

WHITE. Maybe the host isn't here because the host is dead.

(She slurps a sip too loudly.)

GREEN. I'm feeling awfully anxious.

(He slurps a sip too loudly.)

(PEACOCK, ever enjoying her soup, continues her slurping. The other GUESTS begin making sounds of their own: the tapping of a plate, the scuff of a chair, the clink of a wine glass, the opening and closing of a zippo lighter. Perhaps we hear the click click click of YVETTE's heels as she comes out to fill wine glasses. We may even hear a cat sound. The sounds build in intensity as they begin to sound quite rhythmic and musical.)

(After reaching a cacophony, WADSWORTH enters and strikes the gong. The COOK enters with a slicer tray of food—six plates of drab-looking noodles. She slams down the plates in rhythm, moving from stage right to stage left. When she has placed all the noodles, she turns and walks back stage right, the slicer tray hitting the heads of all six GUESTS—also in rhythm.)

(WADSWORTH, YVETTE, and the COOK exit. The GUESTS continue with their rhythmic sounds as they eat and drink. At certain moments throughout, each guest picks up an item from the table, lights shift and the guest strikes a threatening pose. The remaining guests react in horror. For example, WHITE picks up a butter knife and holds it above her head before she butters a roll. MUSTARD struggles to open a jar, but it looks like he is strangling someone. YVETTE enters with a large pepper shaker and it looks like she might strike PEACOCK with it. PEACOCK screams!)

(Meanwhile, we see GREEN begin to choke on a piece of food. He gets up and works his way to the end of the table. He motions towards the other GUESTS for help. Thus begins a game of charades as the GUESTS try to figure out what's wrong with him.)

(When GREEN finally convinces the GUESTS that he's choking, MUSTARD runs around behind him and begins grating him the Heinrich maneuver. WADSWORTH enters, sees MUSTARD behind GREEN in a sexually suggestive position, and exits. Finally, the piece of food comes flying out of GREEN's mouth and lands in WHITE's wine glass [if possible].)

(GREEN recovers. He and the GUESTS eventually sit and eat quietly.)

(After a moment of uncomfortable silence, PEACOCK can stand it no longer . . .)

PEACOCK. *(Nearing hysteria, all in nearly one breath.)* Well, I guess I'll break the ice, I mean, I'm used to being a hostess; it's part of my husband's work, plus I always host the ladies' group from my church on Sundays. It's difficult when a group of new friends meet for the first time, so I'll start the ball rolling . . . I mean, I have no idea what we're doing here, but I'm very intrigued and oh, my, this soup's delicious isn't it?

(The GUESTS stare at her, bewildered.)

WHITE. I think hosting parties is deathly boring.

PEACOCK. Well, it's an integral part of my life as the wife of . . . oh, I forgot we're not supposed to say who we really are.

GREEN. I know who you are.

[MUSIC CUE #16]

PEACOCK. *(Removing her glasses nervously.)* How do you know who I am?

GREEN. I work in Washington, too.

PLUM. Oh, so you're a politician's wife?

PEACOCK. *(Put off by PLUM.)* Yes, I—I am.

SCARLET. So . . . who's your husband? *(Cheekily.)* Maybe I know him.

PEACOCK. *(Vaguely offended, changing the subject.)* Mrs. White, what does your husband do?

WHITE. Nothing.

PEACOCK. Nothing?

WHITE. Well, he . . . just . . . lies around on his back all day.

SCARLET. *(With a sexy wink.)* Sounds like hard work to me.

WHITE. He lies around on his back because he's no longer alive.

(Thunder/lightning.)

PEACOCK. So, what do you do in Washington, D.C., Mr. Green?

GREEN. I'd better not say. I like to follow the rules.

PEACOCK. Oh, come on. How are we to get acquainted if we don't say anything about ourselves? No judgments here; we're all God's children.

WHITE. I don't believe in God.

PEACOCK. Well, if I wasn't trying to keep the conversation going, then we would just be sitting here in an embarrassed silence.

PLUM. In my professional opinion, it sounds like you have a case of “fear-of-silence-itis.”

MUSTARD. Is that an official diagnosis?

WHITE. Are you a doctor, Professor?

PLUM. I know a little bit about psychological medicine, yes.

WHITE. Do you practice?

PLUM. Not anymore. I currently work for the government.

MUSTARD. Another politician!

PLUM. Not exactly. I do research for the office of Social and Behavioral Studies. In other words, I study “crazy,” and I’m good at it. *(He winks.)*

MUSTARD. Sounds fascinating.

PLUM. Thank you, Colonel. You are a real colonel, aren’t you?

MUSTARD. *(Suddenly serious.)* I am, sir.

SCARLET. Aren’t you gonna mention the coincidence that you also live in Washington, D.C.?

MUSTARD. How did you know that?

SCARLET. *(With a twinkle.)* Oh, I’ve seen you before.

GREEN. So, Miss Scarlet, does this mean that you live in Washington, too?

SCARLET. *(With a sly smile.)* I do everything in Washington, Mr. Green.

PEACOCK. *(Deliberately moving on . . .)* Does anyone here not live in Washington, D.C.?

(They all look at each other, putting together the coincidence. MUSTARD stands, fed up, addressing WADSWORTH.)

MUSTARD. Wadsworth, we’ve had about enough of this! Where’s our host, and why have we been brought here?!

(The doorbell rings. They all look to the right. Look out. WADSWORTH straightens his jacket, smooths his hair, checks his watch and . . .)

