

Death of a Lounge Singer

A Comedy Murder Mystery Dinner Theater Musical

By Doug Irving & Gary Randolph



Theme and Purpose

Rob Bell writes in Velvet Elvis, "What does Jesus do almost as much as he teaches and heal? He eats long meals. As Christians, it is our duty to master the art of the long meal."

This play was written as a dinner theater - an evening of food and fun. It invites the audience into the story with strong interaction between cast and audience. It provides a lot of laughs, and when we laugh together we fellowship together. What it doesn't do, unlike our other pieces, is present a spiritual message (though the dead singer does finish the show singing of going to Heaven tonight).

That lack of spiritual pay-off bothered us while we were writing this. Of course, when we produced the play we donated the profits to a mission trip plus held a silent auction in conjunction with the dinner, which raised even more funds. There's a spiritual pay-off right there.

But as we performed it we realized that there was a spiritual value just in the fellowship and the good times - the long meal. As Rob Bell also wrote, "Food and music and art and friends and stories and rivers and lakes and oceans and laughter and... did I mention food? God has given us life, and God's desire is that we live it." This dinner theater is dedicated to the idea of enjoying life, of having a fun time in a Christian setting. Or as one audience member said, it was great to go out and hear some good, clean comedy. Sure. Why should the devil have all the good comedy?

So give it a try. Have fun. And be sure to help your cast grasp the vision that this is not just a performance vehicle but a ministry for the Kingdom.

One more thing, as writers we would like to publically thank and acknowledge the creative input of the members of the original cast from East Side Church of God in Anderson, Indiana. They workshopped this for weeks with us, helping us refine the characters, the plot, the jokes, and the timing.

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Cast list

Jackson Butler - Shallow owner of Jacks' Dinner Club
Meredith - Maître d' (man or woman) - upper crust snob. Think Niles Crane.
Alfredo - Chef - Italian with Father Guido Sarducci or Chico Marx accent
Vic Marino - Self-absorbed Lounge Singer
Jules - Server (man or woman) snooty French type
Anna - Server - valley girl type - in love with Vic, but he's not in love with her.
Harold - Server, conspiracy theorist
Chris - Server (woman) dreams of being the lounge singer and a singing star
Rose - Server, Vic's girlfriend
Jimmy - busboy - constantly annoyed and talking to himself, almost in a mutter but loud enough to be heard.
Andy (Andi) - Optional (but strongly recommended) Server (man or woman) - wears and converses with a sock puppet.
Fanny - Optional Server - moonlighting (while serving) as a computer call center employee. Wears a headset.
Luanne - Optional Server - calls everyone "honey" or "darling" and comments on how cute are various accessories of audience members.
Leslie - Optional Server (man or woman) - an attorney with no clients who is making ends meet as a server.
Police Lieutenant Coleman - Overacts, thinks he is Lt. Cain (David Caruso) on CSI Miami
Police Sergeant Kelly - could be played with an Irish accent, but doesn't have to be
CSI Billy (Billie) - (man or woman) - non-speaking part for a physical actor
Dr. Hackenbush - Medical examiner
Ernie - Optional Newsboy

Approximate Running Time	70-95 minutes including dinner depending on time between scenes, intermission, etc.
Scene Description	Jacks Dinner Club
Prop List	Three toy guns, painted to look realistic Headset for Fanny Mister Fisty hand puppet Four sets of toy handcuffs A thin "reservation" book Hospital Gurney (optional) Various props for CSI Billy
Other Production Notes	Use the actors who work at Jacks as servers for your dinner theater. Depending on the size of your cast and your audience, you may want to supplement them with non-speaking bussers.

Scene 1: Welcome to Jacks

Servers and Jimmy serve drinks and entrées and bus salad plates while ad-libbing the lines below. The idea is that they don't deliver a monologue, but deliver parts of the lines below at various times. Let servers go to multiple tables so that more of the audience will hear their various stories. Jacks and Alfredo work the room and help out. Meredith oversees and upbraids the wait staff when he sees something wrong.

Harold: (ad lib)

Welcome to Jacks' Dinner Club. That's Jacks as in Jackson Butler, the owner. My name is (*whispers*) Harold. I'll be your server this evening. (*Gasps*) Oh, I'm sorry. I thought that earring was a transmitter. It looks just like the ones the (*whispering*) Canadians use. You know, the Canadians are really running the US government - making us fight their wars and getting everyone to hate us while they look all nice and everything. "Oh, I'm a Canadian, eh. Everybody likes me, eh, cause I'm Canadian. Let's go play some hockey and eat donuts, eh." That's why they have such high taxes there - their running two governments. It's a vast conspiracy - a vast north-wing conspiracy. The Canadians were behind the Kennedy Assassination and the fake moon landing and the oil price fixing. And (*looking around surreptitiously*) I understand that Vic, he's the lounge singer, is a Canadian spy. Yes, he is. That's the thing with Canadians. They look just like normal people. You can only tell them from how they react when bacon is cooking. And not just any bacon - Canadian bacon. At least this is the spy's last night here. He's been reassigned to Branson, M-O. His new cover story is a Wayne Newton impersonator - like anyone would believe that. I have contacts in Branson - Internet friends - and they say there's a secret military base near Branson. This is bad. Very, very bad..

