

# **MURDER WHILE YOU WAIT**

## **By Michael Soetaert**

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## CHARACTERS

**15-17 characters:** 9 male, 5 female, 3 either (2 can be combined)  
(In Order of Appearance)

EDWARD LUTZ: Our hero. 20 something. Fairly good looking, and not that bad of a guy... really. But he's probably the kind of a guy that somebody's mother will get to say, "I told you so" about. He works at the Ad Agency, even though he really doesn't have a clue what he's doing. In the first act he wears casual work clothes. In the second act, he'll be wearing a tuxedo.

LAURIE: 20 something. Cute, but a bit ditsy. She's the secretary at the Ad Agency. She will never dress quite appropriately for the situation, either at work or at the wedding. Her dress does not have to change for either if you choose. She's constantly chomping gum.

BRUNO: Mr. Frontenac's "muscle" guy. Big, burly. Wears a cheap suit that really looks too small for him... or is it just that he really is that big? It's not that he's that mean of a guy... it's just business. A bit dense, but definitely not stupid. He will have on the same suit in the second act.

MR. FERRARA: A client of Bruno's. An old man in a cheap suit with a cheap hat. This is a very small role. This character could easily be played by the same person playing either one of the priests, Brick, or even McDermitt, since he is only in the first act.

MRS. NORRIS: Another client of Bruno's. An old lady in a cheap dress. This is also a very small role that could easily be played by the same person playing Aunt Lulu. She is also only in the first act.

MR. ALFONSO FRONTENAC: Small time mobster. 50ish. Wears a pin-striped suit. Go ahead and play the stereotype. I don't know many mobsters who would complain. He truly isn't that bad of a guy, but he will have you shot. It'll be for a good reason, mind you, not that it'll matter much to you. He will dress pretty much the same in the second act, except maybe a boutonniere

MRS. FRONTENAC: The Mobster's Wife, which would be a great title for a play. 50ish. Dresses very nicely; it's one of the perks of being a mobster's wife. Puts up with her husband, but they both know it's really she that runs things. If you want, she can dress even nicer for the wedding. After all, it's her daughter that's getting married.

## Murder While You Wait – Page 3

**JULIETTE FRONTENAC:** The mobster's daughter. 20 something. Cute, but rough around the edges. Dresses casually, but well in the first act. Will be wearing a wedding dress in the second act. She's in love with Romero.

**ROMERO:** Juliette's boyfriend. 20ish. Thinks he's more tough than he really is, which wouldn't be hard, anyway you wish to take that. Wears a mobster wannabe suit, but what he really wants is Juliette. Getting a cut of the family business wouldn't be bad, either.

**WORTHINGTON:** FBI. Middle age. Very stereotypical. Dark suit. Staccato voice. No real grasp of reality. In the second act he will be dressed like an altar boy. It should be fairly obvious that the suit is way too small and has just been put on over his other clothes. If necessary, with minor changes can be a female.

**ROSS:** FBI. A carbon copy of Worthington. It would be fun if one were noticeably bigger than the other. Like Worthington, he will be dressed as an altar boy in the second act as well. If necessary, with minor changes can be a female.

**KLINGMEYER:** Funeral Director. 60ish. Tall, dour. Speaks slowly. It's as if everything he says is a condolence. Very conservative dark suit.

**FATHER TOM:** A priest. 40ish, short, wide. Easy going. Dresses like a priest. Only in the second act.

**FATHER THOMAS:** A priest. 40ish, tall, thin. Falls asleep a lot. Dresses like a priest. Only in the second act.

**AUNT LULU:** Edward's Aunt. 60ish. Gregarious (a great word). Wears a print dress that really is out of place for a wedding... except for the corsage. Only in the second act.

**BRICK:** Laurie's significant other, more or less... well, really, more less. Late 20s. He's an absolute dweeb – an accountant that wears a white, ink stained shirt, black, high-water pants, and heavy framed glasses. He needs to look very wimpy and should speak an octave or so too high. Only in the second act.

**JOEL MCDERMITT:** Lawyer for the mob. Middle age. Dresses extremely well. A lot of chains and rings would be nice. He's the type of guy that would wear fur. Yellow lensed glasses would work as well. He really despises his clients, but he really loves their money. Watcha gonna do? He is only in the second act. With minor changes, this could be played by a female.

Murder While You Wait – Page 4

And SCHRÖDINGER THE CAT: Who is really a poodle. Witness Protection is really good. If you can get a small, real live dog to do this, it would be great. He (or she) only has to come on at the very end, and can go straight off. A stuffed dog would also work.

**PROPS**

*(By Order Of Need)*

LAURIE

Fingernail kit (file, polish, etc.)  
Fashion Magazines  
Gum  
Ransom note and envelope  
Gun  
Glass of Water

EDWARD

Piece of Paper  
Notebook  
Pencil  
Glass of Water

BRUNO

Three Contracts  
Ink Pen  
Small, black appointment  
book  
Reading glasses  
Cell phone  
A \$20 bill  
Watch  
Gun in breast pocket  
Gun in holster on ankle  
Glass of Water

ROSS

Badge  
Kazoo  
Gun  
Glass of Water

WORTHINGTON

Badge  
Kazoo  
Gun  
Glass of Water  
Really Big Pair of Scissors

KLINGMEYER

Letter  
Glass of Water

AUNT LULU

Handkerchief  
Piece of chain  
Purse  
Gun  
Glass of Water

MRS. FRONTENAC

Paper bag (big enough to fit  
over Edward's head)  
Brass Knuckles (they  
shouldn't be real...  
aluminum foil would suffice)  
Gun  
Glass of Water

JULIETTE

Wedding Bouquet  
Gun  
Glass of Water

Murder While You Wait – Page 5

FRONTENAC

Watch  
Gun

ROMERO

Tire Iron  
Gun  
Glass of Water

BRICK

Baseball Bat  
Gun  
Glass of Water

FATHER TOM

Glass of Water

FATHER THOMAS

Glass of Water

MCDERMITT

Several Business Cards  
Small Notepad  
Glass of Water  
Groucho Glasses  
T-Shirt Printed with “You  
Don’t Know Me”

**SETTING**

**Act One: The Frontenac Ad Agency.** It’s a Tuesday afternoon.

**Act Two: Our Lady of Blessed Indifference Church,** the following Saturday, at 7:00 in the evening.

**Set:**

Two sets, both can be fairly simple.

**Act One: The Frontenac Ad Agency**

On the R Apron will be the receptionist area. You need, at the minimum, a desk and a chair for the receptionist. You also need a phone that can be made to sound like it rings. Behind the receptionist’s desk is a sign that says, “Frontenac Ad Agency” in large letters, and in smaller letters under that, “Jingles While You Wait.” If desired, you can have chairs for people to sit in, a hall tree... you know... all the trappings of an outer office

People enter into the receptionist area from the Right. They can just come through the curtain or you can actually construct a practical door. The entrance into the office is to the left of the receptionist. I would probably make a practical

## Murder While You Wait – Page 6

door that gives the illusion of breaking away so you can see behind the wall, but you truly need nothing.

The office area will have a large desk and chair Center stage. The desk, along with the rest of the office, needs to be terribly cluttered – stacks of paper, old fast food sacks, books – what have you. Somewhere on the desk there needs to be a very large pair of scissors. There is an old upright piano with a bench on the wall Left, and on the upstage wall are several windows like you might see in an office building. They don't need to be practical. Other than that, whatever extras you might want to add, like a trashcan with a basketball goal on it, posters on the wall for bad movies, dead plants... whatever... is up to you.

### **Act Two: Our Lady of Blessed Indifference Church**

The church will be sideways, more or less. It should look as if the church is cut in half, with the altar Right and the main door Left, but you can cheat with both. There should be at least four rows of pews lining the Rear wall. The main action will take place where the matching row of pews really ought to be. There needs to be a few flowers at the front of the church, but other than that, it's all frou frou. You can go as detailed as you wish.

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by  
Michael Soetaert

## ACT ONE

**Set:** The Frontenac Advertising Agency.

**At curtain, we see LAURIE sitting behind her desk doing her nails. EDWARD, who's in his office, is pacing back and forth holding a piece of paper that HE looks at from time to time. HE will stop, cross to the old, upright piano, and hit a few out of tune keys.**

EDWARD: *(singing, poorly, as HE once more starts pacing)* Oh, Laurie. Laurie, how could I love you any more-y. *(HE crosses over and looks out the window)* I'd leap from the seventeenth story, to prove my love for Laurie.

*(With a look of inspiration, EDWARD will hurry behind his desk where HE will start frantically writing. After a bit, sometime in the following action, EDWARD will cross to the piano and hit a note from time to time between scribbling on his paper. After a beat, the phone will ring in the outer office. After a couple of rings LAURIE will look up from her nails. SHE will look at it with annoyance for a couple more rings before SHE finally decides it's not going to stop on its own.)*

LAURIE: *(finally answering the phone)* Frontenac Advertising Agency. Jingles while you wait. This is Laurie speaking. Hold please.

