stage lights come up on stage and reveal THE MAN, center stage, dead, gun shots to the chest-bloody shirt. Closet has emptied out its inhabitants. All of the ACTORS are now speaking out of their character roles. Run the following conversation overlapped and panicked fast.)*

SANDRA: Oh my ... Oh my ... Oh my ... Oh my ...

NORMA: Who is he?

SANDRA: Well, I don't know. I don't know ...

JIM: Call 911.

MARTIN: *(Kneels down beside the body.)* I've never seen him before ...

SANDRA: *(Hysterical.)* Will somebody please call 911?

NATE: Put some pressure on the wound.

UNCLE ANDY: *(Gives handkerchief to MARTIN.)* Here take this ...

MARTIN: What am I suppose to ...?

NATE: This is not going to work.

SANDRA: He's dead. You idiot. He's dead.

NORMA: Who is he?

JIM: Look, I've never seen him around here ... check his pockets ...

UNCLE ANDY: Yeah, his wallet ...

MARTIN: How am I suppose to ...? *(Begins slowly and painfully searching THE MAN's pockets.)*

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 20

UNCLE ANDY: Well, we can't go on now.

JIM: That's obvious. We're already on.

*(ACTORS stare out at the audience.)*

NORMA: Yeah, how are we ...?

NATE: Wait a minute ...

MARTIN: Here ... *(Digs out wallet from THE MAN's pocket and begins to open it.)*

*(End overlapped panicked fast conversation. EVIE enters from backstage and joins the group.)*

UNCLE ANDY: What do you got, kid?

*(THE DIRECTOR grabs the wallet from MARTIN's hand.)*

MARTIN: Hey, wait a min ...

THE DIRECTOR: Excuse me ... *(To get attention.)* EXCUSE ME!

*(ACTORS huddle. Mime eight or nine second concerned emotional conversation. THE DIRECTOR settles the CAST down and takes control. THE DIRECTOR walks center stage to the apron's lip. Speaks out into the audience.)*

Security, call the Police, 911, and the rescue squad... now...

*(One SECURITY GUARD leaves.)*

Excuse me. Ladies and gentlemen. Don't get up sir.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: What do you mean? This show is over ...

THE DIRECTOR: Sir! Just a moment. We have a real problem here.

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: No, *you have* a real problem here.

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And I have to go. Go the Ladies' room.

And there are others, I'm sure ...

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I have to go too.

THE DIRECTOR: I'm sorry ma'am. Evie, turn up the house lights.

*(Lights up.)* I uh ... I uh ... Excuse me, ma'am ... uh, you are going to have to sit down in your seat again.

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Oh, come on ...

THE DIRECTOR: As a matter of fact, I am going to have to ask you all to stay right here, in the theatre, until the police arrive.

*(A nervous silence as THE DIRECTOR confers with EVIE.)*

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Feel free to go the restrooms. You're right, ma'am. I'm really sorry. But please don't leave the theatre. Security, make sure that no one leaves the theatre.

*(THE DIRECTOR turns from the audience and walks upstage.)*

*(Grumbles to himself.)* Who is he?

*(Blackout. Curtain.)*

**END OF ACT ONE.**

Do Not Copy

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**INTERMISSION**

During the Intermission, SECURITY GUARDS take up their posts by the theatre exits.

All audience implanted actors need to leave the auditorium/lobby area during the intermission.

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### ACT TWO

**Sound effect: ambulance driving away, siren, and then fade out. Curtain closed. Spot light up on SECURITY GUARD #1 on cell phone at center stage at lip of stage. The SECURITY GUARD #2 stands near the entrance to the house.**

SECURITY GUARD #1: (*Into phone.*) Yes, the ambulance just left and took the deceased. Yes, we are waiting for them; I got in touch through the dispatcher. No, the crime scene is the same, as we left it, minus the deceased, and I have the acting company and the crew assembled. Okay, I'll let him know. Okay. Thanks. Bye. (*To other SECURITY GUARD.*) Would you wait out front? Show them in?  
SECURITY GUARD #2: Yep. Okay. (*Leaves.*)