Rose: (*ad lib*)

Hi, welcome to Jacks' Dinner Club. That's Jacks as in Jackson Butler, the owner. I'm Rose. I'll be serving you this evening. I hope you enjoy your meal. And I know you'll enjoy the music. Vic Marino, the lounge singer - he's my (*syrupy*) boyfriend. (*looking with meaning at women at the table*) Oh yes, he is. And he's on a fast track to stardom. This is his last night here. He's landed a great gig - that's what they call jobs in the "show business" - in Branson as a Wayne Newton impersonator. Branson - imagine! Everyone knows that's the doorway to the big time! But I know that's just the beginning. Before too long I wouldn't be surprised if Wayne Newton becomes a Vic Marino impersonator. You'll just love Vic. Everyone loves Vic. Some people love him too much if you ask me. That Anna over there (*pointing*) is always making eyes at him. But he belongs to me, and no one else is gonna get him.

Chris: (*ad lib*)

Good evening! (*singing*) Welcome to Jacks' Dinner Club. That's Jacks as in Jackson Butler, the owner. My name is Chris, and I'll be taking care of you. (*talking*) Do you like my singing voice? I really should be the lounge singer. Everyone says I'm better than that Vic. Tonight is his last night anyway. He's taking some stupid job in Branson, Missouri. A Wayne Newton impersonator! Have you ever heard of such a thing? I hope Jacks - he's the owner of this joint - anyway I hope Jacks hires me for the job. But I hear that Vic was telling Jacks NOT to hire me - the big jerk! Would you like some water? Would you be interested in my demo CD? Do you know anyone in radio? I'm sort of a swing/rap/bluegrass vocalist with some beat poet thrown in. One night a record executive was here. Well, I made sure he heard me. I followed him right into the bathroom - the acoustics are better there, you know. And he said that he had never heard anyone like me before... ever.

Jules: (*ad lib*)

Allo! Welcome to Jacks' Dinner Club. That's Jacks as in Jackson Butler, the owner. I am Jules, your server. I sincerely hope that you enjoy your meal and that you will not cause me much trouble. Most people have - how you say - zee prejudice against zee French. For some reason they think we are snooty or something - those Cretins! You are lucky you have me as your server. You could have (*pointing*) Harold over there. He is, how you say, a wack case. And then there is sweet little (*pointing*) Rose - or so she would have you believe. She is in love with Veec ze lounge singer - lounge lizard is more like it. This is Veec's last night here, though. He is taking a job in Branson, Missouri as a Wayne Newton impersonator. At least he is putting us out of our Missouri if you know what I mean. Haw Haw. Zat is a leetle joke.

Anna: (*ad lib*)

Hey. Welcome to Jacks' Dinner Club. That's Jacks as in Jackson Butler, the owner. My name is Anna, and I am so gonna take care of you tonight. Let me tell you, you are gonna totally love the entertainment tonight. Vic Marino. (*dreamily*) Oh, he is so good. I just hate it that tonight is his last night here. He got his big break. He's going to be singing in Branson, Missouri as a Wayne Newton impersonator. Whoa! Isn't that totally awesome? (*seriously*) But there is so much more I want to say to him before he goes - alone - you understand. That (*pointing*) Rose over there - she's been monopolizing him. As if! Anyway, if you need anything, just say, "Anna!"

Andy:

OK Then. My name is Andy. Mr. Fisty and I will serving you. Isn't That right Mr. Fisty?

(Mr. Fisty voice) Welcome to Jacks Dinner Club. Hey, good lookin, wanna back rub?

(Andy voice) Mr. Fisty! Leave the people alone and give me a hand.

(Mr. Fisty voice) Oh, a hand joke - ha, ha, ha - isn't that cute - you're a bigot.

(Andy voice) Stop that.

(Mr. Fisty voice) A handaphobe!

(Andy voice) Don't make me get the glove out. I'll put you in my pocket.

(Mr. Fisty voice) Do that and I'll pinch you like a crazed lobster.

(Andy voice while Mr. Fisty continues to look around at people) Sorry folks. Anyway, I hope you enjoy your evening.

(Mr. Fisty to one of the patrons) What are you staring at?

(Andy voice) Our show will be starting soon - Vic Marino - he's a pretty good singer.

(Mr. Fisty) If you like torture!