*(LAURIE then hangs up the phone and returns to her nails. After a few moments, the phone rings again, which LAURIE, after waiting for it to stop like before, finally answers.)*

LAURIE: Frontenac Advertising Agency. Jingles while you wait. Hold please.

*(LAURIE then hangs the phone up again and returns to her nails. The phone almost immediately rings again. With more annoyance than before, LAURIE finally answers it.)*

LAURIE: Frontenac Advertising Agency. Jingles... *(waits a beat)* Yeah? *(beat)* Yeah? *(beat)* I'm sorry, sir. When I asked you to hold, I never said that I was going to put you on hold. *(beat)* Yeah? *(beat)* Yeah? *(beat)* Hold please.

*(LAURIE hangs up the phone and returns to her nails. BRUNO enters the outer office. LAURIE, still busy with her nails, doesn't notice him. HE will stand there for a moment or two, three if necessary, before finally clearing his throat. LAURIE, startled, will look up.)*

BRUNO: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. Could you tell Mr. Lutz that he has a visitor.

LAURIE: Who?

BRUNO: Me.

LAURIE: I figured you was the visitor. Who's Mr. Lutz?

BRUNO: Your boss.

LAURIE: Oh, yeah, Edward.

BRUNO: Could you tell him that a Mr. Bruno is here to see him?

LAURIE: Who's Mr. Bruno?

BRUNO: Me.

LAURIE: Oh. That makes sense. Yeah, sure. *(professionally)* One moment please. *(SHE turns to face the door; shouting, incredibly loudly)* Hey! Edward! You got a visitor. *(turning back to face BRUNO; professionally)* Mr. Edward will see you now.

BRUNO: Thank you.

*(BRUNO enters the office. EDWARD, who is sitting at the piano with his back to the door, will still be hitting random notes, trying to find the right key. BRUNO will stand unnoticed for a few moments before HE once again clears his throat. Startled, EDWARD will look up and fall off of the piano bench. HE will quickly collect himself, get up and cross to BRUNO.)*

EDWARD: Welcome to the Frontenac Advertising Agency. Jingles while you wait! My name is Edward. How may I help you?

*(EDWARD holds out his hand to shake, but instead BRUNO hands him a piece of paper that HE's taken out of his jacket pocket and unfolded, along with an ink pen.)*

BRUNO: *(showing him where)* Sign here, please.

EDWARD: *(reluctantly taking the form, but not really inspecting it)* What's this for?

BRUNO: Services received.

EDWARD: What services?

BRUNO: It's your call... elbow or kneecap. Which will it be?

EDWARD: *(shocked, and understandably so)* What!

BRUNO: Usually I don't let you choose, but it's Tuesday.

EDWARD: What?

BRUNO: I don't know. Tuesdays, you know... they just seem to drag. Everybody gets down on Mondays, but for me, I'd take a Monday any day of the week over a Tuesday. Of course, if it's Wednesday, I wouldn't want either, what bein' that it's hump day and all.

EDWARD: What?

*(During the above lines, MR. FERRARA will pass LAURIE's desk unnoticed by her; SHE's now reading a magazine. HE will softly knock at the door and then timidly push it open. HE shuffles into the room with his head down, holding his hat.)*

BRUNO: *(cordial)* Ah, Mr. Ferrara. Come in. *(to EDWARD)* I hope you don't mind. I took the liberty of having my abuse forwarded here. *(BRUNO reaches into his jacket pocket and takes out a piece of paper. HE will fish around for his pen, and then pat a few other pockets, before realizing that EDWARD has it; to EDWARD as HE takes the pen back)* Excuse me. *(HE will then hand both the pen and the piece of paper to MR. FERRARA)* Sign here.

*(MR. FERRARA looks around for something to sign it on, but sees nothing handy, so BRUNO, sensing his dilemma, bends over so HE can use his back. Completely resigned, MR. FERRARA signs the form and hands it back to BRUNO, who inspects it.)*

BRUNO: You forgot to date it.

*(BRUNO hands the form back to MR. FERRARA, bends back over, and MR. FERRARA dates the form on BRUNO's back. BRUNO straightens back up, re-inspects the form, then neatly folds it and places it inside of his suit jacket pocket. HE then immediately socks MR. FERRARA in the stomach.)*

MR. FERRARA: *(doubled over, barely able to speak)* Thank you.

*(MR. FERRARA, still doubled over, turns and exits.)*

EDWARD: *(finally able to speak after a few moments of disbelief)* You just hit that man!

BRUNO: Yeah. So?

EDWARD: Why did you do that?

*(BRUNO takes out a little book from inside of his jacket pocket and thumbs through it until HE finds the page HE was looking for. HE will hold it out, and then realize HE needs his reading glasses, which HE will*

*fish from his jacket pocket, put on, and then, finally, read what's on the page.)*

BRUNO: *(as HE's putting the book and glasses back up)* He was late this month's payment.

EDWARD: How much did he owe?

*(BRUNO rolls his eyes and then takes back out the book and his reading glasses and looks it back up.)*

BRUNO: A dollar ninety seven.

EDWARD: You just hit that man because he owes you a dollar ninety seven?

BRUNO: *(as HE's putting away the book and glasses again)* Of course not. I just hit that man because he owes Mr. Frontenac a dollar ninety seven. What Mr. Frontenac pays me to hit him, quite frankly, is none of your business. Now, which will it be? Kneecap or elbow?

EDWARD: Mr. Frontenac sent you over to break my kneecap?

BRUNO: OK. Kneecap it is.

EDWARD: No!

BRUNO: Then it's your elbow.

EDWARD: No!

BRUNO: Look, it's one or the other.

EDWARD: Why did Mr. Frontenac send you over to hurt me?

*(With an even more exaggerated eye roll than before, BRUNO reaches back into his jacket and pulls back out the little book and his reading glasses. HE thumbs through it until HE finds what HE's looking for.)*

BRUNO: He wants that I should inflict bodily damage upon your person to help persuade you to finish the Spickelmeyer and Sons account, which, he would like for me to remind you, is now... *(checking the book)* twelve days overdue.

EDWARD: Look. I've been stumped. I've had writer's block. It's a hard account. Have you ever tried writing a jingle for a funeral home?

BRUNO: They don't pay me to write.

*(There is another knock at the door, and MRS. NORRIS, a little old lady, enters with her head down.)*

BRUNO: *(politely)* Oh, Mrs. Norris. Do come in.

*(BRUNO takes out another piece of paper and a pen, which HE hands to MRS. NORRIS.)*

BRUNO: Sign here.

*(MRS. NORRIS takes the pen and paper and looks around for some place to sign it on. BRUNO once again bends over to accommodate. SHE signs the paper on his back and then hands it back to him, which HE inspects.)*

BRUNO: I'm sorry, Mrs. Norris, but you forgot the date.

MRS. NORRIS: Oh, I'm terribly sorry.

BRUNO: No problem.

*(BRUNO hands the paper back to MRS. NORRIS, bends back over, and then SHE dates the form. HE stands back up and SHE hands the form back to him, which HE once again inspects. Satisfied, HE folds it back up and puts it in his jacket pocket. Then HE immediately socks her in the stomach, which, understandably, causes her to double over.)*

MRS. NORRIS: *(as SHE turns to go; breathlessly)* Thank you.

BRUNO: You're welcome.

*(MRS. NORRIS exits.)*

BRUNO: I don't know why they always miss the date. It clearly says "Today's Date" right next to the signature.

EDWARD: *(who has been watching in horror)* You just hit that little old lady!

BRUNO: Hey, I didn't give it everything I got. I got a mother, too, you know.

EDWARD: But you hit a little old lady!

BRUNO: Hey, her cat ate Mr. Frontenac's canary.

EDWARD: But you hit her!

BRUNO: Seems a bit ridiculous to hit the cat. Besides, Mr. Frontenac likes cats. Go figure.

EDWARD: But she came here to let you punch her in the stomach!

BRUNO: Naturally. Most people don't like me comin' to them.

EDWARD: I can see that.

BRUNO: Now what's it going to be?

EDWARD: What?

BRUNO: What's it gonna be? Kneecap or elbow?

EDWARD: *(thinking fast)* If you break my elbow, then I can't write.

BRUNO: So, I break your left elbow.

EDWARD: But I'm left handed.

BRUNO: Then I break your right elbow.

EDWARD: But then I can't snap my fingers.

BRUNO: What you need to snap your fingers for?

EDWARD: When I'm coming up with a tune, sometimes I need to snap.

BRUNO: What?

EDWARD: Um... Like um... Like... (*snapping and writing at the same time*) If your clothes, are a real mess, we'll send 'em back clean, and neatly pressed.

BRUNO: Say, that's pretty good.

EDWARD: Thanks.

BRUNO: So I'll break break your knee.

EDWARD: But then I can't keep beat.

BRUNO: I thought you kept beat with snappin' your fingers.

EDWARD: Sometimes I keep beat by tapping my foot *and* snapping my fingers.