WADSWORTH. Pardon me, please.

[MUSIC CUE #17]

(WADSWORTH exits through the door. Quickly SCARLET dumps the contents of her glass and runs to the door. She places her ear against her glass against the door. The GUESTS follow suit. The

all turn their glasses upside down and line up, single file, behind SCARLET, ears to glasses against the backs of the guest in front of them, as though they are able to hear through the glass, through the guest, through the door. As the GUESTS are listening, we bleed through the scrim to see the front door. WADSWORTH opens it to reveal, MR. BODDY—handsome, suave, and mysterious. He holds a briefcase and duffle bag.)

WADSWORTH. Good evening, sir. You are eagerly awaited.

BODDY. Thank you, Wadsworth. It’s good to be home.

(WADSWORTH takes his coat. As they speak, they slowly make their way downstage.)

BODDY. Are the guests all here?

WADSWORTH. In the Dining Room, sir.

BODDY. Right on schedule. I’ll meet you in the Study then, as planned.

WADSWORTH. May I take your bags?

BODDY. No, Wadsworth, I’ll keep them with me.

WADSWORTH. They contain more evidence, I assume?

BODDY. *(As BODDY opens the door into the Study.)* Never assume, Wadsworth. It’s much more fun to be surprised.

(BODDY steps through the door of the Study, thus disappearing offstage. The scrim wall becomes opaque.)¹

(The GUESTS scramble back to their seats, bumbling about trying to seem as though they had not been eavesdropping. WADSWORTH re-enters the Dining Room.)

PEACOCK. *(Hysterically, slamming the table.)* For God’s sake! I demand to know what’s going on!

WADSWORTH. Right. *(Clearing his throat and then . . .)* I believe you’ve all received a letter, yes?

GUESTS. *(In various ways.)* “Yes.” “I did.” “I did too!” *(Etc.)*

WADSWORTH. Do you have them with you?

(As the GUESTS reveal their letters in one motion.)

[MUSIC CUE #18]

¹ Note: At this moment, the Study furniture can be set behind the opaque scrim.

WADSWORTH. And am I correct that each of your letters advised you to be present this evening, because a certain—Mr. Boddy—has offered to bring an end to a long-standing, confidential and painful financial liability?

ALL GUESTS. "Yes!" "Oh, yes!" "That's what my letter says!" "Mine too." (Etc.)

WADSWORTH. (Evermore the butler.) Can I interest any of you in fruit or dessert?

ALL GUESTS. No!

(Thunder/lightning.)

WADSWORTH. In that case, may I suggest we adjourn to the Study for coffee and brandy, at which point I believe your letters will be explained and . . . the game will be afoot.

(Thunder/lightning!)

[MUSIC CUE #19]

(The GUESTS move downstage and, again, line up across the edge of the stage. Still mumbling about . . .)

ALL GUESTS. "The game?" "What game?" "What's he talking about?" "I love games!" (Etc.)

(Behind them, YVETTE and COOK split the dining room table and push each side offstage.)

(The GUESTS hold their letters in the air. WADSWORTH crosses in front of them, taking their letters with an air of officiousness. The scrim behind them rises as he leads them upstage and into the Study.)

SCENE 3

(The Study.)

(The GUESTS find themselves in a fully realized Study. Stage right, there is a small desk and chair. A large fireplace is center, and, stage left, there is a sofa facing parallel to the edge of the stage.)

(YVETTE stands by her bar cart passing out brandies to MUSTARD, PLUM, and SCARLET.)

WADSWORTH. Thank you, Yvette. That will be all.

(YVETTE exits.)

GREEN. Well, where is our host?

PEACOCK. He's not here! Nobody's here! What is happening?!

WADSWORTH. Please, Mrs. Peacock. Have a drink.

PEACOCK. My lips belong to the Lord!

SCARLET. (She downs a drink.) Well, mine don't! Mind if I smoke?

(PLUM lights SCARLET's cigarette while MUSTARD finds a string and button closure envelope [a la the envelope placed in the center of the Clue board game] on the desk. The envelope reads "CONFIDENTIAL" in large red letters.)

MUSTARD. (Reading.) "For Wadsworth. Open After Dinner."

(Handing it to WADSWORTH.)

It's for you.

(WADSWORTH opens and reads it while the GUESTS crowd around him. GREEN sneezes.)

ALL. Gesundheit.

GREEN Sorry. There really must be a cat somewhere.

WADSWORTH. (Having finished the letter.) Right then. Are you comfortable?

MUSTARD. I make a good living.

PLUM. Oh, out with it, Wadsworth!

WADSWORTH. Ladies and gentlemen, my instructions are clear. It seems the six of you have one thing in common. You are all being blackmailed. For some considerable time all of you have been paying what you can afford—and, in some cases, more than you can afford—to someone who threatens to expose you.

PEACOCK. Oh, please! I've never heard anything so ridiculous. I mean, nobody could blackmail me. I go to church every Sunday!

SCARLET. Yeah lady, don't we all.

WADSWORTH. Anybody else wish to deny it?

(The GUESTS anxiously exchange glances in silence.)

WADSWORTH. Until tonight, none of you knew who was blackmailing you. I hope I'm correct that the more deductive among you have reasoned in the last several moments that it was, of course, Mr. Boddy himself—and that the less discerning members of our cadre are experiencing that particular revelation right about . . .

MUSTARD. It was Mr. Boddy!

WADSWORTH. . . . NOW.