(Andy voice) It's Vic's last night. He's moving on to Branson, Missouri to be a Wayne Newton impersonator.

(Mr. Fisty) A what! He can't even impersonate a singer. *(singing)* Danke Schoen. Darling, Danke

(Andy voice) The glove!

(Mr. Fisty) Chris over there *(points hand toward her)* is a much better singer. Do you think Jacks will hire her to replace Vic?

(*Andy voice*) I don't know.

(*Mr. Fisty*) I hope so. But I heard Vic turned Jacks against her. That stinks!

(*Andy voice*) Let's not talk about this now.

(*Mr. Fisty*) But it stinks, doesn't it?

(*Andy voice*) Shush.

(*Mr. Fisty*) It stinks!

(*Andy voice*) The glove!

(*Mr. Fisty*) Fine, I guess I'm just the hired hand around here.

Fanny:

Hi, folks. Welcome to Jacks Dinner Club. My name is Fanny, and I'll be your server. Tonight we're...Excuse me, I have a call. (*to Bluetooth*) Microtech Support. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Click on Start - Run - type CMD... No, No, C as in clown, M as in moron, and D as in dummy. Yeah, that's right. So that window opened? No, don't close it! OK let's try it again. Wait a second. (*to guests*) Sorry about that. I have to work two jobs to make ends meet. It's a good thing I can do them both at the same time. Anyway you'll love our show tonight. It's the last appearance of Vic Marino our singer. He's off to Branson as a Wayne Newton impersonator. I hope he doesn't take Rose with him. Rose is his girlfriend - that's her over there. She's my BFF. Of course, there are rumors he's dumping her - the jerk. He's just so, so... Oh, excuse me. (*to Bluetooth*) Microtech Support. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well, you probably need to clean out your cache. No, I don't mean money. This doesn't cost a thing... except my sanity.

(*at another time*) OK. put in the next CD. No, you were supposed to take the other CD out first. What do you mean it won't open?

Jimmy:

(if plates clean) Boy, they sure sucked that down.

(if plates not clean) Wasted food. And all the starving people in the world...

Stupid Vic/Jacks/Meredith/job etc..

Go clean the tables, Jimmy. Refill The glasses, Jimmy. Help me with these plates, Jimmy. Would a "please" or "thank you" kill them?

Every single server picks on me - because they see Meredith picking on me - Mr. high-and-mighty Maître d'. All the servers hang on his every word. I'd like to... Stupid Meredith.

Everyone else can take breaks. But not Jimmy. Chris can go sing songs for crying out loud, and I have to pick up her slack.

(to patron) Are you finished with that? No? Fine, *(with a heavy sigh)* I'll walk over there and then come back here again when you've licked your plate.

Leslie:

Welcome to Jacks Dinner Club. That's the owner *(pointing)* over there - Jackson Butler. I'm your server, Leslie. Maybe you've seen my ads - Leslie's Law - for all your legal litigation lawsuit needs. Still trying to build up my client base. So I'm working here nights at this dump... I mean.... Hey, let me know if this food doesn't agree with you. Or if you slip in parking lot. Or if the music is too loud. Vic Marino will be in here singing soon. You'd think that would be actionable in itself. But this is his last night. He's off to Branson, Missouri to be ... get this... a Wayne Newton impersonator. Talk about a crime.

Luanne:

(Sing-song) He-ey! How y'all doin'? I'm Luanne, and I'm just as pleased as a cat in a dairy barn to be your server tonight. *(To a patron)* Well, look at you! Ain't you just the cutest little thing, with your darlin' little earrings? *(To another patron)* Ain't she just so cute with them darlin' little earrings? Yeah...*(Falsetto sigh. Then to another patron)* And look at you, hon, all gussied up. You'll be turnin' heads tonight. *(To another patron)* Won't he be turnin' heads? Don't you think? Hoo - whiplash! *(Smiling, laughing, placing her hand on the shoulder of the another patron)* Ooh! Honey, that is just exquisite! What is this made of? You mind if I look? *(Looks at tag)* Well I've never heard of that material. But it sure does feel good! Y'all, I hope you're ready for a fab-yoo-lus show tonight. Our singer, Vic Marino? Well, tonight is his last performance at Jacks. *(Getting misty)* Oh, we are so proud of him! He's moving to Branson, Misoura to start a new career as - you won't believe it! - A Wayne Newton impersonator! Now don't that just beat all?

Servers and Jimmy also ad lib reactions to each other. They tend to think everyone is crazy but themselves. They regard Meredith as their boss and Hacks as a somewhat comical figurehead.