BRUNO: What?

EDWARD: Yeah, like... um... (*doing both*) If your toilet, refuses to flush, then call a friend, that you can trust.

BRUNO: Why would you call a friend to unplug your toilet?

EDWARD: Um... what if the plumber were named "Friend"?

BRUNO: That's a pretty dumb name for a plumber.

EDWARD: Um... If your pipes, start to rust, call a plumber, that you can trust.

BRUNO: That's better... but you still only need to tap one foot. So, which foot's it gonna be.

EDWARD: But sometimes I have to dance... you know... when I'm coming up with a really good tune.

BRUNO: What?

EDWARD: (*while HE dances around the room*) Um... If you got moles, in your lawn, just give us a call, and they'll be gone.

BRUNO: But I live in an apartment.

EDWARD: Um... If you got termites, chewin' your walls, alls it takes, is just one call. That's 555-1817, we'll send those buggers, straight to heaven.

BRUNO: What? You're sayin' termites go to heaven?

EDWARD: I can't see why they wouldn't.

BRUNO: That sounds kinda fishy to me.

EDWARD: If they didn't, what would the anteaters eat?

BRUNO: I always figured they ate ants.

EDWARD: Only when they can't find termites.

BRUNO: Lookit, enough with the stallin' already. The boss says I gotta break somethin' since you ain't delivered on the Spickelmeyer and Sons account.

EDWARD: I can't write a jingle for a funeral home! Look! Look! This is all I got so far... (*HE thumbs back a few pages in his notebook*) "In times of need, with your loss, come to Spickelmeyer, we got your box."

BRUNO: That's awful!

EDWARD: I know!

BRUNO: Look, I'd love to let you slide... but I ain't. So, what's it gonna be? The boss says I break somethin' today, and if you don't have it by tomorrow, then I come back and break somethin' else. And then I keep comin' back until either you have it, or there ain't nothin' else to break. So what do we start with?

EDWARD: But if you break something today, how can I write it by tomorrow?

BRUNO: Pardon me?

EDWARD: If you break an elbow, then I can't snap or write. If you break a knee, then I can't tap or dance. Then it would be your fault if I couldn't come up with the Spickelmeyer jingle.

BRUNO: Mr. Frontenac wouldn't like that. *(taking out his cell phone)* Maybe I should give him a call.

EDWARD: *(grabbing his arm)* You can't!

*(BRUNO looks at EDWARD's hand on his arm. There's an uneasy moment before EDWARD lets go of BRUNO's arm, straightens out his sleeve, and gives a nervous laugh.)*

EDWARD: What I meant to say is, we don't have reception up here.

BRUNO: Then I'll use the secretary's phone.

EDWARD: We don't get reception with that one either.

BRUNO: Then what's she got a phone for?

*(The phone rings in the other office. Annoyed, LAURIE lowers her magazine and stares at it while it rings for a few times before SHE reluctantly lays the magazine on her desk and answers it.)*

LAURIE: Frontenac Advertising Agency. Jingles while you wait. Hold please.

*(LAURIE then hangs up the phone and returns to her magazine. BRUNO looks at EDWARD with suspicion.)*

EDWARD: It only rings in.

BRUNO: Then how do you call out?

EDWARD: We have to use the phone booth on the street.

BRUNO: There ain't no phone booth on the street.

EDWARD: There is at 14<sup>th</sup> and Delaware.

BRUNO: 14<sup>th</sup> and Delaware? Delaware's seven blocks over.

EDWARD: It's a real inconvenience.

BRUNO: *(grabbing EDWARD's shirt collar which obviously chokes him)* Lookit. I'm goin' over to 14<sup>th</sup> and Delaware, and if there ain't no

phone booth, I'm comin' back, and it ain't gonna matter which elbow you want broken. You get my drift?

*(EDWARD tries to nod while being strangled. BRUNO finally lets go of him, and EDWARD drops to the floor coughing while getting his breath.)*

BRUNO: *(with true concern)* You know, you might want to get that cough looked after. You don't want it developin' into somethin' serious.

*(BRUNO turns to go. HE meets LAURIE as SHE's entering the room.)*

BRUNO: *(tipping a hat that HE's not wearing)* Good day.

*(LAURIE checks out BRUNO with a smile as HE's leaving. SHE absently stares at the wall a moment after HE's gone, and then remembers what SHE was doing in the first place, and turns back into EDWARD's office, where EDWARD is still on the floor trying to get his breath.)*

LAURIE: *(with no concern whatsoever)* You OK?

EDWARD: *(standing)* Yes. I'll be fine. *(hopeful)* Thanks for checking on me.

LAURIE: Oh, I wasn't checking on you. There's been some guy calling all morning. Like he actually expects me to do something. He's really getting to be a pest.

EDWARD: Who was it?

LAURIE: Somebody named Fontenac or something like that.

EDWARD: *(alarmed)* Mr. Frontenac? He owns the agency! He's our boss!

LAURIE: *(not concerned in the least)* Oh. I thought the name sounded familiar. Well, next time he calls, could you tell him to quit callin'?

EDWARD: But... isn't it your job to answer the phone?

LAURIE: Oh... yeah. OK, then, I'll tell him.

*(LAURIE turns to go, and then, remembering something, SHE turns back.)*

LAURIE: Oh, yeah, somebody slid this under the door. *(SHE holds up a letter)*

EDWARD: They slid it under the door?

LAURIE: Yeah. I tried sliding it back out, but they kept sliding it back in. I think it's for you.

(LAURIE takes a piece of paper out of an envelope and hands it EDWARD. The paper has obviously been written on using cutout words from the newspaper.)

EDWARD: (*in shock*) Oh, good golly!

LAURIE: Good golly?

EDWARD: This is no time to make fun of the way I talk. They've got Schrödinger!

LAURIE: Schrödinger? Who's Schrödinger?

EDWARD: My cat.

LAURIE: You named your cat Schrödinger?

EDWARD: What difference does it make what I named my cat? They got my cat!

LAURIE: Who's got your cat?.

EDWARD: (*shaking the letter*) They do!

LAURIE: (*taking the letter and choppily reading it*) "We got your cat. If you ever want to see him again, then you'll do what we say. Sincerely, They." (*SHE checks the back of the letter for more information, but there is none*) This makes no sense.

EDWARD: You're telling me! Schrödinger's a girl.

LAURIE: Why would you name a girl cat Schrödinger?

EDWARD: Enough with the name already! Where's the envelope it came in? Maybe there's something on the envelope.

(LAURIE holds up the envelope and EDWARD quickly snatches it out of her hand.)

EDWARD: (*reading the envelope*) It's just as I feared!

LAURIE: What? You were afraid of an envelope?

EDWARD: No. The envelope is from Carlson Casket Company. (*HE snatches the letter from LAURIE*) And they've pasted their letters on stationary from Carlson Casket Company as well. Don't you see?

LAURIE: (*taking both the envelope and the stationary and examining them*) I can see they're not very smart.

EDWARD: They've taken Schrödinger so I won't write the jingle for Spickelmeyer and Sons.

LAURIE: Why would they care?

EDWARD: Have you read their motto?

LAURIE: (*reading the stationary*) "Carlson Casket Company: When comfort no longer matters." That's awful!

EDWARD: Yeah, but Spickelmeyer's is even worse.

LAURIE: What can be worse than that?

EDWARD: That's beside the point... and trust me, you don't want to know.

LAURIE: Then what *is* the point?

EDWARD: The point is that they're the only two mortuaries in town. As long as they both have lousy mottos, then everything stays even.

LAURIE: But if one of them were to get a really good motto...

EDWARD: ...or a really good jingle...

LAURIE: ...or both...

EDWARD: ...exactly...

LAURIE: ...then they'd drive the other one out of business.

EDWARD: And that's why they've kidnapped my cat.

LAURIE: If you write the jingle...

EDWARD: Then the cat's nipped.

LAURIE: And if you don't...

*(With great effort, EDWARD forces a swallow.)*

LAURIE: But Schrödinger may already be dead.

EDWARD: But if I don't write the jingle, we'll never know.

LAURIE: But if we don't know, then he could be alive. And if you do, then you'll be in a body cast.

EDWARD: Or the Bohemian Rhapsody.

LAURIE: What?

EDWARD: It's the Carlson's Casket Company's deluxe model.

LAURIE: They named a coffin Bohemian Rhapsody?

EDWARD: I didn't name it.

LAURIE: Yeah, but you named your cat Schrödinger.

EDWARD: Enough already with the cat's name. What am I going to do?

LAURIE: Why don't you write them both a really good jingle? Then they'd still be even but nobody would care.

EDWARD: Can I be honest with you?

LAURIE: *(leery)* Is there anything I have to do?

EDWARD: *(ignoring her)* I don't have a clue what I'm doing here.

LAURIE: Everybody knows that.

EDWARD: Is it that obvious?

LAURIE: You rhymed "the thanks I'll give" with "laxative."

EDWARD: Look. I needed the job. I thought I could fake it. Maybe discover some hidden talent.