(*Spot light out. Curtain opens. When the curtain opens, the furnishings in Aunt Mimi's living room are just how we left it at the end of Act One. The body of THE MAN has been removed and the actors, THE DIRECTOR, and EVIE are situated as follows: JIM and MARTIN are seated stage right on sofa. EVIE is seated Stage Right Center in chair. The fireplace bench has been pulled down stage to fill the center gap between the stage right and stage left seatings. SANDRA and NORMA sit on this bench. UNCLE ANDY is seated in the Stage Left center chair. NATE is standing behind the Stage Left chair. THE DIRECTOR is pacing center stage in front of the actors when the SECURITY GUARD #1 passes through the curtain line, whispers in his ear. All audience-implanted actors are back in their seats. There is a nervous and tense panic on stage and THE DIRECTOR's pacing and the SECURITY GUARD #1's update do little to ease this tension.*)

THE DIRECTOR: (*To the audience.*) Okay, the police are on their way ...

SANDRA: Thank God! How are ...?

THE DIRECTOR: But they're going to be late ...

EVIE: Late?

UNCLE ANDY: What do you mean they're going to be late?

MARTIN: What are we going to do?

SECURITY GUARD #1: There was an accident ...

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: But what about our little accident?

SECURITY GUARD #1: Out on the highway ...

THE DIRECTOR: And so we are going to have to sit tight until ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: (*Increasing frustration.*) Sit tight?  
You're telling me to sit tight?

JIM: Ma'am, please ...

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3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: (*Frustrated.*) Blood. Bullets flying! Blackout! Screaming ambulance, security guard sending me back to my seat after I go wee wee like I'm in fourth grade, and you're telling me to sit tight?

NATE: Listen, we're all in this together, and we need to stick together ...

NORMA: Please, ma'am. You have to calm down.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And a real live dead jerk laying in a pool of blood in the middle of your carpet at center stage! You couldn't have written this if you tried.

THE DIRECTOR: (*To the audience.*) Listen, we're doing what we can. The police are delayed because of an accident out on the highway. Traffic is backed up, and they know about our little accident ...

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Can I turn my cell phone back on? If I'm going to be late, I need to call my son ...

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Yeah ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Hey, that's right ...

THE DIRECTOR: Yes, you can turn on your cell phone. We are going to be a while. You can *all* turn on your cell phones. Ma'am, call your son. It's okay.

*(JIM, MARTIN, SANDRA, NORMA, UNCLE ANDY, NATE, AND SECURITY GUARD #1, [noticeably and humorously last], all produce cell phones from their pockets and turn them on at the same time. THEY all begin adlibbed, talking all at once. After the greeting and a few, "can you believe it-I'm stuck in the theater in a murder, yeah pool of blood, gross", lights dim on the stage and these folks pantomime their conversations. Meanwhile, THE DIRECTOR and EVIE hold a private conversation created in a new pool of light.)*

EVIE: What the heck are we gonna do now, boss?

THE DIRECTOR: I don't know. Sit tight? I don't know ...

EVIE: I thought you were going to have a riot on your hands when Madam Fourth Grade Wee Wee was told that she would have to sit tight.

THE DIRECTOR: Listen, I'm doing improv here. Drama School? Forget it. Holy Moley. Like that guy said, I couldn't have written this if I tried.

EVIE: Boss ...

THE DIRECTOR: Look, they don't have a choice, and we don't have a choice. When the police get here, I am just going to hand this big pile of fish over to them and let them sort through the mess ...

EVIE: What about Security?

THE DIRECTOR: Sheesh Evie, don't talk to me about Security. (*Points to SECURITY GUARD #1 on stage on phone.*) They're no help.

## The Man in Seat 24, or The Uninvited Guest – Page 24

SECURITY GUARD #1: (*Into phone.*) Pat, just preheat the oven to 350 and put the pizza in there ...

EVIE: Boss ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Talking to himself, pacing, planning, aloud.*) And we're going to need to find that gun ...

SECURITY GUARD #1: (*Into phone.*) And make sure you take off the plastic bag. And use the center rack ...

EVIE: Boss ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Talking to himself pacing, planning, aloud.*) And we're going to need to get these people out of here ...