Jacks: *(works the crowd - ad lib)*

Hi. I'm Jacks - Jackson Butler. How's every little thing? *(continuing on without waiting for an answer)* Good. Good. Good. Is Harold/Rose/Anna/Jules/Chris treating you okay? Good. Good. Good. In a few minutes we'll be starting our floor show. Tonight it's linoleum! Ah, I'm kidding. It's carpet. Hah! Got you again. Hey, have a good time, folks.

(a server comes up and begins, "Jacks, I...") Go see Meredith. *(server says, "But, Jacks")* Meredith. Sorry, folks, hard to get good help. You know what I mean. Some of you probably aren't good help. Hah! Gotcha again.

Meredith: (*ad lib*)

Servers, (*snapping fingers*) snap, snap! Hurry now. People are waiting. We don't have all night. No, no, serve from the right and take from the left - the other right. Don't bother these good people with the trivial details of your pathetic little lives. Is that fork dirty? Good heavens, man/woman! We beg your forgiveness. Replace that fork at once - at once!

Scene

Scene 2: Vic On-Stage

Servers are finishing serving entrees and refilling drinks as Scene 2 starts. Ernie enters, carrying papers. Jimmy is bussing tables. Alfredo is in the room, serving. Jacks is in the back of the room. Meredith is at his maître d' station

Ernie:

Extra! Extra! Floor show starting! Last chance to hear Vic Marino outside of Branson, Missouri!

Vic enters, carrying a nearly empty glass. Pauses to play for applause.

Vic:

Thanks, Ernie.

Ernie:

Sure thing, Mr. Vic.

Vic:

You still gonna come visit me this summer in Branson, Ernie?

Ernie:

You bet, *(coughs)* Mr. Vic. *(coughs)* If I can sell *(coughs)* enough papers to pay *(coughs)* for the doctor.

Vic:

That's great, Ernie. Just great. *(drains the glass he is carrying)* Say, Jimmy, could you get me another ginger ale?

Jimmy:

Not me. Do I have to do everything around here?

Ernie: *(coughing)*

I'll get you one, Mr. Vic.

Ernie exits. Vic takes the stage at the same time that Alfredo enters.

Vic:

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm just so gratified that you've all come out tonight. This is a special evening tonight. After tonight... I'm out of here. I'd like to say it's bittersweet, but it's more sweet than anything else. (*laughs*) Big time! But seriously, folks, are you enjoying your meal? It's a great meal, isn't it? I'd like to introduce the chef for this evening's meal. Ladies and gentlemen, Alfredo.

Alfredo: (*approaching the center of the room, talking expressively with his hands*)

Howsa you meal, folks? Atsa fine. I slaved all day a baking the bread and choppin' da vegetables and tossing the salad...

Vic:

Yeah, yeah. That's great Alfredo. But seriously folks...

Alfredo:

But itsa all a worth it just to see you smiling faces asa you eat it.

Vic:

Thanks, Alfredo. Don't you need to get back to the kitchen?

Alfredo:

Naw, I gotta time to talk.

Vic:

I'm the entertainment here. Tick-tock. These folks want to hear me sing.

Alfredo: (*to crowd*)

So sings already. Quita talking, and sing a song.. Mama mia! Whatsa matta you! (*to crowd*) I tell you, he'sa no Dino Martin or Frank Sinatra.

Vic:

Thanks for that, Alfredo. You certainly do know your Rat Pack. At the last place he cooked they were part of the kitchen crew.

Alfredo: *(throwing up his hands and exiting)*
Aw, whatsa matta you, Veec - talkin' like-a dat?
(stopping to wag his finger at Vic) I tella you,
Veec, one of deesa days, one of deesa days.
(exits)

Vic:
You know, I've had some good times here. Shared
some laughs. And more than my share of tears.
I've broken a few hearts. I've had my heart
broken. Not really, but I've sung about it.

*Ernie re-enters with a new ginger ale.
Harold enters at the same time, inspecting
his tables.*

Ernie:
Here's your ginger ale, Mr. Vic.

Vic:
Thanks, Ernie. *(takes a sip)* That's good, eh.

Harold: *(loudly)*
Ah ha! You heard him. You all heard him say 'eh!'
He's a Canadian - a Canadian spy, I tells ya!

Vic hears him but tries to ignore him.

Harold: *(to the crowd)*
The Canadians are secretly running this country.
They're behind global warming. If you lived in
Canada, you'd want global warming, too!

Vic:
Harold, for the last time, I am not from Canada.

Harold:
Oh, yeah! Let me see your social security card!

Vic:
Are you nuts? Oh, wait a minute, you are nuts!
Hey, Harold, Bigfoot is behind you. *(Harold
turns)* Made you look! *(laughs)*

Harold stomps out.

