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At the end of each script is a list of what is included in the Production Packet for that show. A Production Order form is also included.

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THE FATAL FIFTIES AFFAIR

An Audience Participation Murder-Mystery

by

Eileen Moushey

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Revised 2009

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

NOTE REGARDING AGES : Obviously, if a character was a certain age in the Fifties, they would have to be a certain age NOW. So if Winky was 10 in 1959, she'd be 55 in 2004. Which would bump everyone's ages older and older. So we've found a way to handle it. Which is: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. We've found that using actors whose ages are correct to their relationship is the important thing. The audiences "forgive" it and it becomes a non-issue. The ages given in the description reflect what we use. Please note that the script refers to the characters by their t.v. names.

HOST/HOUSTESS - The co-ordinator of the event. Listed as HOUSTESS within the script.

BARRY WEST/NICK HARDY, PRIVATE EYE - Thirties. A dual personality. As Barry, he's the quintessential talk show host. As Nick Hardy, he's a hard-boiled detective in the style of Philip Marlowe. Dressed in suit and tie.

CONGRESSMAN JOE WENTWORTH/DADDY BEANS - Fifties. Distinguished. Jimmy Stewart-ish. Dressed in slacks, cardigan sweater.

DR. JENNIFER JOHN/MOM - Fifties. Very warm and professional. Jennifer is a psychologist/author ala Dr. Joyce Brothers. Dressed conservatively but not dowdily.

MAYBELLE FRANKLIN/AUNT CORA - Fifties or older. A down-home ol' country gal, a very low tolerance for pretense. Dressed in checkered blouse and square dance skirt, complete with crinolines.

DEBBIE FLECK/SISSY - Thirties or Forties. Ultra-conservative. Crusader type. Sees things in black and white without shades of gray. Dressed very modestly.

LAURIE ALLING/WINKY - Thirties. The eternal child. Perky, gamine-like. Optimistic. Dressed like the fifties, with a distinctive jacket or letter sweater.

AUDIENCE PLANT/VICTIM - Any age/gender (although referred to as "she" in the script). Dressed in a very good Fifties costume. NOTE: We usually use a friend or relative who is helping out as a clue helper (See PRODUCTION MANUAL). Until their "death" they play themselves. Following their demise, they "come back" as the Victim's long lost twin. If you want, you can use an actor and in that case, the Victim is done.

PART ONE - PRELUDE TO MURDER

The evening is billed as a celebration of the Fifties and promotion should include a costume contest. If it isn't feasible for your show, there's a way to work around it that's included with the FIFTIES Production Packet. As the event begins, and the audience arrives, the actors, in character, will mingle with them. We've found that when it comes to interaction, it is best if the actors initiate conversations, beginning with introducing themselves, etc.

BARRY is all over the place, very excited, greeting everyone, etc. He will, however, have sudden switches in mood and get belligerent and paranoid. He may have a period where he sits down and hugs himself while rocking.

DADDY BEANS is glad-handing like the politician he is. He doesn't belong to a particular party, having switched his affiliation several times. He invites people to ask him about what's happening in Washington or any other current affair. When asked about a particular issue, he will show an ability to be on both sides of it, depending on what his questioner asks. His signature issue is highway safety - particularly the dangers of pot holes.

MOM will attempt to help BARRY when he has one of his "spells." She'll be very concerned about problems that audience members may have. When she asks "How are you?" she really, really means it and will push for an answer. This may include having the audience member lie on a couch as she listens and takes notes.

AUNT CORA is very engaging and has a lot of jokes which she loves to share. She's also keeping an eye on the others and making notes in a notebook. She solicits audience members to eavesdrop on the others and report back to her.

SISSY is very, very unhappy to be there which she shares with one and all. She also likes to show pictures of her beloved husband, Alan, and her nine precious children. She will be heard on her cell phone several times, checking on them, arbitrating on fights, etc. She just wants to go home to her family and will cry on the shoulder of anyone who will listen.

WINKY is very, very excited to be there and talks a lot about the show, finding out who's seen it, etc. She'll ask about particular episodes like the one where Aunt Cora went to Vegas to see Elvis and wound up getting married to a craps dealer. Or when Daddy Beans had to dress up and pretend to be Mother at a PTA meeting. She also has cards she passes out which provide the mailing addresses of television networks, including cable. She's mounting a campaign to revive the old show.

HOSTESS is looking for costume contest winners and taking names, including, of course, VICTIM.

PART TWO - THE PLAY

FIFTIES can be played anywhere there is a stage or playing area. For purposes of simplicity, that area is described as the "stage." Pre-show music is Fifties tunes.

Onstage is six chairs. Five are in a line, with the sixth (BARRY'S) separate. In front of the chairs is a small, low coffee table with five glasses and a pitcher of water. The HOSTESS enters.

HOSTESS: Welcome to _____. My name is _____ and I will be your hostess this very special evening filled with all sorts of fun events. We have a murder mystery to solve a little later, we've got some prizes for costumes, and we are going to meet the cast of the television show, Make Way For Winky. To take us on our trip back in time to the Fifties is a gentleman who really needs no introduction, as his talk show, Barry the Hatchet, is aired every week in _____. I'm speaking of course, of Mr. Barry West. Barry had a little trouble recently that you may have read about, but he's out of the hospital now, and feeling much better. And when he heard we were doing a salute to the Fifties, well, we couldn't keep him away. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Barry West!!

Applause, applause. BARRY comes bounding onstage. During this entire first "interview" segment, BARRY is completely intense and manically enthusiastic. He flips constantly from sincerity to hysterical laughter. He is in constant motion, even when seated, and has a nervous laugh and shoulder twitch.