SECURITY GUARD #1: (*Into phone.*) The center rack. For crying out loud, Pat ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Talking to himself, pacing, planning, aloud.*) And the body's been moved ... and the shooter? Where the heck is *that* guy?

EVIE: Boss, what did you get out of the other guy's pocket? What's in the wallet? Who is *this* guy?

THE DIRECTOR: (*Takes the wallet out of his own pocket.*) Evie, you are not going to believe who this guy is.

EVIE: What do you mean?

THE DIRECTOR: (*Rifles and digs through the wallet. Produces driver's license.*) I mean there are receipts in this wallet, a couple of photos, and a credit card or two, and this driver's license. Here, look at this.

EVIE: (*Reads.*) Theodore R. Camp. Theodore R. Camp?

THE DIRECTOR: Yeah, Theodore R. Camp. Ring a bell with you? Ever heard of him?

EVIE: Mr. Camp? Boss?

THE DIRECTOR: Theodore R. Camp. *Murder This Weekend?* The play. The play. The play that's on stage. Right now.

EVIE: The play?

THE DIRECTOR: Evie! (*Introduction/greeting voice from opening.*) Good evening, ladies and gentleman. On behalf of \*The Little Playhouse and The Cuyahoga Community Players\* (*\*insert your own theater company here\**), I'd like to welcome you to tonight's performance of *Murder This Weekend*, by Theodore R. Camp. Tonight, we are in the living room of the suburban home of ...

EVIE: Oh no! That guy was the writer?

THE DIRECTOR: The dead writer. He got shot right in the middle of his own show.

EVIE: Well, he walked right up on stage ...

THE DIRECTOR: Evie? The guy got shot in the middle of his own show ... in the middle of *my* show.

EVIE: Yeah, but why did he come up on stage?

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THE DIRECTOR: That, Evie, is the question of the hour. You have a future as a detective or at least as a director. Why *did* he come up on stage? He wrecked the show.

EVIE: Oh man, he really didn't like the show. He was talking the whole time. Interrupting the show, the actors. (*Pause.*) And he got shot in the chest ...

THE DIRECTOR: (*Winces.*) Evie? (*Pause.*) Let's ask around ...

EVIE: Ask around?

THE DIRECTOR: Yeah, ask around. Let's see what we can find out before the police arrive.

EVIE: I don't think we ought to mess ...

THE DIRECTOR: Mess? Evie, do you understand the mess we're already in?

EVIE: Well, I ...

THE DIRECTOR: Who do you think is going to come to this show tomorrow night? As of tonight, we're out of a job. Wait until they (*Points to the ACTORS on stage.*) figure this out. But that is really the small potato at this carnival. And here is the big question, perhaps the most relevant question, the most pertinent and topical inquiry of all this evening: How are we getting out of this theatre?

EVIE: Out of the theatre?

THE DIRECTOR: There's a killer in this theatre, Evie, a raving lunatic who would shoot up a stage, and I am not leaving here the way that Mister Theodore R. Camp left this theatre. I would like to drive home myself in my own Subaru. I don't want the ambulance with the little siren flashing. I want to have a little dinner and a small cup of cocoa and put on my Batman pajamas and go to sleep in my own bed. I thought Camp was nuts, planting himself in the audience and hijacking this show with a gun, but there is somebody else out there this evening, and Evie, I need to find him. (*To the ACTORS and the audience.*) May I have your attention please? Please. Can I have your attention?

(*All of the ACTORS wrap up their cell phone conversations [ad libbed: "gotta go, yeah, they're calling us back, later"] and the light changes back to the previous setting.*)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your patience. This is not how I wanted this evening to turn out, and please accept my apologies for any inconvenience ...

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Listen, you don't need to apologize, a nut ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Yes, he does need to apol ...

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: ... goes berserk in a theatre ...

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3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: ... ogize, and when do we get to go home?

THE DIRECTOR: And that's what I need to talk to you about. We are waiting for the police now. Our security people have told us that they are on their way. And we are just going to have to wait.

MARTIN: We all have to wait?

NATE: Maybe we could open the concession stand.

JIM: Hey, that's a good idea.

NORMA: I just love those ...

THE DIRECTOR: No, I have something else in mind.