LAURIE: "Prunes" with "soon."

EDWARD: I mean, how hard could it be?

LAURIE: "Sit" and...

EDWARD: *(cutting her off)* You don't need to remind me. *(after a pause while HE works his nerve up)* But you see, the thing is... because I was working here, I met you.

LAURIE: That's because I work here, too.

EDWARD: You're not making this easy.

LAURIE: Making what easy? (*finally getting it*) Oh my goodness!  
You're, like, wanting to be my boyfriend.

EDWARD: Well, umm.... yeah.

LAURIE: (*with a shrug*) OK.

EDWARD: (*shocked*) What.

LAURIE: I don't think Brick will mind.

EDWARD: Brick?

LAURIE: Yeah. He's my husband.

EDWARD: You're married?

LAURIE: Sort a.

EDWARD: How can you be sort of married?

LAURIE: We have one of them understandings. While he's away, we decided it would be okay if we dated around.

EDWARD: Where is... Brick?

LAURIE: Prison.

EDWARD: (*alarmed*) Prison?

LAURIE: Yeah. He got off light 'cause the guy never died. Go figure.  
They pull life support and the guy hangs on.

EDWARD: He tried to kill somebody?

LAURIE: Well, not exactly. He shoved the guy out in the street and the bus happened to be comin'.

EDWARD: Why?

LAURIE: 'Cause they were at the bus stop.

EDWARD: No. No. Why did he try to kill somebody?

LAURIE: Oh. Brick, well... he used to have a problem with bein' jealous. But he says he's better now. He says that solitary confinement gives you an opportunity for introspection. And you can work on your vocabulary, too.

EDWARD: When does Brick get out.

LAURIE: Last week.

EDWARD: Last week!

LAURIE: Yeah. He ain't got home yet 'cause he says there's some things that he had to take care of. Some people he had to see.  
You know... judges and lawyers and witnesses....

EDWARD: Listen, Laurie. Maybe we're rushing into this just a bit fast.

LAURIE: Ah, no. You're gonna love Brick. (*sizes him up*) Maybe.

EDWARD: Really. Really. It's just not that important. It was just an infatuation. Puppy love.

LAURIE: I thought you had a cat.

EDWARD: Maybe we could just pretend we're going out for a while and see how that goes.

LAURIE: Naw. You know, the more I look at you, the more I think you're kinda cute.

EDWARD: Um... thanks... maybe.

LAURIE: Naw. It'll be fun... at least for a while. What say you pick me up this Saturday... say, around 7:00.

EDWARD: 7:00?

LAURIE: Don't be late. I wouldn't like it. Brick wouldn't like it. *(as an afterthought)* You wouldn't like it.

*(LAURIE leaves his office and returns to her desk, once again opening her magazine. MR. FRONTENAC enters.)*

LAURIE: *(without looking up)* He's in there.

*(FRONTENAC doesn't even slow down, barging into EDWARD's office.)*

EDWARD: Oh, Mr. Frontenac! I'm so glad to see you!

MR. FRONTENAC: Just wait until Bruno breaks somethin'. You won't be so glad.

EDWARD: That's what I need to talk to you about.

MR. FRONTENAC: What you need to talk to me about is why I got to talk to you about... let's just call it commitment. I want all of my employees here to be committed to doing their job like they're committed to breathing. Because there really is no difference, if you know what I mean.

EDWARD: *(after a hard swallow; an octave or so higher)* Yes.

FRONTENAC: *(putting his hand behind EDWARD's neck)* Listen. I don't want to hurt you. I don't want to have Bruno hurt you. And I'd hate to see you hurt yourself in a freak accident where you plummet 17 floors to your horrible death... *(HE turns EDWARD's head to the window)* ... if you know what I mean. *(HE lets go of EDWARD's neck and steps back; more sincere)* You know I want you to do well here. I'm countin' on you to help me break into show business.

EDWARD: You know, I've been meaning to ask you... how do we break into show business by writing jingles for local businesses in the Midwest?

FRONTENAC: You got to start somewhere. Besides, a jingle agency is all that I can afford.

EDWARD: But why do you want to break into show business?

FRONTENAC: Ahhh... It's not so much for me as for Mrs. Frontenac. It's hard for her to tell her friends her husband pays other people to hurt other people. I'm not even sure that makes sense. Me, I don't care.

EDWARD: You don't care if your friends know you hurt other people for a living?

FRONTENAC: Naw. It's just that I ain't got no friends.

EDWARD: Look, Mr. Frontenac... I gotta be honest with you.

FRONTENAC: If you insist.

EDWARD: I know you may have Bruno kill me...

FRONTENAC: Oh, no. Bruno won't kill you... at least, not on purpose.

At least, I won't tell him to. Now, if you sent him on a wild goose chase... that's another thing altogether. He tends to take that sort of thing personally.

EDWARD: Listen, Mr. Frontenac, I can't rhyme worth a hoot. I have no idea whatsoever what I'm doing here.

FRONTENAC: I know that. What do you take me for, an idiot?

EDWARD: Well...

*(FRONTENAC gives him an icy look.)*

EDWARD: No! No! I'd never take you for an idiot. *(thinks for a beat)*  
If... if you knew that I had no idea what I was doing, why did you let me do it?

FRONTENAC: Because I need you to do something else for me.

EDWARD: Oh, really? What?

FRONTENAC: I need you to marry my daughter.

EDWARD: What?

FRONTENAC: Not what, who. Juliette. My daughter.

EDWARD: Your daughter's name is Juliette?

FRONTENAC: You named your cat Schrödinger and you talk about other people's names?

EDWARD: How do you know my cat's name?

FRONTENAC: It's my business to know these things. Now you're gettin' off subject. Come this Saturday, at 7:00 – sharp, you and Juliette will be united in wedded bliss. 'Till death do you part.

EDWARD: I don't want to marry your daughter! I don't even know your daughter.

FRONTENAC: Like I said, "Till death do you part."

EDWARD: But why do I have to marry your daughter?

FRONTENAC: So she don't marry Romero.

EDWARD: Romero? You're putting me on.

FRONTENAC: Alfonso Frontenac don't put nobody on. Kapeesh?

EDWARD: Kapeesh?

FRONTENAC: Yeah. It's supposed be Italian. They always say it in the movies. So here's the deal. My daughter, Juliette, thinks she's in love with this Romero fellow. She says she wants to marry him. But that ain't gonna happen. Not while I still got breath in my one good lung. So you're going to marry her instead. And that settles the problem. You walk down the aisle with my daughter, or you don't walk anywhere for a long, long time... if ever. Kapeesh?

EDWARD: But why do I have to marry her? Why can't you just take care of this Romero guy?

FRONTENAC: That's the whole idea. If he marries my daughter I'll be takin' care of the worthless bum for the rest of my life, and maybe his, too.

EDWARD: No. No. Why don't you... um... rub him out?

FRONTENAC: I ain't rubbin' on him! What's the matter with you?

EDWARD: You misunderstand!

FRONTENAC: I would hope so!

EDWARD: Why don't you take him out?

FRONTENAC: Take him out? I'm a married man! Maybe you ain't the right guy for this job after all.

EDWARD: Why don't you have him killed?

FRONTENAC: Killed? Why would I want to do that? Somebody could get hurt. No. I've made up my mind. This is how it's gonna be. Come Saturday, you are going to be standin' in front of Our Lady of Blessed Indifference church, and when the priest asks, you're gonna say, "I do."

EDWARD: But... I don't love your daughter.

FRONTENAC: Neither do I. I don't see what's that got to do with anything.

EDWARD: But... I'm in love with somebody else. Maybe...

FRONTENAC: I don't see what that's got to do with anything, either.

EDWARD: What if I refuse?

FRONTENAC: *(smiling, moves up close to EDWARD)* The way I see it, you got two choices. You marry my daughter, and live happily ever after. Or you don't... *(while softly patting EDWARD's cheek)* and then you *don't* live happily ever after. *(as HE turns to go)* I'll see you on Saturday... and wear a suit. Somethin' nice. Not too flashy.

*(MRS. FRONTENAC enters with a flourish just as her husband is leaving. SHE grabs his arm and spins him back into the room.)*

MRS. FRONTENAC: *(excited)* So this is the boy that's going to marry our daughter! Have you known each other long?

FRONTENAC: Oh, not really.

MRS. FRONTENAC: I wasn't talking to you, dear. I was talking to this nice young man... whatever his name might be.

EDWARD: It's Edward.

MRS. FRONTENAC: Oh, what a lovely name. We used to have a young man named Edward who worked for us. It's amazing what they can do with plastic surgery now days. So, Edward, how long have you known our little Juliette?

*(EDWARD, uncertain what to say, looks past her to FRONTENAC, who simply folds his fingers together on his chest and nods.)*

EDWARD: It seems like all my life.

*(FRONTENAC smiles his approval.)*

MRS. FRONTENAC: Oh, young love. How exciting.