Also, during this segment, there is lots and lots of movement, with the changing of seats, the pouring of water, picking up the wrong glass and drinking from it, etc. It should be choreographed so that it is difficult for the audience to know who is drinking from what glass, etc. To be fair, however, one glass is designated the "poisoned" one and, while all have access to it, no one may drink from it. CORA may pick it up and hold it, but she will never drink from it. In addition, during this "interview" segment, all the Prescotts at one time or another will do something that, on later reflection, could look like a poisoning attempt. Examples - taking a pill, using a kleenex, using breath spray, etc.

BARRY: Thank you!! Thank you!! Wow, what a welcome!! I am so excited to be here tonight!! We are going to have one hell of a good time!! And that's comin' from a guy who knows what a bad time is!! Try a couple of weeks in the psych ward!!! But I'm fine now, and want to thank all of you who sent the cards and gifts and, most of all, the prayers. If it weren't for my fans, well, let's just say, I'd still be wearing the shirt with the long arms. (*He mimes being in a strait jacket*). Heh-heh-heh.

But enough of that!! We're here to have a good time! To shake, rattle and roll!!! To celebrate a time when the world was a little sweeter, a little gentler, a little less insane - oooh, did I say that? I'm talking, of course, about the Fifties. There was a very special tv program that symbolized that decade more than any other. I'm talking of course, of Make Way For Winky, which ran for six years. During that time America laughed and cried along with the whole Prescott Family. And, tonight, ladies and gentlemen, we'll have a chance to do that again, because the PRESCOTTS ARE HERE! Let's bring out the star right now, okay? Ladies and gentlemen, give a real warm welcome to Laurie Alling, better known as Winifred Prescott, Wee Willie Winky, the Winky-bird!!!

The musical "theme" from the show is heard (See Appendix) as WINKY enters through the audience and joins BARRY onstage. He is ecstatic to see her and they exchange hugs and the "wink" that was her trademark. She sits in the chair closest to BARRY.

BARRY: You haven't changed!!! *(To audience)* Doesn't she look exactly the same!! Do you have a portrait at home that's doing all the aging??? Remember that book? About some dude who stayed forever young but he had this picture at home that looked like. . . . I think Stephen King wrote it . . . But, anyway, I gotta tell you again. . . you look like a million bucks.

WINKY: Thanks, BARRY.

BARRY: Not that a million bucks will buy you a whole lot nowadays. . . But, seriously, you look exactly the same. Only in color. Winky Prescott. Live and sitting here next to me. Pinch me.

WINKY: Now, Barry. . .

BARRY: I'm not kidding. I mean it. Pinch me. Go ahead.

WINKY: Gee, Barry. . .

BARRY: Please, huh, Winky, please, please, please. . . *(WINKY reluctantly gives BARRY a pinch.)* Ow! Oh, that felt good. A Winky Pinky pinch. I still can't believe you're here., Winky. Do you mind if I call you that?

WINKY: Not at all. I guess I even think of myself as Winky. No one's called me Laurie for years.

BARRY: *(Becoming the investigative reporter)* Okay, now, Winky, I want to know it all. What was it like? Was it awful being a child star? Were you exploited by the studios? Your parents? Was it all a case of too much too soon. . . Do you have any regrets, what would you change??? Come, come, don't be shy. . . Tell Barry all.

WINKY: There's not that much to tell, Barry. Dirt, I mean. It was the happiest time of my life. My real parents were great folks who invested my money wisely, so I

don't have to work another day if I don't want to. And the studio was like a big playground. If I ever have a kid, I'd want them to grow up just like I did.

BARRY: Winky, Winky, Winky. Are you telling me it was all just like the show? All sweetness and light? No little jealousies? No fights? This is Uncle Barry you're talking to.

WINKY: I know it's terribly boring, but the Prescotts were just like you saw them on t.v. We didn't just work together at being a family. We were a family. You'll see when the others are out here.

BARRY: I will, I will, 'cause you are all just too good to be true!! But before the rest of the Prescotts join us, I want to catch up on what life has held for Winky since the show went off the air in 1964.

WINKY: Well, I finished school.

BARRY: Boy, am I glad to hear that! Some kids couldn't handle going from star to NOBODY overnight. You deserve just a big round of applause. (*He gets audience to applaud.*) How about that, ladies and gentlemen, for once a show biz success story. Winky goes to college. Hey, I think there's a show there!!! So, you finished college?

WINKY: I meant I finished junior high, Barry. After that, I had a chance to make a movie, which, of course, turned out to be a big mistake.

BARRY: Hey, Winky, that's what being human is all about. Making choices, sometimes bad ones. Goofing up. There isn't a person out there who hasn't screwed up at one time or another.

WINKY: I suppose you're ri. . .

BARRY: 'Course, nobody here did it on film . . .heh-heh.

WINKY: Now, I. . .

BARRY: Tell me, Winky, what ever possessed you to make "Young Mrs. Einstein"?

WINKY: Well, my agent thought that sounded like a fascinating story.

BARRY: Oooh, it was your agent's idea? What an idiot, huh?

WINKY: Um, he died last week, Barry.

BARRY: You're kidding. You're such a joker!!!

WINKY: No, really. My agent died last week. He was ninety-two.

BARRY: Oh, gee, Winky, I am so sorry. Is my face red or what?? It was a joke, honest. I feel awful. Hit me, Winky.

WINKY: I really don't think you need to. . .

BARRY: Hit me, Winky, hit me hard. I deserve it.

WINKY: He was real old, Bar. . .

