

MURDER AHOY

By Michael Druce

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CHARACTERS

Valene Depardee	Queen of everything. Stuck-up, disliked by all. Married to Charles, her fifth husband.
Dr. Charles Depardee	Rich, educated, not the least bit happy about this cruise that is taking the place of his honeymoon with Valene.
Mallory	Young, perky cruise director, interminably cute.
Hollandaise Soss	Former cheerleader and runner-up to Valene in just about everything.
Bernaise Soss	Former cheerleader jilted by class clown and all-around hunk, Steve Furline.
Captain Jack Colby	Strapping, handsome, serious.
Steve Furline	Former hunk still riding high on his high school glory days.
Detective Frank Ripley	A little too serious to be taken seriously.
Curtis	Young, dimwitted D.J., a few tunes short of an album.
Marion Webster	Retired high school librarian

PROPS

CAPTAIN-toy or fake cigar

MALLORY-clip board and pen

BERNAISE-Giveaway T-shirt, name tag

STEVE-bandage for neck and head, sling, crutch, name tag

CHARLES-poison dart feather

CURTIS-the captain's pistol (pepper spray may be substituted)

RIPLEY-notepad and pencil

HOLLANDAISE-name tag

MARION-name tag

VALENE-name tag

COSTUMES

MALLORY & CURTIS: Ship's crew outfits.

CAPTAIN: white gloves, captain's cap, captain's outfit.

HOLLANDAISE: cheerleading outfit, blue tights, cruise-wear

BERNAISE: cheerleading outfit, cruise-wear

RIPLEY: trench coat, cruise-wear

ALL OTHER CHARACTERS: cruise-wear.

Dialogue may be edited for appropriateness. For productions in which a gun is not permitted, the gun can be changed to pepper spray and the lines changed accordingly.

TIME & PLACE

The Present, the Dining Room of the cruise ship THANATOS. It is the thirty year reunion of Broken-Rattan High School

PRODUCTION NOTES

Murder Ahoy presents numerous opportunities to involve your audience in the production. When appropriate, lines should be directed to the entire audience or specific individuals. Your real audience members should be considered as graduates of the Broken-Rattan High class of _____.? (*The date should be thirty years prior to the year of the production.*) If performed as a dinner theater show, you may wish to hand out name tags with vintage photos printed on them and the phrase “I used to be _____.” Guests can fill in their real names or whatever names they choose. The theatre lobby or dining room could be decorated with school memorabilia.

Music: Pre-show music and music used during the production should reflect what was popular thirty years earlier. Curtis can actually play the music for the show, or it may be handled by the sound crew.

Set: The main action of the play takes place in the ship’s dining room. Two small dining tables each with two chairs on the upstage side are positioned center stage, approximately ten feet apart. The open area between the two tables is where Steve and Valene do their reunion dance. Upstage center is a table for Curtis and his D.J. equipment. The main entrance to the dining room is stage left. A right stage entrance may be used when characters need to exit briefly.

Sound Effects: Barking dog, optional horn tooting, poison dart, ticking clock.

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SCENE ONE: AFTERNOON

SETTING: *The Present the Dining Room of the cruise ship THANATOS. It is the thirty year reunion of Broken-Rattan High School*

AT RISE: *The action takes place in the dining room of the cruise ship THANATOS. VALENE and Dr. CHARLES DEPARDEE enter L and cross center.*

VALENE: Do you think Fluffy will be all right out there all by himself?

CHARLIE: He's fine, don't worry.

VALENE: I'm beginning to think we should never have come on this trip. I've hardly seen anyone I was friends with.

CHARLIE: They're either smart or dead. The sooner this floating prom is over with, the better.

VALENE: A reunion cruise, Charlie, it is not a prom.

CHARLIE: More like *The Love Boat* for people without teeth. This is not my idea of a honeymoon.

VALENE: If those cheesy Soss sisters had sent the invitations earlier, we could have rescheduled the wedding.

CHARLIE: We should have skipped this reunion all together and gone on a real honeymoon cruise. Why is this so important to you?

VALENE: Tradition. Being named royalty comes with a lot of responsibilities.

CHARLIE: For life? Valene, you've been out of high school for thirty years.

VALENE: I know, but our school reunions have always been a big deal. When you are popular, there's an expectation. The senior queen dances with the senior king, that sort of thing.

CHARLIE: I'm not coming to the next reunion. It'll be too depressing. By then they'll be spiking the punch with embalming fluid.

VALENE: Alright, we'll get off at the first port of call.