*(SHE crosses to EDWARD, still smiling, and with one quick move grabs him by the collar and pulls his face up to hers.)*

MRS. FRONTENAC: *(menacing)* You break my daughter's heart, I break your kidneys.

*(SHE lets him go and is instantly happy again.)*

MRS. FRONTENAC: *(as SHE'S crossing to the door past her husband; cheerful)* Comon, dear, we got a lot of planning to do.

FRONTENAC: Welcome to the family, son.

*(THEY exit. EDWARD crosses and sits on his desk. After a beat, JULIETTE pushes through the door. Of course, SHE will have crossed in front of LAURIE, but LAURIE will not have noticed her, or for that matter ANYONE ELSE. SHE's once again engrossed in her magazine.)*

JULIETTE: Let's get this straight. There ain't gonna be no wedding.

EDWARD: Who are you?

JULIETTE: I'm Juliette. I'm your fiancé. But we ain't engaged, 'cause there ain't gonna be no wedding.

EDWARD: I don't want to marry you.

JULIETTE: What? You got somethin' against marrying me?

EDWARD: *(checking her out, more or less)* No. Not really.

JULIETTE: Well it ain't gonna happen, see? Now let me tell ya what's gonna happen. Come Saturday night, you're going to be at that church, all right. But when Father Tom asks if you do, you're gonna say you don't. You got that? That way we show the whole world what a fool my father really is.

EDWARD: I... I don't think I really want to show the world that your father is a fool.

JULIETTE: Fine. Fine! You go ahead and say, "I do." *(getting lovey-dovey... it's a technical term... cuddling up to EDWARD)* Then it's just the two of us, alone, on our honeymoon. Alone in Acapulco.

EDWARD: *(liking the idea)* Acapulco, huh?

*(In one swift movement, JULIETTE grabs EDWARD in a headlock and crosses over to the window, where SHE presses his face against the glass.)*

JULIETTE: Yeah, Acapulco. You ever go cliff diving?

*(SHE lets him go. EDWARD staggers backwards.)*

EDWARD: No. Never.

JULIETTE: Well, I guess they'll be a first time, then. But I wouldn't count on a second time.

*(JULIETTE crosses to the door. Just as SHE's leaving, ROMERO barges through.)*

JULIETTE: Romero. What are you doin' here?

ROMERO: That's none of your business.

JULIETTE: What do you mean, it's none of my business?

ROMERO: I mean exactly what I mean. I got business with this fella here that don't concern you.

JULIETTE: I think maybe it does.

ROMERO: Well ya do, do ya. Get on outta here!

*(JULIETTE exits in a huff. ROMERO crosses over to EDWARD and walks around him, sizing him up.)*

ROMERO: *(finally)* So daddy found a suitor, did he?

EDWARD: Look. It's not what it seems.

ROMERO: Oh, I know how it seems. What daddy says, goes. And the rest of us, we just smile and say, "Yes, sir," or "No, sir." And that's just the way it is. Oh yeah, I understand. I understand it all. But here's something for you to understand. If you touch her, I'll kill ya. If you look at her, I'll kill ya. If you call her on the phone, I'll kill ya. If ya...

EDWARD: I get it already!

ROMERO: I just want that it should be clear between you and me. Ya know?

EDWARD: But, we're supposed to be married.

ROMERO: I ain't gonna marry you! What do ya take me for!

EDWARD: No! Not you. I'm supposed to marry Juliette this Saturday at 7:00.

ROMERO: Then you got a problem, don't cha? Because when seven o'clock rolls around, you better be nowhere near Our Lady of Blessed Indifference.

*(ROMERO leaves EDWARD's office. As HE's passing LAURIE, HE stops and checks her out, as SHE does him. THEY are just smiling at each other when BRUNO enters, obviously very angry. ROMERO immediately leaves and LAURIE hides behind her magazine. BRUNO continues right on into EDWARD's office.)*

BRUNO: There ain't no pay phone at 14<sup>th</sup> and Delaware. There ain't even a 14<sup>th</sup> and Delaware!

EDWARD: *(never giving up)* Did I say this town? I meant in Crawfordsville.

BRUNO: *(pointing angrily at EDWARD)* I've been sapped the play for the last time!

EDWARD: What?

BRUNO: You and me, we got a settle to score.

EDWARD: What?

BRUNO: You sent me on a wild goose chase. And I don't even like geeses.

EDWARD: Geeses?

BRUNO: *(off on a tangent)* You know, I don't really see why anybody would. They're big and dirty and really more of a nuisance than anything else. And on top of that, they're really kinda mean.

EDWARD: What are you talking about?

BRUNO: Geeses.

EDWARD: Why?

BRUNO: I thought you wanted to. Listen, enough of this chat chit. You tried to make me look like a fool. Nobody makes me look like a fool. If I wanna look like a fool, I'll do it on my own. So here's what's gonna happen. You and me... mano and... less than mano. This Saturday night at 7:00 down at the old warehouse.

EDWARD: What old warehouse?

BRUNO: How many old warehouses can there be? And don't make me come lookin' for you. If I have to find you, then you're better off not bein' found... if you know what I mean.

EDWARD: At this point, I don't think it matters.

BRUNO: OK, then.

*(BRUNO exits into the outer office just as ROSS and WORTHINGTON enter. THEY will ALL see each other and ROSS and WORTHINGTON will quickly hold up a hand so that BRUNO can't see them, and BRUNO will do the same.)*

LAURIE: *(to each as THEY're passing)* How ya doin' Bruno? Hey, Ross. Hey, Worthington.

*(LAURIE will return to her magazine as BRUNO exits and ROSS and WORTHINGTON enter the office. As THEY enter, BOTH will flip out badges.)*

WORTHINGTON: Are you Edward Lutz?

EDWARD: *(with apprehension)* Yes...

WORTHINGTON: I'm agent Worthington.

ROSS: *(pointing at WORTHINGTON)* And this is agent Ross.

EDWARD: That doesn't make sense.

ROSS: Exactly.

*(During the following exchange, EDWARD will continually look from one to the other.)*

WORTHINGTON: We're with the FBI.

EDWARD: The FBI?

ROSS: Exactly.

WORTHINGTON: We're going to be straight with you.

EDWARD: That's a relief.

ROSS: We've been trailing your employer.

WORTHINGTON: Mr. Frontenac.

ROSS: For nearly three weeks now.

WORTHINGTON: He's a slippery one.

ROSS: Indeed he is.

WORTHINGTON: We can arrest him.

ROSS: Right now if we wanted to.

WORTHINGTON: Most certainly.

ROSS: But we want to make it stick.

WORTHINGTON: Like flypaper on an August afternoon.

ROSS: Like chewing gum on hot asphalt.

WORTHINGTON: Like those soft mints they serve at weddings on your molars.

ROSS: Like...

WORTHINGTON: I think he gets it.

ROSS: How come you always get to use more metaphors than I do?

WORTHINGTON: Because I'm the senior officer. Besides, they're similes.

ROSS: Listen, Edward, I'm going to be Frank with you.

EDWARD: I thought you were Worthington.

WORTHINGTON: No, I'm Worthington.

ROSS: And he's Ross.

EDWARD: Then who's Frank.

ROSS: I suppose Frank would be.

WORTHINGTON: Never mind about Frank.

EDWARD: I don't even know who Frank is.

ROSS: And it's best that it stays that way.

WORTHINGTON: Here's the deal.

ROSS: And it's the best deal you're going to get.

WORTHINGTON: We need your help.

ROSS: We need to catch Frontenac in the commission of a crime.

WORTHINGTON: But nothing little.

ROSS: It's gotta be big.

WORTHINGTON: Really big.

EDWARD: And what crime would that be?

ROSS: Killing you.

EDWARD: What?!

ROSS: He doesn't actually have to kill you.

WORTHINGTON: Though that would make for a much stronger case.

ROSS: Much.

EDWARD: You want me to help you put away Frontenac?

WORTHINGTON: In summary, yes.

EDWARD: But what about all the others?

WORTHINGTON: The other crimes won't matter.

EDWARD: Not the other crimes! The other people who will want to kill me!

ROSS: Who else would want to kill you?

EDWARD: All of the other mobsters!

WORTHINGTON: Don't worry. When they do, we'll be able to put them away for good, too.

EDWARD: No!

ROSS: Most certainly we will... well, if we can catch them in the act.

EDWARD: No!

WORTHINGTON: (to ROSS) It's like I've always said, "The layman doesn't understand the law."

EDWARD: No. I understand the law perfectly well. I dropped out of law school. What you don't understand is the word, "No."

ROSS: No.

WORTHINGTON: Adverb.

ROSS: To negate.

WORTHINGTON: The opposite of yes.

ROSS: That which isn't positive.

WORTHINGTON: The absence of possibilities.

ROSS: I believe we understand "No."

EDWARD: I'm not going to do it!

ROSS: Why not?

EDWARD: Why not? Because they'll kill me!

WORTHINGTON: Is that all that's bothering you?

EDWARD: Is that all?

ROSS: Two words.