BARRY: I SAID, "HIT ME." (*She hits him and he does an immediate "flip" back into interview mode.*) So you made a real stinker of a film, and of course we all know about your trouble with drugs.

WINKY: It was a real painful time in my. . .

BARRY:(*Interrupting*). . .then I don't think we should talk about it. Instead, let's talk about the future, okay? Where do you go from here, Winky? What does tomorrow hold for the little girl from Pine Avenue?

WINKY: Wow, you've got quite a memory, Barry. Actually, the future holds lots of exciting things for me and the family. . .My t.v. family, I mean. We're visiting _____ as one of the first stops on a nationwide tour. We're going to sixteen cities, performing some of our old scripts. And I'm in talks to produce a new series, based on the old one.

BARRY:Oh, wow - "The New Make Way for Winky Show."

WINKY:Actually, we're thinking of just calling it "Winky!" With an exclamation point.

BARRY: That's fabulous! I cannot wait. I simply cannot. I'm gonna die. So, Winky-bird, what say we bring out the rest of the folks? Are they all here tonight? I know they all have gone on to great things and we want to find out all about it. Should we bring 'em out? Hey, I'm in charge and I say let's get 'em out here!!

The others enter from the house to the "Winky" theme. BARRY is dancing to it. He greets all with an exuberant bearhug except SISSY who rebuffs him.

BARRY: Ladies and gentlemen. Television's Prescott Family!!! Mom Prescott! Aunt Cora!! Sissy!! Father, or as Winky used to call you, Daddy Beans!!

MOM: Hello, Barry.

CORA: How do.

DADDY BEANS: Nice to meet you, Barry. This is one great theatre. . .um. . .hotel. . .um party center. In fact, I gotta tell you, this is a great town. I won't say it's as great as my hometown, Minneapolis, but it's still just. . .great.

SISSY: Tell me, Barry, how many adult movie houses are there in this great little town?

MOM:Now, Sissy..

SISSY: How many stores that sell girly magazines? How many massage parlors? How many pool halls?

CORA: I swear if she starts singin' 'bout pool tables and River City, I'm gonna puke.

MOM: Cora!! I'm sorry, Barry. You're witnessing an unfortunate phenomenon, not unlike the Stockholm syndrome. You see, verbal sparring is one way in which we humans will deal with the innate hostilities that arise after sharing close quarters for a period of time. We Prescotts are not immune to this. We've all grown and evolved and developed agendas which, though vital and valid to us individually, may be the cause of antipathy when placed in a community type environment.

CORA: In other words, Sissy here has grown to be a big fat pimple on the Prescott Family Butt.

DADDY BEANS: (*Laughing*) Cora, that homespun, down-home way you have about you!!! If I haven't told you lately, you're great, just great!

CORA: Put a sock in it, Daddy Beans.

BARRY: Well, Winky, so this is the family that loves each other, hmm??? I think I'm going to have to dig a little deeper into what makes the Prescott family tick.

CORA: Go ahead. Ask me.

BARRY: Ask you what?

CORA: Anything. Me and Winky know all the answers, don't we, Wink?

BARRY: Sorry, Cora. My show, you know. Ha-ha!! (*They all laugh with him.*) And I want to start with Mom. Mother Prescott. Did you ever have a name on the show, by the way?

MOM: (*As she pours water for all.*) No, everyone called me "Mom" and called Joe "Father." Even Cora. And we always called her that. "Cora," I mean. It was so much easier, you see. And Sissy was "Sissy" and Winky was, of course, "Winky."

BARRY: Life was simpler then.

SISSY: Men were men and women were. . .

CORA: Stupid.

BARRY: Remember, Cora, my show. Ha-ha. *(They all laugh again.)* Now, Mom, I gotta tell you how impressed I am by your second career. You're a psychologist which, of course, is something I know about. If I want to be truthful, I gotta say - I know too much about psychologists, ha-ha.

MOM: Yes, Barry, I dare say you do. I've been observing you closely. That nervous laugh. The shoulder twitch. Would you care to go and maybe have a little talk later on? No charge.

BARRY: *(Laughing and twitching.)* Heh-heh. No thanks, Doctor, but thanks for thinking of me. I have read both your books, and found them very helpful, especially "The Joys of Sanity." I particularly like the section on fantasies and how they can take. . .

SISSY: Fantasies!!!! As in sexual fantasies? Just what kind of fantasies are we talking about here!!

CORA: One in which you go and soak your head in a bucket of warm pig spit for a week or two..

DADDY BEANS: Now, girls. . .What will Barry think of you, arguing like this? Anyone who didn't know you, would think that you two weren't great friends. They're great buddies, Barry. Really. Great. Now, sometimes, Cora here can get kind of crude. . .

CORA: 'zzat so? Better remember who you're talking to. . .

DADDY BEANS: Although, Sissy can be just a tad narrow-minded. . .

SISSY: Yes? Well, I'll just pass that little fact along to some of my friends, my many friends, in Minneapolis. . .

DADDY BEANS: Well, now, when I was a boy, growing up on the farm, I had two sisters who used to fight just like you two. They were as different as night and day. And you know, they're both nuns now. So it only goes to show how much. . .

BARRY: Tell him, Cora.

CORA: It's Barry's show, Joe. *(All laugh.)*

BARRY: And I'm not done talking to Doctor Mom. Also known as Dr. Jennifer John, who, unlike Winky, not only finished junior high but went on to become a respected and prominent member of the mental health field. And the author of several best-selling books, including the in-depth psychological biography of Squeaky Fromme, *(or O.J. or Robert Blake)* which I was not able to put down. Fascinating stuff. So tell, me, seriously, Mom. . .Why now? Why return to the Prescott family?