MALLORY: (*Entering R. with clipboard and pen*) Hello! I'm, Mallory, the cruise director. Welcome aboard *The Thanatos*. Are you here to register for the reunion?

CHARLIE: Unfortunately. (*Beat*) Dr. Charles and Valene Depardee.

MALLORY: That's French, isn't it?

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CHARLIE: Yes, and I am not related to that French actor with the big nose.

MALLORY: Which one?

CHARLIE: The one who played the guy with the big nose bigger than his own. *He* pronounces his name Depar-doo. Mine is Depar-dee. Dr. Charles Depardee Got it?

MALLORY: *(Writing)* Depar-dee. Got it.

VALENE: What time does the reunion begin?

MALLORY: Right after dinner. It's going to be fun.

CHARLIE: That's what passengers on the *Titanic* thought.

MALLORY: Don't worry. We're in the Caribbean, there are no icebergs here.

CHARLIE: *(Facetiously)* Really?

(Off stage we hear a rapid bark followed by a small scream.)

VALENE: That sounds like Fluffy.

(HOLLANDAISE and BERNAISE hastily enter L., crossing center to CHARLIE and VALENE.)

HOLLANDAISE: Careful, there's a barking cow pie out there.

VALENE: That's not a cow pie. That's Fluffy, my Shar Pei.

BERNAISE: You call a dog without hair Fluffy? It's got so many wrinkles, I thought it was an accordion.

HOLLANDAISE: Speaking of wrinkles, Valene, how nice to see you.

VALENE: *(Ignoring HOLLANDAISE)* Hello, Bernaise.

HOLLANDAISE: *(TO CHARLIE)* Hello, I'm Hollandaise Soss. Your mother and I went to high school together.

VALENE: This is my husband, Dr. Charles Depardee.

HOLLANDAISE: Oh, my, a doctor this time. If I have any ailments, I'll know who to come to.

VALENE: I'm sure there's a veterinarian on board.

HOLLANDAISE: *(Shaking CHARLIE's hand)* Pleased to meet you.

VALENE: Charles and I are on our honeymoon.

HOLLANDAISE: *(To CHARLES)* Try to enjoy yourself anyway.

VALENE: *(To BERNAISE)* I don't understand how you two ended up on the reunion committee. What happened to Bobby and Cindy?

BERNAISE: They were killed in a mine shaft explosion.

VALENE: I didn't like them much anyway, not after hosting our last reunion at *Burritos are Us*. I had gas for a week. So, I take it this reunion at sea was your idea.

HOLLANDAISE: We received a flyer in the mail offering us a special rate.

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BERNAISE: You probably didn't think we could come up with something so exotic, did you?

VALENE: You're right. Given your track record, I would have expected a tramp steamer. See you this evening.

HOLLANDAISE: If I don't throw myself overboard first.

VALENE: Promises, promises.

(Exits L. with CHARLIE)

BERNAISE: She's on her honeymoon?

HOLLANDAISE: Isn't she always? She's had more husbands than Henry the Eighth had wives.

BERNAISE: One thing's for certain—

BERNAISE & HOLLANDAISE: He's rich.

BERNAISE: At least this one is younger. Her last husband was so old their wedding limo was a hearse. *(To MALLORY)* How's registration coming?

MALLORY: Almost a hundred and fifty graduates and their families have registered and one faculty member.

BERNAISE: A faculty member? Really?

MALLORY: A Miss Marion Webster.

BERNAISE & HOLLANDAISE: The librarian?

(BERNAISE pulls HOLLANDAISE aside so MALLORY doesn't hear the following.)

BERNAISE: Did you send her an invitation?

(CAPTAIN COLBY enters R)

HOLLANDAISE: Not me.

BERNAISE: Well, I didn't.

CAPTAIN: Is there something I can help you ladies with?

HOLLANDAISE: *(Practically breathless at the sight of the captain)* I certainly hope so.

CAPTAIN: I'm Captain Jack Colby.

HOLLANDAISE: *(Regaining her composure)* Hollandaise Soss. We've met.

CAPTAIN: *(Surprised)* We have?

HOLLANDAISE: In my dreams.

CAPTAIN: *(Offers his hand)* Oh, I see. Pleased to meet you.

HOLLANDAISE: *(Noticing COLBY's white gloves)* Doing a white glove test?

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CAPTAIN: No, I wear these to protect my hands from the lemon oil on the ship's wheel. I have a slight skin condition.

HOLLANDAISE: This is my sister, Bernaise. We're the entertainment.

CAPTAIN: Really? Well, I'm looking forward to your act. It was a pleasure to meet you, again.