Vic:

Sorry about that, folks. But hey, there's Jacks. Jacks, come up here with me a minute. Jackson Butler, ladies and gentlemen! (*starts applause*) Jackson Butler. Jack's Place! (*once Jacks reaches the stage*) Jacks, I just want to thank you here in front of all these fine folks for giving me my start. Help me thank him, folks. In all seriousness as a lounge singer, I just want say that this guy here - he's the guy. His name's out there on the front door. He's the best dinner club owner/operator/host/I-don't-know-what-else that you'll find anywhere. And, Jacks, as I move on now to a real gig (*Jacks reacts*) - no, no, let me finish. What I'm trying to say is this place has been a real stepping stone for me. (*Jacks reacts*) If it hadn't been for your encouragement I might be playing little one horse towns like this all my life. (*Jacks reacts*) I'll never forget you, and I'll never forget Jacks Place. I'll try and try, but I'll never forget you, man.

Gives Jacks a demonstrative hug while still holding his ginger ale with one hand.

Vic:

Now, get off the stage, you. I've got to give these folks some Branson-quality entertainment.

Vic sings Branson, MO.

Branson, MO*

*pronounced Moe or M-O
Sung to the tune of New York, New York

Start spreading the news
I'm leaving tomorrow
I'll make a brand new start of it
In Branson M-O*

Goodbye to old Jacks,
Alfredo and Meredith
I'll be a star tomorrow in
Branson M-O

I'll be the Newton of the Ozarks, just wait and see
And before you know it... they'll impersonate me.

Goodbye, this old town**
Hello, Big Time
Off to the Ozark Mountains
in Branson, M-O
If I can make it there
I'll make it anywhere
It's up to you, Branson, M-O.

*can localize to your city or state

See real lyrics at:

<http://www.brave.com/bo/lyrics/nyny.htm>

Vic:

Thank you. Thank you. Enjoy your meal. I'll be
here all week. Oh! No, I won't!

Vic exits.

Scene

Scene 3: The Murder Discovered

Two-to-five minutes can pass between Scenes 2 and 3. Desserts can be served during this time, unless they are preset on the tables. Prior to Scene 3 starting, all actors except Jacks should exit. A shot rings out from offstage followed by a scream. A few seconds later Rose screams into the middle of the tables. Jacks meets her and grabs her arms.

Rose: *(rushing in, hysterical)*

He's been shot! He's been shot! I heard the shot, and I ran to see what it was. And... *(breaking down)* and it was Vic! *(looking up as Harold rushes in)* Vic's been shot!

Harold:

And stabbed.

Jacks:

What?

Harold:

I heard Rose screaming, and I ran there. I saw the knife in his chest. *(Andy rushes in)* Andy, did you hear, Vic's been stabbed!

Andy:

And strangled! I ran to see what all the shooting and screaming was about. And there was Vic with a *(pantomiming with Mr. Fisty)* ligature mark all the way around his neck. And his eyes were bulging out. And his tongue.. *(Rose starts sobbing)* *(Mr. Fisty voice)* Oh, sorry, Rose. Anyway, he was strangled.

Jules: *(rushing in)*

Strangled, you say? I think not. I saw him there and I clearly saw an impression on ze back of his head. I believe he was... konked to death with an object of some type.

Jacks: (*addressing the servers and the crowd*)
Alright, let's just all stay calm. Folks, I am so sorry. Believe me, nothing like this has ever happened before. This is worse than the cockroa... I mean... tell you what, folks, just enjoy your meal... please... How about some music?

Meredith:

I'm afraid, sir, that our lounge singer is... deceased... departed... he is no more.

Jacks:

Oh. I don't have time for this. This is a bad time for me.

Andy: (*Mr. Fisty voice*)

A bad time for you? What about Vic?

Chris: (*entering, wearing lounge singer attire*)

Oh, oh, Jacks. I can sing. I had to change into my stage outfit because I spilled some... cherries on my server clothes. It's a good thing I had this change of clothes handy.

Rose:

Sweeping in already, huh, Chris.

Chris:

It... I just picked it up from the cleaners.

Rose: (*through clenched teeth*)

How convenient.

Jacks:

Well, go ahead, Chris. And give 'em your best number. Knock 'em dead... Oh. I mean... Just make it up to these people. And somebody... call the cops!

Everyone except Chris exits. Chris arranges herself or converses with the piano player as Ernie enters.

Ernie:

Extra! Extra! Lounge singer found shot... or stabbed... or... (*breaking down*) Oh, it's all so horrible (*rushes out*)

Chris:

Ladies and gentlemen, before I sing could we just have a moment of silence in honor of Vic (*pauses for just a beat*) OK, that's enough.

Chris sings a torch song.

If you want an intermission, have Chris announce it after she finishes her song.

Scene

Scene 4: The Cops Arrive

Servers are in the room, working. Jacks, Meredith, Alfredo, and Jules are already in the room. Coleman, Kelly, Billy, and Hackenbush. Coleman is wearing his trademark sunglasses.