UNCLE ANDY: Something else in mind? I'm ready to go home.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: So am I. What's taking them ...

THE DIRECTOR: I need your help.

EVIE: Boss, what are you doing?

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: What sort of help do you need, sir?

THE DIRECTOR: I have a lot of questions. *(Pause.)* I have a lot of questions about what went on here tonight. And I was wondering if you could help me?

SANDRA: Help you?

THE DIRECTOR: Yes, help me. Help me re-create the last moments on stage just before that guy came up out of the audience.

NORMA: Ohhhh no. No sir, I've had enough.

UNCLE ANDY: Hey, who was that guy anyway?

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Theatre critic?

THE DIRECTOR: The dead man is, or was ...

EVIE: Boss ...

THE DIRECTOR: Theodore R. Camp. He's ...

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: He's the playwright, the writer of this show.

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Bravo. I'll take Actors and Their Roles for five hundred, Alex.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I go see his work all the time. I saw a production of his at the Rudnick Theatre last month in ...

UNCLE ANDY: That was Camp? Jerk. What a jerk ...

SANDRA: He deserved what he got. Walking up on this stage and making a *complete* jerk out of himself ...

*(ALL eyes turn toward SANDRA.)*

Don't look at me. He locked you in the closet too *(Points to UNCLE ANDY.)* and blamed you *(To THE DIRECTOR.)* for the failure of this show. *(To MARTIN.)* He threatened to kill you when you told him you wouldn't audition.

THE DIRECTOR: Stop. Stop. We are going to need to look at what he actually did and what he actually said on this stage. But Mister Camp

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is no longer our problem. (*Pause.*) There is, however, a killer in this theatre, ladies and gentlemen, and I don't think we can wait until the police show up.

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: What makes you think he is still in the theatre?

SECURITY GUARD #1: Listen lady, we closed this theatre up tight as a drum following the shooting. My partner and I ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: When you're not cooking frozen pizza, Sherlock?

THE DIRECTOR: Stop. Stop right there. Please ma'am, you are not helping this situation. We are all trying ...

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Again, what makes you think he's still in the theatre?

THE DIRECTOR: I really don't know, Ma'am. It's a feeling. A gut feeling. Mr. Camp's revolver is out here in this theatre somewhere, and for all I know, there is another gun out there too.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Another gun? Fine. That's great. That's just great.

THE DIRECTOR: If we could just calm down, walk through this carefully and logically, maybe we'll be able to find something, anything, to get over this feeling of being helpless, stuck, no answers ...

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And then maybe we could go home?

MARTIN: And then when the police arrive ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Why should we do their work for them?

UNCLE ANDY: Don't you want to get out of here? Go home?

THE DIRECTOR: Yes, do their work for them. I'm fine with that. We need to kill some time.

EVIE: Boss ...

THE DIRECTOR: I know. I know. Really bad joke.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I don't think this is funny.

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I want to go home.

THE DIRECTOR: (*To 3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM.*) Ma'am?

What do you remember? What did you see right before the lights went out? Let's turn up the house lights a little bit here, Evie?

(*EVIE leaves stage.*)

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: You want to kill some time? Let's kill some time. You want to play? Let's play. (*House lights come up halfway.*) I saw and heard a bad cowboy song, I saw you and this old man (*Points to NATE.*) getting angry, I saw a nut running around this stage with a gun, and enough bad Shakespeare to kill a moose. The guy hated your play. He went up on stage to blow your ...

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UNCLE ANDY: (To NATE.) You did get angry. I've never seen you ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: brains out.

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And there was a scream.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And Lady Macbeth and Prince Hal. Real anger. Real emotion ...

THE DIRECTOR: What was that ma'am?

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: There was a scream right after the lights went out ...

NORMA: That's right. I remember.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: This guy (Points to NATE.) says, okay mister, I've had enough of this, and then the lights go out, and bam.

NATE: That's correct. I did say that ...

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And Mr. Camp says, why you never ...

JIM: And then there was the scream, a woman's scream. I thought it was you (Points to NORMA.) and then the gun went bam, bam, bam.

NORMA: I didn't scream. I don't remember screaming.

SANDRA: I screamed. I was in the closet when the lights went out.