WORTHINGTON: Witness Protection Program.

(EDWARD, puzzled, tries counting on his fingers.)

WORTHINGTON: We'll move you to a new city.

ROSS: Give you a new identity.

WORTHINGTON: Set you up when you get there.

EDWARD: I feel like I'm being set up here.

ROSS: It's the best deal you're going to get.

EDWARD: What about my cat?

WORTHINGTON: We'll give her witness protection, too.

EDWARD: How can you change the identity of a cat?

ROSS: (*picking up a large pair of scissors off the desk*) We can make her a Manx.

EDWARD: What!?

WORTHINGTON: (*ignoring him*) We'll send you and your cat to Sioux Falls.

EDWARD: What?

ROSS: It's in Iowa.

EDWARD: I know where Sioux Falls is! I don't want to go to Sioux Falls.

WORTHINGTON: Neither does anyone else.

ROSS: It's a very safe place to hide.

EDWARD: You're going to cut my cat's tail off and send us to Sioux Falls?!

WORTHINGTON: Ummm...

ROSS: Yeah.

WORTHINGTON: And then there's the gender change.

EDWARD: What!

ROSS: They won't be looking for a woman.

WORTHINGTON: Consider it the start of a whole new you.

EDWARD: This is insane! You want me to set my boss up. And if that doesn't get me killed, every mobster between here and New Jersey will be gunning for me. And the only solution you have is to cut my cat's tail off and make me a woman?

WORTHINGTON: Ummm...

ROSS: Yeah.

EDWARD: What if I refuse?

ROSS: Code 138.

WORTHINGTON: Section 12.

ROSS: Part A.

WORTHINGTON: Sub-header Four.

ROSS: Interfering with Federal Officers.

WORTHINGTON: Code 147.

ROSS: Section Nine.

WORTHINGTON: Part B.

ROSS: Sub-header Four.

WORTHINGTON: And Five.

ROSS: Respectively.

WORTHINGTON: Aiding...

ROSS: ... and abetting...

BOTH: A criminal.

WORTHINGTON: You ever been in a Federal Prison, Mr. Lutz?

ROSS: Sioux Falls starts to sound good.

EDWARD: You can't send me to prison for refusing to help you!

WORTHINGTON: We can do anything we want.

ROSS: We're the Federal Government.

*(As THEY're leaving.)*

ROSS: Remember Mr. Lutz. 7:00 p.m. Saturday at Our Lady of Blessed Indifference.

WORTHINGTON: And remember, we've got your back.

EDWARD: A lot of good that'll do if they shoot me in the front!

*(ROSS and WORTHINGTON exit. EDWARD, in a state of disbelief, sits on his desk. KLINGMEYER slowly rises from behind the desk to the Right of EDWARD. At first HE will not be seen by EDWARD. EDWARD will slowly turn and see him, and jump off the desk with a shout in shocked surprised.)*

EDWARD: *(holding his chest)* Good Guppies! Who are you?

KLINGMEYER: *(sedate, as always; offering a limp hand that EDWARD will not take)* My name is Cromwell P. Klingmeyer the Third.

EDWARD: How did you get in here?

KLINGMEYER: I came in through the window.

EDWARD: I'm on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor!

KLINGMEYER: I know.

EDWARD: How could you get in here with my hearing you?

KLINGMEYER: We're trained to be unnoticed.

EDWARD: What? Are you another government agent?

KLINGMEYER: No. I'm an undertaker.

EDWARD: What?

KLINGMEYER: I owned Klingmeyer and Sons Mortuary until we were bought out by Carlson Casket Company.

EDWARD: You work for Carlson Casket Company?

KLINGMEYER: No. I work for Spickelmeyer and Sons. I was offered a position at Carlson, but somehow it just didn't seem right, what with their having bought me out. But I suppose it's just as well. Neither of my daughters wanted to carry on the family business anyway.

EDWARD: I thought you said it was Klingmeyer and Sons.

KLINGMEYER: I did. But who ever heard of a funeral home named Klingmeyer and Daughters?

EDWARD: What are you doing here?

KLINGMEYER: I've come to help you get your cat back.

EDWARD: Help me get her back?! You guys took her to begin with!

KLINGMEYER: I didn't take her. My employers did.

EDWARD: Like there's a difference?

KLINGMEYER: Only to me. No, sir. I do not approve of what my employers have done. But... well... As you know, these are trying economic times we exist in.

EDWARD: That's not an excuse!

KLINGMEYER: If you don't have a job it is. Besides, I understand you were less than truthful with the circumstances in which you procured your present employment.

EDWARD: Yeah... well... but I didn't kidnap anybody's cat!

KLINGMEYER: And neither did I.

EDWARD: Ok, then!

KLINGMEYER: Precisely.

EDWARD: Why are you here?

KLINGMEYER: I have been sent to inform you that if you don't deliver a jingle by Saturday at 7:00 p.m. my employers are going to put your cat in a box with poison in it. And trust me, they have a lot of boxes.

EDWARD: They're going to poison Schrödinger?!

KLINGMEYER: Who's Schrödinger?

EDWARD: My cat.

KLINGMEYER: You named your cat Schrödinger?

EDWARD: What difference does it make what I named my cat?!

They're going to poison her!

KLINGMEYER: Only if you don't deliver the jingle to by 7:00 p.m.

They'll be waiting for you at Our Lady of Blessed Indifference.

EDWARD: They're doing a ransom transfer at a church during my wedding?

KLINGMEYER: Where else?

EDWARD: I don't get it. You came all the way down here... you risked your life climbing in through a window on the 17<sup>th</sup> floor... just to tell me that? Why didn't you just send a letter?

KLINGMEYER: *(taking one out of his pocket)* They did.

EDWARD: What?

KLINGMEYER: I'm actually here as part of my other job. I've been hired to keep an eye on you by Mr. Frontenac so you don't sneak off before Saturday's wedding.

EDWARD: You work for Mr. Frontenac, too?

KLINGMEYER: Yes. But only part time. Contrary to popular belief, funeral directors don't make that much money.

EDWARD: There's a popular belief about how much money funeral directors make?

KLINGMEYER: Apparently. *(after a beat)* Shall we?

EDWARD: Shall we do what?

KLINGMEYER: Shall we go?

EDWARD: I'm supposed to work 'till five.

KLINGMEYER: At this point in your life, do you really suppose anybody's going to care if you take off early? Besides, I left the hearse running down on the street.

EDWARD: You drive a hearse?

KLINGMEYER: It's one of the perks of the job. *(as THEY're walking toward the door)* Oh, you'd better turn off the lights. We don't want to waste electricity, now, do we?

*(As EDWARD hits the lights, drop the entire auditorium, close the curtain, and then bring up the house lights.)*

## END OF ACT ONE

## ACT TWO

**Set: Our Lady of Blessed Indifference Church.**

***At Open, FRONTENAC and BRUNO are standing in the church DR. The TWO PRIESTS are up toward the altar. Weirdly enough, there is a bit of the excitement of a wedding. EVERYBODY will be dressed for the ceremony.***

BRUNO: I tell you, Mr. Frontenac, I'd go ten dollars, five to one, he don't show.

FRONTENAC: Whose five and whose one?

BRUNO: Your five and my one.

FRONTENAC: Why would I want to give you them kinda odds?

BRUNO: On account of employee appreciation day.

FRONTENAC: When's that?

BRUNO: Whenever you wanna give me odds like that, Mr. Frontenac, sir. Besides, it don't matter what you bet, 'cause I'm bettin' he don't show.

FRONTENAC: You're bettin' that he will disrespect me?

BRUNO: With all respect, sir, yes.

FRONTENAC: What?

BRUNO: My respect, his disrespect, respectfully.

FRONTENAC: Never mind what you say. He's gonna show.

BRUNO: No disrespect, sir...

FRONTENAC: Oh, no, we're not going to start that again.

*(THEY BOTH become silent, glancing about suspiciously, after which, BOTH at once, will look at their watches.)*

BRUNO: It's seven o'clock. Pay up.

FRONTENAC: Pay up? We never made no bet. Besides, it wasn't whether he'd show up at 7:00, it was whether he'd show up at all...

*(EDWARD, with his tuxedo half buttoned up, comes rushing through the door, along with KLINGMEYER, who is following way too closely.)*

FRONTENAC: ...And there he is.

BRUNO: *(shocked)* He showed up.

FRONTENAC: He showed up.

*(BRUNO, while keeping his eyes in amazement on EDWARD the whole while, will reach into his breast pocket, take out a \$20, and hand it to FRONTENAC, who transfers it to his breast pocket, all the while never looking at BRUNO either.)*

FRONTENAC: No one disrespects Alfonso Frontenac.

*(FRONTENAC will fade to the front of the church, and BRUNO will exit. EDWARD, who has crossed to center, will stop and KLINGMEYER will bump into him. EDWARD will turn and push him away, but KLINGMEYER will immediately step back up.)*

EDWARD: Just because you're supposed to keep an eye on me doesn't mean you can't do it from a socially acceptable distance!