Coleman: *(to the entire crowd)*
Alright, folks, calm down. Calm down. We're... the police. My name is... *(pulling off his sunglasses while Billy hums a few dramatic notes)*
Lieutenant Coleman.

Kelly:
And I'm... *(Coleman cuts him off while Kelly grimaces)*

Coleman:
This is Sergeant Kelly. *(gesturing toward Hackenbush)* Hackenbush, the medical examiner. And this *(gesturing toward Billy)* is our CSI, Billy. Who's in charge here?

Jacks:
This is my place. Jackson Butler. Everybody calls me Jacks. But you can call me Jacks. Ha!

Coleman:
Well, Mr. Butler, first thing we'll need to have the doc and Billy examine the crime scene. Where is *(puts sunglasses back on)* the body?

Jacks:
Harold, will you take these gentlemen out to... to where Vic... Can you take them out there?

Harold:
I'm not getting near someone who collects DNA.

Jacks: *(annoyed)*
Fine. Jules?

Jules:
Just a minute! I am what you say burning both my ends with zee candle wax. *(pause for laughter)*
Come zese way, Billee and Hackie.

Jules, Hackenbush, and Billy exit.

Kelly: *(to Jacks)*

We'll need to talk to all your staff and maybe some of your guests here.

Jacks: *(chuckling at his little joke)*

I can tell you the servers don't know anything.

Coleman:

Why do you say that, Mr. Butler?

Jacks:

Well... it's just a joke, uh... Alfredo, Meredith, come here. *(to Kelly)* Guess you can start with us.

Alfredo, Meredith, Jacks, Coleman, and Kelly congregate. Alfredo sits on a chair, while the others stand. Coleman stands with one leg on the chair seat.

Coleman:

Do any of you know why anyone would want to kill the victim?

Meredith:

Did you hear his singing? I believe everyone here could be considered a suspect.

Jacks:

Now, Meredith. Don't speak ill of the dead.

Meredith:

When he was alive he made everyone else ill.

Jacks:

Don't listen to him, Lieutenant. Every one here loved him. Why, he was like a son to me... except we were about the same age. How about a nephew? Maybe a cousin... once removed.

Coleman:

Mr. Butler... By the way, can I call you Jackson?

Jacks:

Call me Jacks. Everybody does.

Coleman:

Well, thank you, Jackson. So how long had you known... the deceased?

Jacks:

Several years. I discovered him at a church talent show and signed him to manage his career. He's been singing here ever since - like a kid brother to me he was. But he was moving on to his big break in Branson.

Coleman:

Branson. Missouri?

Meredith:

There's another one? Lord have mercy!

Coleman:

Lookit, I'll ask the questions here. So as his manager you would have made a lot of money from this Branson contract, huh?

Jacks:

Actually he broke the contract. (*exploding in melodrama grabbing on to Coleman*) Such a waste! Such a terrible, senseless waste! He was like a brother-in-law to me!

Coleman: (*extricating himself from Jacks*)

Broke the contract. Hmmmm. And that made you angry, didn't it, Butler? Found him in church, you say? Guess you forgot about... the fifth commandment!

Kelly: (*backing up Coleman*)

Honor thy father and mother.

Coleman:

No, not honor thy... The murder one.

Kelly: (*dismayed at Coleman*)

That's the sixth, sir.

Coleman:

Whatever. (*to Alfredo, changing the subject*)
So, you're the cook here?

Alfredo:
Nota cook - executive chef.

Kelly:
And what's your name?

Alfredo:
Alfredo.

Coleman:
Well, Mr. Fredo...

Alfredo:
Itsa not Al Fredo. It's Alfredo. It's all first name.

Kelly:
So what's your last name?

Alfredo: *(evasively)*
Well, everyone justa calls me Alfredo. Justa like Jacks.

Coleman: *(suspicious)*
What's your last name, Alfredo?

Alfredo: *(voice trailing off)*
Well, uh... it's uh. Santini.

Jacks, Meredith, and Kelly all gasp.

Coleman: *(not understanding)*
What?

Kelly:
Santini. As in the Santini crime family?

Alfredo:
Well, atsa my family. But I'ma no parta dat.

Coleman:
So you say.

Alfredo:

Da only thing Ia wack... eesa cheecken. (*to patrons*) Da cheecken, itsa good, no? Tell him. Tell him. Ia wack eet jeest this morning. I take-a da leettle cheecken by ees neck anda swing (*making a broad swinging motion*) em around a-like-a dis. Den Ia drop em and he run off (*mimics a chicken with a broken neck*).

Jacks: (*trying to be discrete*)
Alfredo.

Alfredo:

And you know where he was?

Jacks:

Alfredo!

Alfredo:

What? What? I'ma telling a story. He was under the oven! Whaddaya know! So Ia took outa my gun (*pulls out a pistol*) anna I shot 'em.