UNCLE ANDY: Ohhhh yeah ... she's the screamer, I can verify that.

SANDRA: We were trapped. I couldn't see ...

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: And you (Points to THE DIRECTOR.), you were really angry. Annoyed, frustrated ...

THE DIRECTOR: Yes, I had had enough. He was getting to me like he wanted to just set me off. But, I didn't kill him.

*[AUTHOR'S NOTE: If the actor playing THE DIRECTOR wishes to interrogate other members of the audience, who are not in the cast (Brave enough to do a little improv?), this would be the place to insert it and work the audience a little. You could insert the line: Did anyone else see anything unusual? Please tell me what you saw. I need your help here, and then start calling on random folks. If not, continue to this next 3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM line below.]*

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: He went up on stage to blow your brains out. The guy hated your play. If the lights hadn't gone off, you would be ...

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: But you got this all wrong. The guy, Mister Camp, didn't hate the play ...

JIM: He *didn't* hate the play. You're right. You are right. I told him I was sorry he didn't like the play, and he said ...

NORMA: (Remembering.) Not like the play ... This isn't just a play in some cornpone theatre in the middle of a field in the middle of the week in the middle of your life. (Pause.) And that's when I decided to do my audition speech from *Macbeth*.

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JIM: He said he wanted to give us a chance. He actually complimented you.

NORMA: I was pretty good, if I do say so ...

SANDRA: But he said he really wanted to fix the show.

NATE: (*Remembering.*) I am on a mission. I *can* fix this show.

MARTIN: Yes. We all heard that. Along with the sarcasm and the threats and his whining and his needling and pushing ...

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: But who would want to kill him?

THE DIRECTOR: (*A beat.*) What was that?

WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I said, *but who would want to kill him?* Isn't that what we are looking for here? Isn't that what you said you're looking for here?

THE DIRECTOR: Yes ...

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Did any of you know him? Work with him before?

(*CAST looks at each other and shrugs and mimes no.*)

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: You all looked pretty threatened up there. Any one of you could have gone for the gun and ...

SANDRA: Wait a minute, ma'am. We're actors. We're not ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: You are an actor with a gun in your face. He was a complete monster to you, and he locked you in the closet. Are you telling me you ...?

SANDRA: (*Defensive.*) I was in the closet, in the dark ... how am I supposed to jump out of the closet, shoot the guy, and then jump back in the closet? I couldn't see a thing when the lights went out.

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: He made you (*To UNCLE ANDY.*) get down on your knees and beg for a part ...

UNCLE ANDY: Wait a minute. Wait a minute ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I know, you were in the closet too.

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: (*To MARTIN.*) He was pretty nasty to you too, young man.

MARTIN: I didn't like the way he was treating everybody. You know, we all have a part to play here. He was in the audience; *stay in the audience*. If he didn't like the show, he could have just walked out.

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: But it was his show ...

THE DIRECTOR: It's *not* his show. We have a *right* to produce his ...

MARTIN: But he didn't have to go after people. He didn't have to ...

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Are you saying ...?

MARTIN: *I'm saying, I didn't kill Mister Camp ...*

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Any one of you could have done it. He threatened your lives. He had a gun. You all have a good motive. Frankly, you're all suspects as far as I can tell ...

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WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Self defense, for crying out loud ...

SECURITY GUARD #1: Hey, anybody in the house could have done it too. We could have a shooter out here right now. There's *nobody* in here ...

THE DIRECTOR: Please, this gets us nowhere ...

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: (*Remembering.*) It's gotta be you. That's what he said.

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: *And* he went after *you* with a vengeance right before ...

NATE: (*Remembering.*) You do have some talented folks here.

THE DIRECTOR: It's not me!

JIM: (*Remembering.*) I first heard them bad, and now I heard them good, that's what he said.

UNCLE ANDY: Maybe, he was checking you out.

THE DIRECTOR: It's not me! Why would I ruin my own show?

NATE: Maybe because we were threatened? I'm not saying you planned this. I am not accusing you of ruining the show.

UNCLE ANDY: Camp ruined the show.

NATE: Events got out of control and you, as the director, took control and

...

MAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Did you know this guy? You're the director. Had you ever met Camp?

