

WADSWORTH. Gladly.

(WADSWORTH moves to distribute the gifts.)

BODDY. (Pouring himself a brandy.) Anyone wanna make a guess as to what's in your boxes?

SCARLETT. Perfume?

WHITE. Candy?

PEACOCK. A rare single-malt Scotch whiskey?

BODDY. (With a laugh.) Aren't guessing games fun?

(Then:)

Please—open them.

[MUSIC CUE #16]

(SCARLETT opens her box. Puzzled, she lifts out a heavy brass candlestick. Music sting. She looks at BODDY.)

SCARLETT. A Candlestick? What's this for?

(One by one, with a music sting, each of the GUESTS open their boxes, pulling out their "gift.")

MUSTARD. A Wrench . . .

GREEN. A Lead Pipe . . .

PEACOCK. A Dagger . . .

PLUM. A Revolver . . .

WHITE. Ahhhhhh! A snake! Oh, no. It's a Rope.

(Then:)

BODDY. In your hands you each have a lethal weapon.

(They gasp.)

BODDY. You all came tonight because you believed the evidence against you was so terrible that you would do anything to keep it a secret. I'm putting that theory to the test.

WADSWORTH. You are?

BODDY. Mr. Wadsworth here is the only other person who knows your secrets; and it's costing us all dearly to keep him quiet.

GREEN. What do you mean?

BODDY. I wouldn't have to double your payments if I didn't have to pay Mr. Wadsworth for his silence.

ALL. Wadsworth?!

WADSWORTH. That's a lie!

BODDY. He may look suave and charming . . .

WADSWORTH. Thank you . . .

BODDY. But really he's conniving and manipulative.

WADSWORTH. False!

BODDY. Why do you think he's called the police?

PLUM. (To WADSWORTH.) You called the police?

WADSWORTH. Only because HE instructed me to do so!

BODDY. Did I?

(Then:)

Ladies and gentlemen . . . if you can manage to get rid of Mr. Wadsworth, I'll have no need to increase your blackmail or expose you to the police.

PLUM. Get rid of?

PEACOCK. (To WHITE.) Does he mean . . . kill him?!

BODDY. In fact, if you can eliminate Wadsworth . . .

WHITE. Yes, I think that's what he means.

BODDY. . . . Who not only knows all of your secrets, but also mine—then I will eliminate your blackmail altogether and be done with this terrible business once and for all.

WADSWORTH. You would never!

PLUM. But why make us do it, Boddy? Why don't you do your dirty work yourself?

GREEN. Yeah!

BODDY. Why should I when the six of you are so uniquely motivated . . . and armed?

SCARLETT. What a patriot.

WADSWORTH. After all I've done for you?!

(To GUESTS:)

He's a liar! I'm one of you! I'm not a butler! I'm an indentured servant!

BODDY. A familiar refrain.

(Darkly:)

Don't make a scene, Wadsworth. It's over.

(To GUESTS.)

The police are on their way. Now's your chance. The only way for you to end your blackmail and avoid finding yourselves on the front pages is for one of you to kill Wadsworth . . . NOW!

END

(He switches off the lights. BLACKNESS. CHAOS. SCREAMS. A GUNSHOT. MORE CHAOS AND SCREAMS. Lights.)

(BODDY lies on the floor. Prone. Face down. EVERYONE else is spread throughout the Study.)

WHITE. It's Mr. Boddy!

WADSWORTH. (Enormously relieved.) Oh thank goodness.

SCARLET. Is he breathing?!

(They rush to him in a hubbub.)

PLUM. (Cutting off the hoopla.) Stand back, I'm a doctor!

(They move back. PLUM gives BODDY a cursory examination.)

PLUM. He's dead.

WHITE. Who had the gun?

PLUM. I did.

PEACOCK. So you shot him!

PLUM. I didn't!

PEACOCK. If you didn't, who did?

PLUM. Somebody grabbed it from my hand, and the next thing I knew there was a shot!

(WADSWORTH turns BODDY over.)

WADSWORTH. There's no gunshot wound.

WHITE. He's right. There isn't.

SCARLET. (Re: a hole in the wall.) Look, there's a bullet lodged here.

MUSTARD. Eagle eye, Miss Scarlet.

GREEN. Well, if the bullet's over there, then how did he die over here?

PLUM. I don't know! I'm not a forensics expert.

SCARLET. Something else must have killed him.

WHITE. One of us must have killed him.

(They all look at each other – and their weapons – nervously aware that a murderer is present amongst them.)

GREEN. Well, don't look at me! I didn't do it!

ALL. (Joining in:) Me neither! / I didn't do it! / What're you looking at me for? (Etc.)

(PEACOCK, unable to find a drink elsewhere, goes to BODDY's body [who is still holding a goblet].)

PEACOCK. I need a drink!

(She pries the goblet from BODDY's dead hand, raises it to her lips . . . She downs it just as . . .)

PLUM. Maybe Mr. Boddy was poisoned by the brandy!

(PEACOCK spits out the brandy—all over PLUM [and dead BODDY].)

PEACOCK. (Screaming.) Poison!?

(PEACOCK continues to scream. GREEN tries to comfort her . . .)

GREEN. There, there, Mrs. Peacock—

(She still screams.)

GREEN. I'm sure you'll be just fine—

(She still screams.)

There's nothing to—

(SCARLET takes over, pushing GREEN out of the way. She slaps PEACOCK who falls onto the sofa, silenced, as the GUESTS gasp.)

SCARLET. (Offering an excuse.) Well, someone had to stop her screaming.

PLUM. (To GREEN.) Was the brandy poisoned?

GREEN. How should I know?

SCARLET. Looks like now we'll never know.

GREEN. Unless she dies too.

(They all hurry over to the sofa and stare at PEACOCK. Suddenly SOMEONE [YVETTE] SCREAMS from another part of the house. They all look out, terror on their faces.)

[MUSIC CUE #17]

(Transition music.)

WADSWORTH. The screams are coming from the Billiard Room!