*(The TWO PRIESTS, FATHER THOMAS and FATHER TOM, will step up. FATHER THOMAS will immediately fall asleep with his head on FATHER TOM's shoulder.)*

FATHER TOM: *(to KLINGMEYER)* Ahh... Arthur Klingmeyer. 'Tis a surprise to see you at a wedding. Did you get your days confused?

KLINGMEYER: Oh, no. I'm a friend of the groom.

EDWARD: We're not friends!

KLINGMEYER: *(unfazed)* I'm the best man.

EDWARD: You are not!

FATHER TOM: *(to EDWARD)* Ah, then! So you're the groom! I'm Father Thomas. *(nudging the OTHER PRIEST)* And he's Father Thomas.

*(FATHER THOMAS wakes up)*

FATHER THOMAS: How do you do?

EDWARD: You're both Father Thomas?

FATHER TOM: Yes. It's a bit confusing. That's why I go by Father Tom.

FATHER THOMAS: I thought I was Father Tom.

FATHER TOM: No. That was last month.

FATHER THOMAS: I thought it was this month, too.

FATHER TOM: No. That will be next year. *(explaining to EDWARD)* You see, I go by Father Tom in every month that ends in "Y," and he's Father Tom in every month that ends in "R." But to make it work out even, we switch in odd years.

FATHER THOMAS: They all seem odd to me.

EDWARD: What about all the months that don't end in R or Y?

FATHER TOM: We just let them take care of themselves.

EDWARD: That really sounds confusing.

FATHER TOM: Oh, don't worry about it. We can't keep track of it, either.

*( FATHER THOMAS has once again fallen asleep on FATHER TOM's shoulder.)*

EDWARD: Does he have a sleeping disorder?

FATHER TOM: Oh, no. Before Father Tom...

FATHER THOMAS: *(waking up)* It's Father Thomas... *(HE falls back to sleep)*

FATHER TOM: Yes. Before he came to Our Lady he was a Somnambulist.

EDWARD: What?

FATHER TOM: It's a Brotherhood of Monks dedicated to staying awake.

EDWARD: Why?

FATHER TOM: Why, so they won't miss anything. He stayed awake for seven years straight. And then he came here. He's just really, really tired. He's got a lot of sleep to catch up with.

EDWARD: How long ago was that?

FATHER THOMAS: *(waking up)* Four years this summer. And I'm just about caught up. *(HE falls back asleep)*

EDWARD: *(quieter)* How come he quit after seven years?

FATHER TOM: Oh, that's all they'll let you. After that, you start to see things that really aren't there.

FATHER THOMAS: (*suddenly awaking*) Ah! Blessed be! So, you're the groom?

EDWARD: (*to FATHER TOM*) I thought we'd already gone through this.

FATHER TOM: Don't worry. You'll get used to it.

EDWARD: Listen! You can't marry me.

FATHER THOMAS: Oh, I know. I'm a priest. We're not allowed to get married.

EDWARD: No. I mean you can't marry me to Juliette.

FATHER THOMAS: Oh, I know.

EDWARD: You know?

FATHER THOMAS: Absolutely.

EDWARD: Thank goodness.

FATHER THOMAS: That's why Father Tom will do the ceremony.

EDWARD: What?

FATHER THOMAS: Oh. They won't let me marry anybody on account I keep falling asleep.

FATHER TOM: He once fell asleep during Mass, and when he woke back up, it was next Sunday. He just took up where he left off, and nobody seemed to mind.

FATHER THOMAS: People getting married, though, don't usually want to wait. That's why Father Tom is going to marry you. Well, not *you*. He can't do that either. But he'll do the ceremony. Unless I'm Father Tom this month. Then Father Thomas will do the ceremony. But don't you worry; it'll all work out the same. We'll get you married.

(*FATHER THOMAS falls back asleep with his head on FATHER TOM's shoulder.*)

EDWARD: Listen. You don't understand. I can't be married.

FATHER TOM: (*with a bit of concern*) What's that you say?

EDWARD: I said that I can't be married.

FATHER TOM: You're not already married, are you?

EDWARD: No.

FATHER TOM: Are you of the faith?

EDWARD: What faith would that be?

FATHER TOM: Close enough. (*thinking hard*) Let's see... Oh yes... and you're not crazy?

EDWARD: No! I'm not crazy.

FATHER TOM: Then you can be married. Although that last one is not an absolute.

EDWARD: (*resigned*) But you don't understand.

FATHER TOM: I know. *(to the sleeping FATHER THOMAS, loudly)*

The Royals win!

FATHER THOMAS: *(waking with a start)* Blessed be! A miracle!

*(THEY BOTH drift off toward the altar. AUNT LULU, who has entered on the above lines, looks around for a beat. Seeing EDWARD, SHE crosses to him.)*

AUNT LULU: Well! It is true! You are getting married! *(with a sniffle, dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief)* And it seems like just yesterday you weren't.

EDWARD: Aunt Lulu! What are you doing here?

AUNT LULU: *(immediately no longer sad)* "What am I doing here," he asks. Why, I've come to see my third favourite nephew get married, that's what. And lucky thing I did, too. Otherwise there would've been no one from your family present on this, the most important day of your life. Why, just wait until your mother finds out she wasn't invited to her very own son's wedding. It'll just break her heart.

EDWARD: *(trying to be quiet)* Aunt Lulu... I'm not really getting married.

AUNT LULU: *(loudly)* What? Not getting married? You got a lovely bride waiting for you at the altar and you're not going to marry the poor dear?

*(THEY BOTH look toward the altar where FRONTENAC, who has been fooling around with the flowers, appears to be holding a bouquet.)*

AUNT LULU: Better your mother wasn't here to see such a thing.

There's only so much heartache a mother can stand, you know.

And I would say your mother has reached her limit. What with your brother Vinnie being in prison and all.

EDWARD: Vinnie's not my brother! He's your son.

AUNT LULU: It still doesn't mean your mother's heart isn't breaking.

EDWARD: Aunt Lulu... how did you know I was getting married?

AUNT LULU: Why, just this morning I was getting my hair coloured down at Arlene's Beauty World... and you remember Beulah Tarkington? Well, she had the boy who became the doctor – and let that be a lesson to you – some parents have children they can be proud of. Well, Beulah's nephew's oldest boy, the one who used to go with that girl whose left leg was shorter than her right... or was it the right leg that was shorter than the left? Not that it matters, because when you walk in a circle you end up in the same place no matter which direction you head out in. Her sister – remember, the cute one who had normal feet? Well, she used to date this boy who

was run over by a bus. Smashed him flat, it did. He was out in the middle of the street trying to pry the reflectors off the center stripe. I don't know why. No wonder he was smashed flat. So I was wanting to send flowers to the funeral, on account of his mother used to work at the dry cleaners where your great uncle Folksencroft, God rest his soul, always had his trousers tailored. Why he couldn't have his trousers done at the same place he had his shirts, we'll never know. So any way, she tells me the poor boy's body, such as it was, was taken down to Carson's Casket Company, which I always thought was a rather silly name for a funeral home, but who am I to say? And, wouldn't you know it, but your cat came up in the conversation. Why, I knew it had to be your cat, because who else would name their cat Schrödinger? And the next thing I know, I hear you're getting married! Today even. Why, right there in that chair I told Janis to skip the crème rinse, I've got a wedding to attend. And here I am.

EDWARD: But you don't understand.

AUNT LULU: "I don't understand," he says! What's not to understand? You say, "I do." You go home and raise a family... *(glancing back at FRONTENAC)* ...or not, then you retire, and then you die. *(noticing KLINGMEYER, who has once again moved in just a bit too close to EDWARD)* Who's he?

EDWARD: He's the undertaker.

AUNT LULU: You think you could wait a year or two.

KLINGMEYER: Ours is a very competitive business.

*(Enter WORTHINGTON and ROSS, disguised as ALTAR BOYS. THEY cross to EDWARD and push in front of AUNT LULU and KLINGMEYER.)*

WORTHINGTON: *(to EDWARD)* We're all set to go here.

AUNT LULU: Hey! We were havin' a conversation here!

ROSS: *(flipping out his identification)* Altar Boy business, ma'am.

AUNT LULU: *(after inspecting his identification)* Oh. Sorry.

*(AUNT LULU, along with KLINGMEYER, step back. THEY will start a quiet, convivial conversation between the two of them.)*

EDWARD: You've got to be kidding! What's with the get up?

WORTHINGTON: We're undercover.

EDWARD: No one's going to believe that you're Altar Boys!

ROSS: *(hooking a thumb toward AUNT LULU)* She did.

WORTHINGTON: Don't worry about a thing. We got it all figured out.

As soon as Frontenac makes his move we'll whisk you out of here in our stealth helicopter.

EDWARD: (*skeptical*) What stealth helicopter?

ROSS: The one that's parked out on the street.

EDWARD: (*looking toward the main doors*) I don't see any helicopter out in the street.

ROSS: Of course not. It's stealth.