HOLLANDAISE: Again?

CAPTAIN: As you said, we've already met in your dreams.

(CAPTAIN crosses to MALLORY, looking over the registration while HOLLANDAISE and BERNAISE converse.)

HOLLANDAISE: *(Fanning herself)* Is he hot, or what?

BERNAISE: He's probably married. The good ones always are.

HOLLANDAISE: It's funny, but the Captain seems familiar to me.

BERNAISE: Everyone seems familiar to you.

STEVE: *(Entering L)* The Soss sisters, I can't believe it.

HOLLANDAISE: Oh, my gosh! Steve Furline, is it really you?

(BERNAISE gives STEVE the cold shoulder.)

STEVE: Oh, yeah, it's me, baby, study Steve. *(Hugs HOLLANDAISE)*
Hello, Bernaise.

BERNAISE: *(Unenthusiastically)* Hi, Steve.

STEVE: *(To BERNAISE)* That's it? That's all I get? You're not still mad at me, are you?

HOLLANDAISE: She's still mad, just like the last two reunions.

STEVE: How can you still be mad at me?

BERNAISE: You don't get over a thing like that!

STEVE: After three decades you do. Get a life.

BERNAISE: That's what I thought I was getting.

STEVE: We were stupid, we were kids, we were in Vegas. Forget about it. What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas.

BERNAISE: What stayed in Vegas was me. That's what happened. You left me standing at the altar of The Royal Flush wedding chapel.

STEVE: I smartened up.

BERNAISE: And flew into the arms of Valene. It turned out royally for you, and I got flushed.

STEVE: If it makes you feel any better, Bernaise, my life hasn't been good. I haven't been happy.

BERNAISE: Good. I'm glad.

STEVE: Really? Forget it, I was lying. Hey, save me a dance. See you this evening. *(Exits L)*

MALLORY: *(Ever cheerful)* Well, this looks like it's going to be fun.

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HOLLANDAISE: You better add his name to your list.

MALLORY: What was it, again?

BERNAISE: Butt face.

HOLLANDAISE: Steve Furline.

MALLORY: Furline. Got it.

HOLLANDAISE: We've got to get ready and get this party started.

MALLORY: Okay, see you later.

BERNAISE: If I haven't murdered someone by then.

HOLLANDAISE: *(To the CAPTAIN)* Ship ahoy. See you this evening.

(As they exit L., DETECTIVE FRANK RIPLEY enters L. HE is wearing a trench coat over shorts and a tropical shirt.)

RIPLEY: Captain Colby?

CAPTAIN: Yes?

RIPLEY: Detective Frank Ripley, Broken-Rattan division of homicide.
Can I speak to you privately?

CAPTAIN: Mallory, will you excuse us, please?

MALLORY: Oh, sure, go wherever you like.

CAPTAIN: *(Waiting for MALLORY to leave)* Mallory. *(Gestures for MALLORY to leave)*

MALLORY: Sorry. *(Exits L)*

CAPTAIN: How can I help you?

RIPLEY: Prior to coming on this voyage, I was doing some research in the criminology library at Notre Dame. I have reason to believe a homicidal maniac may be on board.

CAPTAIN: What?

RIPLEY: Prior to coming on this voyage--

CAPTAIN: I got that part. Are you sure?

RIPLEY: I can't say positively.

CAPTAIN: Then what are you saying, Ripley?

RIPLEY: Believe it or not, it's not a hunch. Back at Notre Dame I was investigating a series of mysterious deaths and unsolved murders.

CAPTAIN: What does that have to do with *The Thanatos*?

RIPLEY: These murders and deaths have all occurred over a period of the last few years. And they all have one thing in common, the Broken-Rattan High School Class of 1976.

CAPTAIN: Are you saying someone is trying to kill everyone in the class of 1976?

RIPLEY: Oh, no, not the entire class, only the popular people.

CAPTAIN: But why?

RIPLEY: That's what I am trying to find out. There could be any number of reasons, petty jealousies, broken hearts, betrayal, all of which could point to revenge.

CAPTAIN: You say these deaths have occurred only during the past few years. Why now?

RIPLEY: Who knows? Revenge is like a boil. It festers until it finally explodes.

CAPTAIN: I see. And you think something could happen here?

RIPLEY: Possibly.

CAPTAIN: How can I help?

RIPLEY: I would like to work undercover. Let me move among the passengers. I'll blend right in.

(To underscore his point of working incognito, HE opens his trench to reveal HE is dressed as any ordinary passenger.)

CAPTAIN: Of course.