MOM: Um. . .well, Barry, that's a tough one. I guess I'd have to say I'm doing it because Winky asked me. It's hard to say no to her.

WINKY: Ah, Mom. See, Barry, of all of us, Mom comes the closest to her character on the show. That's why people trust her, she'd never lie, or do anything dishonorable. . .

DADDY BEANS: I'd have to second what Mom said, Winky. It's hard to say no to you. That's why I'm along for the ride too. When the Winky calls, you don't let the machine answer!!!

SISSY: You two always did love her best.

DADDY BEANS: Now, Sissy, that's not true. We loved you both the same. Well, okay, sometimes we loved her best, but sometimes we loved you best. And sometimes we loved each other best. And sometimes we loved Cora best.

BARRY: And sometimes you loved Walter the dog best.

DADDY BEANS: No, never the dog. I hated that nasty, vicious, son of a . . .Um, although I really love dogs. Except pit bulls. Now, they should be destroyed. . .or, um. . .locked up real good or. . .something. . . Anyway, I love Cocker Spaniels. . .yessir, a spaniel's just about my favorite dog. . . . 'Cept for Irish setters, . . .Now there's a beautiful dog. . .great, just great. . . not that I don't love daschu. . .weiner dogs. . .

BARRY: Thanks for sharing your thoughts on dogs with us, Joe. I find this all fascinating. Simply fascinating. First, Dr. Jennifer John, best selling author and respected professional psychologist, is giving it all up to go back to being a sit-com Mom. That's incredible. And then there's you, Daddy Beans. Also known as Congressman Joe Wentworth of Minneapolis. Serving his constituency while he tours as Dad Prescott. Is that possible?

DADDY BEANS: Well, it hasn't been easy. But I keep in touch with my folks back home and they know I'm still working for them. Plus, as you know, I was blessed back in '85, winning the lottery. . .

BARRY: That's right! You walked away with a couple mil!!! Talk about lucky!! You got to be a Prescott, you turn that into a successful political career, and you are loaded. So, how does it feel to be the second most famous actor-turned-politician in the country?

DADDY BEANS: I'm honored, just honored, to follow in Reagan's footsteps. I mean, Barry, . . .

BARRY: I was talking about Arnold, Joe. You've been a Congressman for what, twelve years? And the hot poop I've heard is that you are thinking of an even

bigger prize. That you are, as they say, Presidential timber. True? Tell Uncle Barry.

DADDY BEANS: Are they saying that? I think that's great, just great. Presidential timber, huh?

CORA: More like dead wood. . .

DADDY BEANS: Not that I have the slightest intention of seeking higher office. I'm perfectly happy serving the wonderful, great people of Minneapolis. And I hope and pray I can continue doing it in the future.

BARRY: Well, now, how will you manage to do that while on tour the next few months? And if, as Winky hopes, you'll be busy making "Winky!"

DADDY BEANS: Hey, Barry, I think it's a little premature to worry about that. The cow's still in the barn, the plane's in the hangar, the train hasn't even left the depot yet. I am not going to be cornered into committing to anything based on generalities or vague assumptions. That's something that time and the Good Lord will have to take care of.

BARRY: Why is it I'm having trouble envisioning "Hail To The Chief" being played to someone named Daddy Beans? So, Sissy, how's it been hanging with you?

SISSY: Oh, my turn?

BARRY: Why not? I wanted to save Cora for last.

SISSY: Well, if you really want to know, I'd be more than happy to fill you in on what I've done since that stupid show went off the air. I married a wonderful man named Alan Fleck, and I have been completely fulfilled ever since. He taught me how to be a true woman.

CORA: That guy!! (*To the audience*) Her husband looks like Squiggy.

SISSY: We have nine beautiful children. . .

CORA: C'mon, they aren't really his, are they?

SISSY: (*Aghast and standing*) I will not stay and put up with that woman's SMUTTY mouth.

WINKY: Ah, please, Sissy, stay. Cora didn't mean it. C'mon.

CORA: Hell, Sissy, I didn't mean anything by it. Your old man just looks like such a weenie, that's all.

SISSY: MY HUSBAND IS NOT A WEENIE. And I'm just grateful that he allows me to do all the things outside the home that I feel need to be done. You see, Barry, ever since all this Women's Liberation garbage started brain-washing the ladies of America, our country has been in a steady decline. So I formed a group, first of all in my home town of Kenosha, then state-wide, and now we have over 6,000 members across these United States. It's called Women Against Dirt, or WAD for short and I am the founder and president.

BARRY: This is just fascinating. And what do you do at WAD?

SISSY: Well, our agenda is no secret. We are concerned with saving this country from the moral cess pool that the libbers, and the liberals, and the underground Commies have dumped it in.

BARRY: Wow, and all in your spare time?

SISSY: That has been hard, Barry, I am so glad you can appreciate it. But my husband shares my beliefs and has encouraged and supported me every step of the way.

CORA: As long as supper's on the table.

SISSY: You joke, Cora, but it's true. Until we left on this tour, there wasn't a day go by that I didn't serve Alan his dinner. And that includes the day the twins were born. *(To Barry)* I had all my babies at home. Alan's a dentist.

BARRY: Then we know it wasn't the money that made you reprise your role as Winky's big sister. Dentists make mucho dinero.

SISSY: Alan is a fabulous dentist and a real artist with a drill, so of course, he's in great demand. We are very comfortably off, if it's any of your business, Barry.

BARRY: Then, as they say in the commercial, why leave home without him?

SISSY: Well, Winky did ask and despite how we sometimes fight, I do have a tough time saying no to her.