Andy: (*Mr. Fisty voice*)
He's got a gun!

Alfredo:

Whata? Whata? I only use it for a cooking. Itsa my secret ingredient.

Kelly: (*pulling out a gun and pointing it at Alfredo*)
Give me the gun, Alfredo.

Alfredo:

Okay. Okay. Don'ta shoot. Don'ta shoot. (*handing the gun to Kelly*)

Meredith:

Why did you shoot a chicken that already had a broken neck?

Alfredo:

Well, you canta be too sure with thesa cheeckens.

Coleman:

And I'm not too sure about you, Fredo. *(to Kelly)*
Make a note of him, Sergeant. This one sticks in
my craw. *(to Meredith, consulting his notebook)*
And you are Merrill, is it?

Alfredo discretely exits.

Meredith:

Meredith, sir.

Coleman:

You're the... What is it you do here?

Meredith:

I have served as Maitre d' for the past five
years.

Jacks:

And he's the best. He keeps everyone around here
on their toes. I tell you, anybody gets out of
line with Meredith and *(dragging his thumb across*
his throat) its curtains for them.

Meredith:

He means that figuratively. I just aim to please.

Coleman: *(trying to spring one on him)*

And who were you trying to please when you killed
the singer?

Kelly reacts with exasperation.

Meredith:

Does that line of questioning ever actually work?

Kelly: *(to himself)*

There's always a first time. *(to Meredith)* Were
you friends with Mr. Marino?

Meredith:

We worked together. I would say that sums up our
relationship.

Kelly:

So you wouldn't be knowing who might want him
dead?

Meredith:

There were... rumors floating around.

Coleman:

Rumors? What rumors?

Meredith:

I'm sure you can find that out if you do your job. I believe I need to be doing my job to take care of our guests. If you'll excuse me...

Coleman:

Just like you took care of Vic?

Meredith: *(walking off)*

I said, excuse me...

Coleman: *(to Kelly)*

Did you see that? He didn't deny it. I tell you, Kelly, I've got a feeling in my bones.

Jacks:

Lookit, if that's all for now, Lieutenant, we do all need to get back to our guests.

Coleman:

OK. For now... I'll go talk to your servers.

All exit. Billy enters carrying a case, pauses to look around and then nods to the musician or sound technician. CSI-type investigation music begins to play. Billy opens a case and removes various CSI props - such as police tape, a light with special filter, magnifying glass, goggles, a camera, tape for picking up DNA and fingerprints, ink pad for fingerprints, note cards, and a can of soda (for him). Billy works the room with his equipment, doing various comedy bits. He can examine the musicians, the walls, the guests. He can try telling guests that he needs their dessert for evidence. He can take fingerprints. He can shine his light on anyone and take notes.

Scene

Scene 5: Interview with the Servers

Scene 5 can begin immediately after CSI Billy finishes. Rose, Anna, Chris, Jules, Harold, and Jimmy are working in the room (other servers are absent). Coleman and Kelly enter.

Coleman:

I'd like you servers to gather around. We have a few questions for you.

Rose, Anna, Chris, Jules, Harold, and Jimmy congregate in the middle of the tables along with Kelly and Coleman. Some sit on chairs, while the others stand.

If using any of the optional servers, this can be a good time to run Mini-Scenes 5a, 5b, 5c, and 5d while Rose, Anna, Chris, Jules, Harold, and Jimmy gather. Coleman and Kelly can do those scenes on the edge of the stage with the individual servers. Following the Mini-Scenes, Coleman and Kelly turn their attention to Rose, Anna, Chris, Jules, Harold, and Jimmy.

Coleman: (to Rose)

Your name?

Rose:

Rose.

Kelly:

Last name, ma'am.

Rose:

Gardner.

Coleman: (Coleman tries to stifle a laugh)

Rose... Rose... Gardner. That's a "thorny" situation. (laughs to himself)

Rose: (sarcastically)

Gee, I've never heard that one before.

Coleman: *(not getting the slam)*

Well, I... Anyway, what was your relationship with the vic? Hey, and his name was Vic, and he's the vic. Vic the vic. Get it? *(laughs)*

Rose: *(bursting into tears)*

We were engaged.

Coleman: *(chastened)*

Oh, sorry, ma'am. Still you have to admit that's pretty funny.

Kelly: *(to Rose)*

Did anyone have anything against him?

Rose: *(trying to pull herself together)*

There were all kinds of rumors floating around about him, but I didn't believe any of them. We were going to get married and live in Branson as soon as he got settled there.

Harold:

That isn't what I heard.

Coleman:

What did you hear?

Rose:

Shut up, Harold.

Jules:

Ze rumor was zat Veec was ditching Rose.