MALLORY: *(Re-enters L., sees RIPLEY facing the CAPTAIN with his coat open) Whoops! Sorry. (Makes a hasty exit L)*

RIPLEY: *(Unsure of what just happened)* Is there someplace a little more private we could speak?

CAPTAIN: Yes, we can use my cabin. *(Reaches into his pocket for a cigar)* Cigar?

RIPLEY: Oh, no, thank you. Those things can kill you.

CAPTAIN: Yes, they can.

END OF SCENE

SCENE TWO – AFTER DINNER -- EVENING

AT RISE: CURTIS, a crewmember is playing music UC. STEVE and MARION are seated at the same table, right. The CAPTAIN moves through the dining room. RIPLEY is seated among the dinner guests or HE could be standing left of the stage left table. Music fades.

CURTIS: Good evening. I'm Curtis; I'll be your D.J. this evening. If you have any special requests, please let me know. Mallory, your entertainment director should be here any moment. *(Looking toward the entrance L)* In fact, here she is—sorry, not her.

(VALENE and CHARLIE enter L., fashionably late. VALENE spots MARION and freezes.)

CHARLIE: What is it?

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VALENE: I can't believe it.

CHARLIE: What's the matter?

VALENE: Someone I hoped I would never see again.

CHARLIE: So far, that's everyone you've met.

MARION: Hello, Valene.

VALENE: Mrs. Webster. Or is it still *Miss Webster*?

MARION: Nice to see you again.

VALENE: Likewise, I'm sure.

(They move to their table, L)

CHARLIE: What was that all about?

VALENE: It's a long, ugly story. I'll tell you later.

(MALLORY enters L. and crosses center.)

CURTIS: Hereeeeeee's Mallory.

MALLORY: Hi, everyone. How is everyone? Good, good. Welcome aboard *The Thanatos*. For those of you we haven't had a chance to meet yet, my name is Mallory. I'm your cruise director, and this is Curtis, our D.J. who'll be playing lots of golden oldies. We like to think of ourselves as the Donnie and Marie of the high seas. Anything you need, just let us know.

CHARLIE: I may need a shot of insulin.

MALLORY: We love reunion cruises, don't we Curtis?

CURTIS: We sure do, Mallory. Reunion cruises are always so much fun and so romantic.

MALLORY: Now, whose reunion is this?

STEVE: Broken-Rattan High.

CURTIS: We didn't hear you.

STEVE: *(Encouraging audience to participate)* C'mon everyone, yell out it. Broken-Rattan High! Broken-Rattan High! Broken-Rattan High!

MALLORY: And how long has it been?

EXTRA: Not long enough!

CURTIS: Mallory, it's the thirtieth reunion.

MALLORY: Wow, you guys graduated from high school thirty years ago? Whoa! I haven't even had my first reunion yet. I mean, you don't look that old. Still, we want you to have a good time. You know what they say; your thirtieth reunion only comes around once every ten years. Well anyway, I'm told by your reunion captains there's going to be lots of great memories and great entertainment. But before I introduce your hostesses for the evening, please give a big hand to our captain, Captain Jack Colby.

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CAPTAIN: (*Crosses C*) Thank you, Mallory. As Mallory said, we're glad to have you aboard. Something tells me this will be a cruise you will never forget. Our first port of call will be the island of Sans Soleil, in about two days. So there's plenty of time to relax and enjoy yourselves. Again, welcome aboard and happy thirtieth.

MALLORY: Okay, class of seventy-six, it's time to introduce your reunion captains. Please welcome Hollandaise and Bernaise Soss. Hit it, Curtis.

(HOLLANDAISE and BERNAISE, dressed as cheerleaders, enter L. to music. HOLLANDAISE is wearing blue tights. THEY work their way through the audience, ending up center.)

HOLLANDAISE: Hello Broken-Rattan High! Remember that tune?

BERNAISE: Who can name that tune?

(The song should be something familiar. When an answer is called out, BERNAISE tosses that person a T-shirt.)

BERNAISE: Great, you win a T-shirt. Welcome to the thirty year Broken-Rattan High reunion. I'm Bernaise, and this is my sister--

HOLLANDAISE: Hollandaise. And for those of you who don't remember, we're not twins. Bernaise is the older one who was held back in kindergarten.

BERNAISE: Thanks, Sis. It's so great to see everyone—almost everyone.

HOLLANDAISE: And so many of you have brought your parents, your children, your trophy wives, and (*To VALENE*) trophy husbands.

BERNAISE: Okay, we're going to do the fight song. For those of you who don't remember, it's sung to the tune of Jingle Bells. It's written right there on your programs. Ready?