BARRY: Oh, Winks, you are a piece of work. What a scamp!! So now we've only one family member who hasn't filled us in. Cora Prescott, everybody's favorite aunt. The chief cook, housekeeper and partner in Winky's escapades. . . .Better known in country western circles as Maybelle Franklin, star of Hee Haw and the Grand Ole Opry. Do y'all mind if I just call ya Cora, though?

CORA: Shoot, Barry, if ya give me a kiss, ya can call me anything ya like!!

BARRY: *(They peck.)* Yeeee-haw!!!! I have wanted to do that for years!! A peck from Aunt Cora. I can die a happy man!!! Okay, Cora, I'm ready. Tell all of us what

you've been doin' since the show went off the air.

CORA: Well, Barry, I came real close to getting the role of Granny on The Beverly Hillbillies. It came down to between me and that Irene Ryan.

BARRY: Hey, I remember her..

CORA: Bitch. Anyway, I kinda gave up on them sitt-yee-a-shun comedy-type programs and concentrated on the other shows. I got married again. It was my fifth and Cal's first. And we had ten great years together 'fore he died in the crop-duster plane. He had some land y'see.

BARRY: Oh, a farmer?

CORA: Weell, not exactly. He had some ranches, and a farm or two, but it was mostly the oil that he made his money in. Left me real well off. Real well off.

BARRY: But still, even though you don't need the money, your little buddy Winky called, so here you are, back to being Aunt Cora again.

CORA: Shoot, sure I love the little Wink, here, but I was perfectly happy in my Eye-talian villa. . .No, I came back to doin' Cora cause I just wasn't satisfying my artistic side.

BARRY: Ahhhhh, you felt the need to once again trod the boards, to slap on the greasepaint, to feel the penetrating heat of the stage lights?

CORA: Are you nuts, boy? After doin' Hedda Gobbler a few years back, I don't care if I ever act again. But see, if I came back to doin' Cora, I could finally do the one thing I've always hankered to do.

BARRY: Punch a cow?

CORA: No, ya nitwit. WRITE A BOOK!! (*She takes a small notebook from her pocket.*) Yeah, I know, you're all thinking I ought to read one first, and I'll be the first to admit my spelling and punk-chee-a-shun ain't the greatest. Still, I got a publisher interested enough to give me a fat ol' advance to write a book on television in the Fifties and what it was like on our show, that kind of thing. I'm doing Cora again to get material for my book!

BARRY: Writing a book!! Cora, darlin', I gotta tell you, I don't know. . .I mean - I am a Fifties buff. I have read everything, every little thing there is about your show. And, Cora, Cora, Cora, it has all been said. Ten times, at least.

CORA: Not the stuff I'm gonna tell. (*The others look aghast.*)

DADDY BEANS: I really think you should let me help you with it, Cora.

MOM: And I meant what I said about helping check out your rough draft for you, and help you with grammar and spelling and everything. I do have a little experience here. . .

SISSY: AND I MEANT WHAT I SAID!! If you so much as mention my name, old woman, I will sue you so fast it'll make your eyeballs spin. . .

CORA: Well, you just go ahead and sue. My lawyer, Johnny Cochran, tole me I ain't got nothin' to worry 'bout.

WINKY: We've been trying to talk Cora out of the book idea, Barry. Please, Cora, think about it. Lots of people could get hurt. At least let me see what you're planning to put in. . .

CORA: Yeah, I'm sure you'd all love to take a peek at my little notebook!!! Well, you're just gonna have to buy a copy like everybody else, Winky, hon!!

BARRY: *(To audience.)* Well, I'm curious! Send me a copy, okay, Cora? Look, Prescotts, I am getting the high sign from offstage that it is time to end this little talk, fascinating though it's been. I understand you will be coming back a little later to do a scene for us. One of the old scripts?

WINKY: *(Distracted)* Um. . .yes, it's the one where Cora and I dress up like bums to pan-handle down by Harrison's Hardware so we can get money to buy Sissy a new sweater to replace the one I accidently unraveled.

BARRY: I loved that one!!! I can't wait! Well, off with you all then! *(As they exit offstage through the house, the theme is heard.)* Aren't they something, though!! The Prescotts, ladies and gentlemen. Well, I see it's time to do a little costume judging. Our little Hostess here was circulating earlier this evening, to find the costumes that were most authentic, most creative, and most deserving of the incredible prizes the _____ is offering. Come on up here and announce the winners _____.

The HOSTESS announces the winners and invites them to come onstage. The last person who will receive a prize is VICTIM. BARRY will remain onstage during the awards with them. While the others are being introduced and given their prizes, VICTIM will begin to cough and choke. BARRY will be solicitious and slap her on the back, etc. Just as VICTIM is taking the prize, she will have a big coughing attack. This time, BARRY will grab a glass of water from the coffee table and she will drink from it. It will, of course, be THE GLASS. As the winners and HOSTESS are leaving the stage, she will begin to stagger, clutch her throat, and die dramatically. BARRY, will be aghast, and, after briefly examining the body, he will undergo a transformation. He grabs his head, crosses to the other side of the stage, and goes into the fetal position while the HOSTESS ad-libs horror etc. She will send the other winners to their seat and get the body removal team into action

(see APPENDIX).

Take time with this so that BARRY can complete his transition to NICK HARDY, PRIVATE EYE. He will loosen his tie, remove his jacket and assume the world-weary attitude of a man who's been around. He will even have an unlit cigarette, which, during the remainder of the play he will treat as lit, including taking "drags," flicking imaginary ashes, putting "out" and stepping on, etc. ... HOSTESS returns, speaks.