EDWARD: There is no stealth helicopter!

WORTHINGTON: Would you believe a stealth taxi?

EDWARD: No!

WORTHINGTON: It doesn't matter. As soon as Frontenac makes his move, Ross will cuff him.

ROSS: Why do I always have to be the one to do the cuffing?

EDWARD: You guys aren't here to save me! You're going to let them shoot me!

ROSS: Oh, they're not going to shoot you.

WORTHINGTON: They'll probably use a garrote. (*HE mimes using one*)

ROSS: Besides, if they think you're dead, you won't need to go into hiding.

WORTHINGTON: As much.

ROSS: Maybe your cat can keep its tail.

EDWARD: But I *will* be dead.

WORTHINGTON: Then you won't need to go into hiding at all.

(*FATHERS TOM and THOMAS have crossed over to EDWARD, ROSS, and WORTHINGTON.*)

FATHER TOM: (*to WORTHINGTON and ROSS*) Oh, good. The Altar Boys are here. Come along now, it's time to get ready.

(*The FOUR of them cross to the front of the church, where EVERYBODY is slowly getting organized. In the meantime, BRICK has entered with LAURIE. They cross to EDWARD. LAURIE will fade a step back.*)

BRICK: Are you Edward Lutz?

EDWARD: Yeah... who are you?

BRICK: I'm Brick.

EDWARD: (*in disbelief*) You're Brick?

BRICK: Kevin Bricowski. But everybody calls me Brick. It's easier to pronounce.

EDWARD: Than Kevin?

BRICK: It has fewer syllables.

EDWARD: But... I thought... you were supposed to be some big, mean guy. A homicidal manic. You know. Beat people to death with their own body parts.

BRICK: Oh, heavens no!

EDWARD: But your girlfriend...

BRICK: Who's that?

EDWARD: You don't know who your girlfriend is?

BRICK: No. I don't have a girlfriend.

EDWARD: But Laurie said that you and her... were... whatever.

BRICK: Oh! That. She just tells people that to keep them from hitting on her.

EDWARD: Then... she's available?

BRICK: How would I know?

LAURIE: No, I'm not. I'm going out with Bruno now.

EDWARD: The mobster?

LAURIE: Yeah. He's a sweet guy once you get to know him.

EDWARD: (to BRICK) But... weren't you in prison?

BRICK: I suppose.

EDWARD: You suppose?

BRICK: It was very minimum security. There wasn't even a fence. We had to promise to be back, around midnight. But it wasn't as koosh as you might think. Sometimes, the guards could really talk harshly. They only had basic cable. And 18 months without a decent Chardonnay is really rough.

EDWARD: Well... um... yeah. That goes without saying. So... um... what were you really in for?

BRICK: Tax fraud. I worked for Mr. Frontenac. They say I didn't pay taxes on \$10,000.

EDWARD: That sounds pretty serious.

BRICK: Yeah, but not as serious as it would've been had they known about the other 48 million.

EDWARD: Well... um... yeah.

BRICK: But all told, it was a good experience. It allowed me to pursue my other interest: Writing.

EDWARD: Oh?

BRICK: Yeah. (eager) And that's why I wanted to talk to you. I understand that you're a professional writer.

EDWARD: Um... not really.

BRICK: What do you mean "Not really"? They pay you to write, right?

EDWARD: Right.

BRICK: Then you're a professional. See, when I was in prison I wrote a jingle for my tax company. I worked really hard on it. Want to hear it?

EDWARD: No.

BRICK: Great! I don't have it completely worked out yet, but here it goes. (as if HE's singing a big Broadway production number)

When you got money by the sack-es,

And you don't wanna pay your taxes,  
And you don't want to spend the rest of your life in jail,  
Then come and see the pros,  
'Cause everybody knows  
That we'll always treat you swell!

*(BRICK finishes with one knee on the floor and his hands raised. EVERYBODY ELSE has stopped to watch, and when HE's done, THEY ALL politely clap, and then immediately return to whatever it is THEY were doing before.)*

BRICK: What do you think?

EDWARD: You spent 18 months working on that?

BRICK: No. I didn't get started right away. So... what do you think? Do you think I got what it takes?

EDWARD: *(inspired)* Actually, I do. In fact, I know somebody who needs a jingle. See that guy over there? *(pointing at KLINGMEYER)* He needs a jingle for his company.

BRICK: *(excited)* Really? What kind of company is it?

EDWARD: They make caskets... among other things.

BRICK: *(not quite so excited)* Oh?

EDWARD: *(nudging him toward KLINGMEYER)* Consider it a professional challenge. You score big with this group, and you'll never have to work through another tax season ever again.

BRICK: *(the excitement is building)* You think so?

EDWARD: Do I think so? I know so. They're just waiting for somebody like you to knock 'em dead... to impress them.

BRICK: Really? By golly! I'm going to do it!

EDWARD: *(as HE going)* And be sure to tell them that I sent you.

*(BRUNO has entered and crossed to EDWARD. HE is very angry.)*

BRUNO: I thought I told you to meet me at the old warehouse at seven so I could kill you! Now I got no choice but to kill ya! But first, I'm gonna beat ya ta death! *(noticing LAURIE; sweetly)* Oh, hi honey bunch.

LAURIE: *(flirtatiously, which is a great adverb)* Hi, Bruno.

BRUNO: *(back to EDWARD; once again angry, HE grabs him by the collar and cocks his other fist)* And now, say goodbye to daylight.

*(At the last moment, FRONTENAC steps up.)*

FRONTENAC: What you doin'?

EDWARD: *(scared)* Praying.

FRONTENAC: Not you.

BRUNO: With all respect, I was getting ready to seriously hurt this worthless individual for not showing up at the warehouse at 7:00 where I was going to seriously hurt this worthless individual.

FRONTENAC: But you weren't at the warehouse at 7:00. You were here.

BRUNO: Yeah, but then I went down to the warehouse to make sure he hadn't shown up there, too.

FRONTENAC: That's why I like you. You're thorough. However, at this point I can't have you doing serious damage to the groom, being that this is my daughter's wedding and all.

BRUNO: *(letting go of EDWARD)* I find that disappointing, Mr. Frontenac, sir.

FRONTENAC: You think you're disappointed? You ain't marryin' my daughter.

*(MRS. FRONTENAC and JULIETTE enter. JULIETTE is in a wedding dress that SHE keeps tugging at. SHE also has a bouquet.)*

FRONTENAC: *(with false sincerity)* Ah, speaking of brides... mine *(to EDWARD)* ... and yours.

MRS. FRONTENAC: *(suddenly alarmed; to EDWARD)* Don't look!

*(SHE crosses to EDWARD and puts a paper bag quickly over his head. JULIETTE then hurriedly crosses to the front of the church as EDWARD takes the bag off.)*

EDWARD: What was that for?

MRS. FRONTENAC: What was that for, he says? It's bad luck to see the bride on the day of the wedding.

EDWARD: I don't possibly see how anything could make my luck worse.

BRUNO: *(stepping up and cocking his fist back in a warning)* Your luck's been good so far... relatively speaking.

*(BRUNO backs off and smiles pleasantly at LAURIE as ROMERO, who has entered, crosses over to EDWARD. HE is wearing a tuxedo identical to EDWARD's.)*

ROMERO: I'm only going to tell you once: You go up to the front of this church, and I'm gonna kill ya.

EDWARD: *(surprised)* What?

ROMERO: I said I'm only gonna tell you once. You go through with this wedding and you're dead.

EDWARD: What?

ROMERO: What? Are you hard of hearin'? You say, "I do," and you're done. It's that simple.

*(The "Altar Boys," WORTHINGTON and ROSS, start playing the "Wedding March" on kazoos. JULIETTE, who is already at the front of the church, holds up her flowers and starts walking as only a bride would toward the back of the church. EVERYBODY who is sitting down will stand and face her while KLINGMEYER will grab EDWARD by the arm and usher him to the front of the church. JULIETTE will get about halfway down the aisle before...)*

FRONTENAC: Hey! Wait a minute!

*(JULIETTE stops, but WORTHINGTON and ROSS continue playing.)*

FRONTENAC: *(to them)* Cut it out, would ya!

*(WORTHINGTON and ROSS stop.)*

FRONTENAC: *(to JULIETTE)* Where do you think you're goin'?

JULIETTE: Well... they was playin' the "Wedding March," and since I was already at the front of the church, I had to march somewheres, so I thought I'd march to the back of the church and then turn around and come back again. *(to ROMERO)* Oh... hi Romero.

*(ROMERO waves.)*

FRONTENAC: Well... that's far enough. Now you turn around and march back here.

JULIETTE: What? I can't march without no music.

*(WORTHINGTON and ROSS look at each other, shrug, and then start playing again. JULIETTE turns and walks – as only a bride would do – back to the front of the church.)*

FATHER TOM: *(when SHE finally gets there)* Ah! Blessed be. Now who would be giving this bride away?

FRONTENAC: That would be her mother. I've already given up on her.

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