(This needs to be as awkward as it reads. VALENE stands, hand over heart, as if the song is almost sacred.)

BOTH:

Go, Broken-Rattan,
Go, Broken-Rattan,
We're with you all the way
Oh, how proud I am to be
A Broken-Rattan Manatee.

BOTH: Yeah, go Manatee's.

HOLLANDAISE: Wow, that was fun.

BERNAISE: We have so much planned this evening, so many memories to share. We begin, as all of our reunions begin, by introducing our senior royalty. Please give a big hand to our 1976 royal couple, Steve Furline and Valene Hudson-Sparks-Smith-Brown-DuVall- Depardee. Steve, and Valene, come on down.

(STEVE and VALENE come down center)

HOLLANDAISE: Steve, remind us again why you were chosen senior king. Tell us just a few of your accomplishments at Broken-Rattan.

STEVE: Well, I was quarterback for three years. Captain of the basketball and football teams my senior year. Junior prince, senior king. Athlete of the year four years in a row.

HOLLANDAISE: And according to the yearbook, you were voted “Best Body in a Speedo.”

STEVE: Oh, yeah.

BERNAISE: And don’t forget, “Most likely to leave someone standing at the altar.”

STEVE: Oh, Bernaise. *(Returns to his seat)*

HOLLANDAISE: Valene, what about you? I’m sure you have a few accomplishments you can share.

VALENE: Thank you, Hollandaise, I do.

HOLLANDAISE: Don’t forget, it’s only a ten day cruise.

VALENE: This is always so embarrassing, because it seems like I’m tooting my own horn, *(An optional horn sound effect can be inserted here.)* but it’s just the way things were. Well, let’s see, I was class queen all four years. Cheerleading captain sophomore through senior year. President of the glee club, student body president for two years, Valedictorian, captain of the swim team, I had the leads in all four musicals, I was named junior miss, and I was runner up to Bernaise in the penmanship competition—because she cheated. Oh, and I was named “Mostly Likely to Bring About World Peace.” Well, that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

HOLLANDAISE: Thank you, Valene, you’re an inspiration to all of us.

BERNAISE: You forgot to mention, “Most Likely to Marry a Millionaire.”

STEVE: Several.

HOLLANDAISE: Before we go on, we are honored to have a very special guest, our librarian, Miss Marion Webster. Miss Webster, won’t you say a few words?

MARION: *(Rising from her seat)* Thank you, Hollandaise. I’m just so honored to have been invited and that you remember me.

VALENE: Who could forget her?

HOLLANDAISE: Miss Webster, tell us what you’ve been doing for the past several years.

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MARION: I've since retired. I read, I travel. I've spent a lot of time in the Amazon.

(As MARION is speaking, an extra dressed as a crewmember enters L. and crosses to MALLORY, handing her an envelope which is to be given to VALENE.)

VALENE: Where I'm sure she feels right at home.

BERNAISE: Miss Webster, tonight as we pay special tribute to our senior royalty. Perhaps there's a special memory you could share about Steve and Valene.

MARION: Well, nothing I could share in public.

BERNAISE: Anything. Just one special little thing.

MARION: I don't think so.

HOLLANDAISE: Some little piece of dirt, perhaps?

MARION: I couldn't.

HOLLANDAISE: Maybe after a few drinks you'll change your mind.

MARION: You never know.

(As MARION returns to her seat, BERNAISE and HOLLANDAISE review their agendas. MALLORY delivers the envelope to VALENE.)

MALLORY: Mrs. Depardee, this came for you.

VALENE: What is it?

MALLORY: An envelope.

VALENE: I know it's an envelope. Who's it from?

MALLORY: I don't know, a crewman just handed it to me. He said it was urgent.

VALENE: *(Opens letter and screams)*

CHARLIE: What is it?

VALENE: Look, look!

CHARLIE: *(Quickly reading)* It's a death threat.

MALLORY: A death threat? Wow, we don't get many of those. May I see? *(Taking the letter from CHARLIE)* You're right, it is a death threat. But great handwriting.

VALENE: Who sent this? Who'd want to kill me?

HOLLANDAISE: Are you kidding? It's a miracle you're not dead already.

VALENE: That's a horrible thing to say.

BERNAISE: Horrible things for horrible people.

VALENE: I want everyone on this boat arrested.

CAPTAIN: *(Having worked his way to the front, takes the note)* It's a ship, Madame. *The Thanatos* is not a boat, it's a ship.

VALENE: I don't care what it is.

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