HOSTESS: (To an imaginary doctor offstage. This can be ad-lib.) Are you sure? But it happened so fast! How could this. . . (To audience) Ladies and gentlemen, I am terribly sorry. One of our audience members who was also a contest winner. . .The strain and excitement of the evening has taken its toll on one member of our audience. . .She's. . .dead. Dead. Apparently of a heart attack.

NICK: That wasn't a heart attack, sugar. Heart attacks don't make you clutch your throat and gasp for air. And they don't give you burnt almond breath.

HOSTESS: BARRY?

NICK: No, sweet lips, heart attacks don't act like that. Unless the heart attack followed a little cyanide poisoning.

HOSTESS: BARRY?

NICK: Sorry, honey, I'd love to be this Barry guy, if it would make you smile again. . .But - the name's Hardy, Nick Hardy, Private Eye. Look, angel hair, I don't go looking for trouble, see, but it follows me around like toilet paper on a shoe. Like this. Some poor bimbo thinks she's collecting a prize, and what'd she get? A cyanide cocktail. Straight up. No soda. No ice.

HOSTESS: Oh, my. Oh wow. . .I mean. . .I was the one who got the water. ..But I didn't have anything to do with poison. Oh, dear, do you think I'll get arrested. . .Oh, Barry!

NICK: Look, I'm gonna say it again, real slow, so you got it right, cream puff. I'm Nick. Nick Hardy. I'm a gumshoe, a P.I., a private dick. I don't know this Barry guy. I do know, however, that you had nothing to do with poisoning the chick. Somehow, that just ain't your style. You do, however, need to get the Prescott bunch up here. Pronto. I got some sticky questions for the Winky dame and her mob. And I don't like sticky questions that ain't got answers.

HOSTESS: Barr. . Nick. . um, don't you think maybe we ought to let the police. . .

NICK: (Laugh) The coppers. They couldn't find a rat in their underwear drawer. Look, I don't like getting rough with broads, but I don't have time to change your diapers. (He takes out a gun.) See this, pillow thighs, this is the law here right now.

I've been downtown on the bus a few times, and I know a frame-up when I see it. Well, I ain't taking the rap for this, so move your cute little butt and get the Prescotts up here. *(He waves gun towards HOSTESS who exits hurriedly, in search of the PRESCOTTs.)* Dames. Sometimes you want to wrap 'em up in cellophane with a big satin bow and take them to the top of the Eiffel Tower. . . Other times ya just want to back over 'em in the driveway. . . This is the way I see it. Somebody is trying to pin something on somebody else and I'm gonna make damn sure that somebody else ain't me. But even if it ain't, somebody iced that kid just like she was so much junk mail, comin' through the slot. Nick Hardy doesn't walk away from things like that.

As he finishes this, the HOSTESS returns with all the PRESCOTTs minus CORA. During this scene, all the PRESCOTTs, at some point, will attempt to give NICK a "light" with Bic type lighters that all will have.

HOSTESS: Bar. . .Um, Mr. Hardy, here they are. Except for Aunt Cora. Couldn't find her. *(To others)* See what I mean.

MOM: That's okay, dear. I know what to do. *(HOSTESS exits.)* Nick! Nick Hardy! Why it's been years!

NICK: Can the routine, lady. I don't know you and you don't know me and that's the way it's gonna stay. Businesslike. Strictly on the up and up.

SISSY: What's with him?

NICK: Look, pillow thighs, I don't want to get to tough with any of you, but we got a little matter of murder to clear up.

DADDY BEANS: We heard about it, Barry, and it's shocking, just shocking.

NICK: Who is this Barry guy? I'm getting real tired of this real fast. *(He puts the gun up again.)*

DADDY BEANS: Rick!!! I meant Rick!! Ned!! Nick!! Yeah, yeah Nick.

NICK puts his hands to his head and starts rubbing his temples.

SISSY: Now's our chance, jump him!!

MOM: Don't be ridiculous, Sissy. You can't handle an hallucinatory episode like that. Barry has been under a lot of stress lately and it manifests itself in self-denial, personality subjugation, role displacement and the deep seated need to assume an alter identity. Some handle stress by drinking or gambling or watching soap operas. Barry becomes Nick Hardy.

WINKY: What should we do?

MOM: Play along with it.

SISSY: Oh, you mean because he's a loony, we're supposed to act like loonies, too? Not me. Alan belongs to a gun club, and I've cleaned his Magnum plenty of times. I don't think that little thing is even loaded.

NICK fires the gun.

NICK: The worst kind of dame. The kind that don't trust you.

MOM: So, Nick, do you have any theories on why the girl was killed?

NICK: Theories. Theories are for shrinks and rocket scientists and I ain't neither. I deal in facts. Straight. Hard. Cold. Like a flagpole in January. That the truth will stick to, like a kid's wet tongue. *(The PRESCOTTS grimace.)* Try these on for size. You're all sitting like ducks in row right there. Go on. Sit. *(They do, reluctantly.)* Hey, where's the old broad?

DADDY BEANS: We couldn't find her. After we left the room, she wandered off.

WINKY: I hope she didn't get lost. This place is pretty big.

MOM: Who saw her last? *(Everybody shrugs.)*

WINKY: She was going outside so I gave her my jacket.

SISSY: I haven't seen her since she walked out of here, still writing in that stupid notebook of hers. Frankly, I don't care if she falls and breaks her leg in the dark, I want that notebook.

MOM: SISSY!!!

NICK: Okay, so we'll look for the dame later. Right now we're gonna have a little chat about poison. Something somebody here knows something about.