THE DIRECTOR: Hold it right there. No. I didn't know the guy. I read his play. I liked it. Camp wrote a cute and clever murder mystery. I asked around. They did a production last year in Cleveland at Playhouse Square. They did a production down here at the high school, and I saw the show in a community theatre in upstate New York last summer. I did auditions. We had four and a half weeks of rehearsals. *You were there. You know me! I have been producing and directing shows in this theatre for ... what are you saying?*

NATE: Listen, all I'm saying is we got in trouble. Events got out of control, and you ...

THE DIRECTOR: *Are you accusing me of murder?*

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Excuse me.

NATE: No, you make it sound ...

THE DIRECTOR: *Are you accusing me of murder? I can't believe ...*

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Excuse me. I have a question.

NATE: Listen to me, all I'm saying ...

NORMA: (*To THE DIRECTOR.*) It's okay ...

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Excuse me. You asked us to help you, think about what we saw.

THE DIRECTOR: I'm sorry, ma'am ...?

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2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: I don't know much about this stuff.  
I'm trying to remember what everyone said, where everyone one was,  
but there's something that's bothering me.

THE DIRECTOR: Go ahead, ma'am. What's on your mind?

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: *(A beat.)* Why did the lights go out?

THE DIRECTOR: Excuse me?

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: This one says *(Points to NATE.)*  
you leave these kids alone and give me the gun ...

3<sup>rd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: Go back to your cell phone, lady.  
Call your son. Ask your son why the lights went out.

2<sup>nd</sup> WOMAN IN THE AUDITORIUM: But why did the lights go out? This  
one is screaming, this one is threatening, this one is in the closet, this  
one is protesting, this one is defending himself, and the lights  
suddenly decide to go out ...

MARTIN: Yeah, why did the lights go off?

JIM: Just before the gun went off.

SANDRA: The lights.

THE DIRECTOR: Evie? What do you ...?

UNCLE ANDY: Gone ...

*(Blackout house and stage. Ad libbed pandemonium from the cast.)*

THE DIRECTOR: Evie?

*(Silence.)*

Evie?

*(Silence.)*

Evie, it's okay. Come on out. Let's talk ...

*(On stage SECURITY GUARD #1's cell phone rings.)*

NATE: Answer the phone. It could be the police.

SECURITY GUARD #1: Hello? *(Pause.)* Okay. Okay. Right. Yes  
ma'am.

SANDRA: Who is it?

THE DIRECTOR: Evie, we need you to come down here. Turn on these  
lights.

MARTIN: Are the police coming? Who was on the phone?

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*(Stage lights come up on stage. EVIE, pursued by the (off-stage) SECURITY GUARD #2, enters USCL door runs through and jumps through the SR window.)*

SECURITY GUARD #2: Get down, get down, she has a gun.

*(CAST scatters [commotion and panicked excitement] for cover. SECURITY GUARD #1 exits through window in pursuit of EVIE and the [off-stage] SECURITY GUARD #2. Off stage gun shots fired. Then, EVIE, pursued by the [off-stage] SECURITY GUARD #2, re-enters DSL door runs through and opens the closet door. Enters the closet.)*

Stop right there.

*(SECURITY GUARDS capture EVIE in the closet, door opens, and THEY bring her to center stage. The GUARDS have her gun.)*

THE DIRECTOR: Evie?

SECURITY GUARD #2: Is everybody okay?

SECURITY GUARD #1: Thanks for the call.

*(CAST looks at each other – tired, panicked, relieved.)*

SECURITY GUARD #2: Once I found that light switch up in the booth, I knew I could surprise her, and we could catch her.

UNCLE ANDY: Thank you, ma'am.

THE DIRECTOR: Evie, are you okay?

EVIE: *(Pause.)* I begged him not to come to the show. He wouldn't listen. I've been doing this for years, but he keeps getting worse. He generally stays away from this type of venue. But I couldn't stop him this time.

NATE: He wouldn't listen?

JIM: Stop him?

EVIE: He's crazy. He's a perfectionist. He's a crazy perfectionist. He never thinks any of his plays are finished. And he goes out, on the street, and he tries to ... fix them.

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