DADDY BEANS: I think it's a little premature to assume that anyone knows anything about anything anywhere. Anyhow.

NICK: Yeah? Think so? Then how do you suppose the cyanide got in this glass of water? *(He holds one up.)*

DADDY BEANS: Well, I don't know. It certainly warrants further study. Actually, I think a full scale investigation is in order. Ordinarily, I would move that we form an ad hoc committee, but in lieu of that, I suggest we call in the police. . . What say we do that, Barry, NICK?

SISSY: Of course we should. This is just about the dumbest. . . *(She starts to*

stand.)

NICK: Plant it, rosebud. *(She does.)* See, I may not be the brightest guy in the cosmos, but two things are crystal clear to me. One, whoever slipped the fatal mickey in the H2O had to be one of you. Two, whoever did it didn't mean to kill that poor bimbo. They meant to kill one of you.

WINKY: No!!

DADDY BEANS:My God!! He's right. Somebody is trying to assassinate me!! Remember Squeaky Fromme!!! I want Secret Service protection!!

SISSY: What makes you think they're after you? The liberals have been trying to silence me for years. I'm the one that blew the whistle on their plot to brainwash our children with hard metal music.

MOM: This doesn't make sense, who would try to kill. . . .

NICK: It's a cruel world, crumbcake, and I'd change it if I could. Sometimes you don't get the chance to. . .

He's interrupted by a loud moaning sound coming from the audience. It is CORA, entering down the aisle. She is still wearing WINKY's jacket and has been stabbed in the chest. A knife is protruding from a bloody wound in her chest. She staggers onstage, as the others are at first skeptical, and then horrified. They ad-lib as she falls dramatically and dies. In her hand she clutches the charred remnants of her notebook.

WINKY: Oh no!!! Aunt Cora.

DADDY BEANS:Is she???. . . .

MOM: Cora!! Cora!!!! Who did this to you. . .

NICK: *(After taking her pulse, and closing her eyes.)* She's dead.

MOM: Oh, poor Cora.

DADDY BEANS:*(Sensing a "photo op.")* The world is a little sadder, now she's gone. A light's gone out in Nashville. It's a dark, dark day. . .

WINKY: Who could do such a thing???. *(They all look at SISSY, who is thumbing through CORA's charred notebook. She notices them staring at her.)*

SISSY: Don't look at me!! Broken leg, yes, stabbed to death, no. But whoever did it was pretty thorough, they burnt up the notebook.

WINKY: It's just as well, it only got Cora killed. How long ago was she stabbed, can you tell, Nick?

SISSY: I can't believe you, you're asking him like he would know.

NICK: She was stabbed about twenty minutes ago. From the looks of the wound and the amount of blood. Coincidental, isn't it, that the old broad bought the farm right about the time that all of you were offstage. Curious. Funny thing about murder. Up close it ain't any prettier. Let's get her outta here. Give me a hand, Congressman. We can stow her offstage.

They drag her off, by the legs. The theme song comes on while this is being done and is abruptly stopped when SISSY glares offstage and makes a cutting gesture.

WINKY: That just seems so cruel, to drag her off like that.

MOM: Nick, I'm afraid we are going to have to bring the police into it now. *(Talking as if to a very small child.)* But if we explain to them how helpful you've been, and how experienced you are at this sort of thing, I'm sure they will be more than grateful for your assistance. I wouldn't be surprised if they let you head up the investigation. I'll go call them for you, shall I?

NICK: The worst kind of dame. The kind that plays ya for a chump and when ya don't want to ante up, tries to sucker punch you with a candy-coated line of bull.

DADDY BEANS: Do any of you know what he's talking about?

SISSY: He doesn't want us to call the police.

WINKY: It's me. Me.

NICK: What's you, sugarplum?

WINKY: The one they're. . .one of you. . .is trying to kill.

NICK: How do ya figure that, cupcake?

WINKY: It's obvious. The poisoned water was meant for me. And whoever killed Cora, thought they were stabbing me. It's dark out there. She had on my jacket. They thought it was me!! *(She starts to back away from the others. NICK puts his arm around her protectively.)* Why? Why?

NICK: I wondered when you'd figure it out, baby. Somebody wants you to give your last little wink. Maybe the answer's here. *(He holds up notebook.)* Looks like whoever bumped off the old lady didn't want me to do any light reading. But y'know, my library card ain't expired yet, and I think maybe we oughta take a look around. See, if you're gonna go around incinerating evidence, you'd better be prepared to

finish the job.

WINKY: Do you think some pages might be intact?

NICK: I don't do predictions, lamb chop, I leave that to the Psychic Network. But it's worth taking a look-see. And just to make sure no one tries to pull a fast one, I think we ought to let all these folks do the looking.

DADDY BEANS:Nick, I've humored you and let you take charge here for a while, but this is too much. I'm sorry, son, but I think that I'm going to have to pull a little rank here. Even you will have to admit that a Congressman is, in a very real sense, an authority. I've been invested with powers by the will of the people. Give me the gun, son.

He holds out his hand for it. Nick looks down at it, and flicks an imaginary ash into it.

NICK: Sorry, Pop, no can do. *(To audience.)* I'm looking for a few good people, to give me a hand. . . .

SISSY: *(To MOM)* Gee, thanks, Mom. Humor him, she says. Go along with him. Look, you big Palooka. . .now I'm starting to talk like him. The notebook got burnt. Let's just drop it, okay. . . .

MOM: She's right, young man. It's time to let go. Your head hurts, doesn't it. Wouldn't it feel good to just lie down and take a good long rest. And your eyes look are soooo heavy, Nick. Think of a big, soft, mattress. And sleep. Beautiful, deep, dark sleep. . . *(Everybody goes into a trance.)*

NICK: *("Breaking" from the trance. He says this line without a break, in one breath if possible.)* The last time a dame said that to me, I woke up three days later in a fleabag hotel in Tijuana with a lump on my head and a pair of women's panties in my wallet where the money should be. No thanks, sister, I'll stay awake and watch over little Winky.

WINKY: Nick, I'm scared. I don't want to stick around looking for pages from the notebook. Just take me back to our hotel. Please.

NICK: Sorry, beanbag, Nick Hardy doesn't do that kind of thing. At least not before he solves a case. . .

WINKY: I didn't mean THAT, Nick. . .

NICK: Sure ya did, marshmallow. Dames go for me in a big way. Later, okay, honey. In the meantime, my nose itches. And that means either one of you broads is wearing Shalimar, or else there's some clues around here. Yeah, yeah, I smell clues. Evidence. And you don't have to worry about a thing. If there's anything left

of that notebook, this crowd will find it. Right?

WINKY: Can't we just forget the notebook. Cora's dead!

SISSY: Drop it, will you, Nick.

MOM: Nick, the notebook burnt up. . .

DADDY BEANS: Mom's right, Nick. We want to find Cora's killer more than anybody. But her notebook won't help.

SISSY: He's right, Nick. You probably can't even read it. Cora's spelling was atrocious and her grammar worse.

NICK: Sorry, gang. I realize that the notebook may contain embarrassing things about all of you, but that's pretty small potatoes compared to murder. If there's anything left of the old dame's notebook, it's important evidence. So we're going to let this group look for it. *(He calls the HOSTESS by name.)*

HOSTESS: Yeah, Nick, what can I do for you.

NICK: Look, doll-face, I want you to organize search parties just on the off-chance that we can find pages out of Aunt Cora's notebook.

HOSTESS: Anything for you, big guy.

NICK: The worst kind of dame. The kind that calls you "Big Guy."
(He exits with group.)

HOSTESS: Welcome to THE FATAL FIFTIES AFFAIR. Tonight you will have the opportunity to find out who is behind the crimes you have witnessed.

In a minute clue helpers will be passing out clipboards with the clue hunt. The clues will help you to discover fragments from Cora's partially burnt notebook. Remember that Cora was a terrible speller!

The clue packets are self explanatory, but be sure to read the directions on first page. It will tell you which clue you should start with. Also read the directions for each clue. During the clue hunt you will also have the opportunity to interrogate the suspects. They will do their best not to lie, but remember that one or more have something to hide.

The last page of the clue packet is a solution sheet. After you've found all the fragments and questioned the suspects, come back to your table to review what you have learned. Enjoy dessert while you complete your deliberations and write your solution. Give your solution page and your clipboard to the mystery helper at the front of the stage.

THIS IS NOT A RACE. You will have plenty of time to find the clues and offer your solution. Happy detecting !

PART THREE - THE CLUE HUNT

The Production Manual gives complete instructions for designing and staging a clue hunt, if one is being used. The physical evidence - in this case the fragments from Cora's notebook - can simply be distributed. The Production Manual describes other methods you might use.

Ten "fragments" of CORA's notebook will be found. They are written out by hand on notebook paper, roughly torn, and singed on the edges. If you want have fewer clues, you could give out two fragments per clue. Again, the Production Manual and other production materials will help you decide the best method to use in adapting or creating your own Clue Hunt.

The ten fragments are:

- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| 1. black | 6. shop |
| 2. drug | 7. illegitimute |
| 3. lifting | 8. child |
| 4. star | 9. male |
| 5. porno | 10. addikt |

During the clue hunt the cast will mingle with the audience and help them - without giving it away, of course. At the end of the clue hunt (a predetermined time) there needs to be a short break before the solution scene is played, to give the actors a break and an opportunity to "grade" solution sheets and determine winners.

THE VERY BRIEF SOLUTION SCENE IS NOT INCLUDED IN REVIEW SCRIPTS. IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE THE ENTIRE ACTING COPY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ABOUT PRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT US:

330-678-3893

info@mysteriesbymoushey.com

APPENDIX - PROPS, etc. . .

Six chairs in a semi-circle around a coffee table

Pitcher of water and five glasses

Lighters for everyone

Cigarettes for Nick

Notebook for Cora

Gun for Nick

Bloodied shirt for Cora, identical to the one she wears earlier. This one has a hole in the front, saturated with blood.

The knife effect is made by breaking/sawing off the all but 4 inches from the handle of a large knife. One-half inch of the remaining blade is then hammered and glued into a thin 6x6 piece of wood. This is then taped to Cora's t-shirt, which she wears under her shirt. We use the ubiquitous gaffer's tape - also known as duct tape - and wrap it several times around her body securing the knife effect. The handle and an inch or two of the blade should stick out of the prepared bloodied shirt described above.

Something for body removal - We've used a stretcher, a hotel luggage rolling rack, a wheelchair, a furniture dollie, and we've simply dragged offstage - which is tough if you're just using a playing area without wings. If you can get local paramedics to come in with a real gurney, etc., it's a nice realistic touch.

SENT WITH PRODUCTION PACKET

Sample clue packets, with answer key and flow chart

Directions for omitting Costume Contest.

Blank flow chart so you can design your own.

* Production Manual

OPTIONAL

* Replacement Production Manual	\$10.00
CD which includes a track for FIFTIES - the Theme Song for 'Make Way For Winky'	5.00

* The Production Manual is the same for all shows. It is sent free with the first Production Packet.

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