Rose:

That is not true. It's not true. *(to Kelly)* Write it down: not true.

Jules:

That ees why I said it was a rumor. Who knows if it ees true?

Coleman:

We'll find out. That's for sure. Let's move on to you, Miss... Miss *(indicating Anna)*. Your name?

Anna: *(glumly)*

Anna Taylor.

Kelly:

Are you okay, miss?

Anna:

Well, like, I bummed out. Not just a little bummed out, but totally, totally, totally bummed out. It's just that Vic and me - we never had a chance.

Rose: (*standing and getting in Anna's face*)

And you never would have, you... you...

Anna: (*heatedly*)

Oh, yeah? You totally didn't see the way he looked at me. We had something you two never had. It was awesome. And it would have developed in time.

Coleman:

What about you... uh... (*consulting his notebook*)
Chris? Were you in love with Vic like these other two?

Chris:

Oh, sure. I thought he was dreamy. (*acting puzzled*) No, that's not right word. (*brightening*)
Ah - nightmarish - that's it.

Rose and Anna react with shock and anger.

Coleman:

Didn't like him, huh?

Chris:

The word was that he was trying to talk Jacks out of making me singer after he left.

Kelly:

Where did you hear that word?

Chris:

Harold told me.

Kelly: (*to Harold*)

That right?

Harold:

That's the word I heard. But it might not be true. I didn't see it on the Internet or anything. It's just what somebody said.

Kelly:

Who said it?

Harold:

Meredith, I think. Maybe Jimmy.

Jimmy:

Not me.

Kelly:

What about you, Harold? What was your relationship with poor Mr. Marino?

Harold:

I... I tried to stay away from him. He was...
(*looking around*) a Canadian spy, you know.

Coleman:

A what?

Harold:

A spy. He was a spy for Canada.

Kelly:

You don't say? Let me ask you this, Harold, what do you think about the Apollo missions?

Harold:

Oh, don't get me started on NASA and their whole
(*making quotes with fingers*) "globe" theory.

Coleman:

Hmmm. Big foot? Loch Ness? Abominable?

Harold:

Those... are the aliens.

Coleman:

Yeah, right... Well, what about you, Frenchy. Did you have any reason to want the singer dead?

Jules:

Mais non. I liked him just fine... for an American.

Harold:

He was Canadian! Canadian, I tells ya!

Coleman: *(to Kelly)*

I tell you, Kelly, I've got a feeling in my gut about Frenchy here. I like her for the murder. That's how you get to be lieutenant; you just get a feeling for these things.

Jules:

What! I have no moteeve. And you have no evidence.

Coleman:

Well, I'm keeping my eye on you. Don't leave the country. Don't any of you leave the country.

Rose:

Uh, we have glasses to refill.

Servers start to wander back to work while Coleman is still talking.

Coleman:

Well, I guess you can get back to work... for now.

Ernie: *(entering)*

Extra! Extra! Everyone's a suspect. Vote for your favorite in our interactive web poll. Text your vote to 55193.

Coleman and Kelly exit.

Scene

Mini-scene 5a: Coleman and Andy, and Leslie

Coleman: (to Andy)
What's your name?

Andy: (Mr. Fisty voice)
Mr. Fisty.

Coleman: (turning to Mr. Fisty)
Ah, a little guy. What do you know about this mess?

Andy: (Mr. Fisty voice)
Well, a lot of people didn't like the singer - anyone with ears I think.

(Andy voice)
Mr. Fisty, don't!

Coleman:
You stay out of this. I'm interviewing Mr. Twisty here.

Andy: (Mr. Fisty voice)
It's Fisty, you moron.

Coleman:
You watch your mouth... or whatever that is.

*If there is no Leslie, end the scene here.
Coleman can add an "I'll be watching you"
and point at his eyes with two fingers and
then points with them at Mr. Fisty.*

Leslie: (coming up to them)
Is he harassing you? I'm an attorney. I can handle police harassment suits. (puts business card in Mr. Fisty's mouth)

Coleman:
Lawyering up, eh Wristy? Fine. I'll back off. But that's a sure sign of guilt. (points at his eyes with two fingers and then points with them at Mr. Fisty)

Mini-scene 5b: Kelly and Leslie

Kelly:

You're name is Leslie?

Leslie:

That's right. Perhaps you've heard of my law office - Leslie's Law - for all your legal litigation lawsuit needs.

Kelly:

Uh. Right. So you're a lawyer but you work here?

Leslie:

The law business isn't exactly booming. Why doesn't anyone around here want to sue anyone else! Surely, someone has been wronged. What about you? How come you're the sergeant and that guy is the lieutenant?

Kelly:

Well...

Leslie:

I can handle job discrimination suits. (*lowering her voice while handing him a card*) Just think about it.

Kelly:

Did you see anything suspicious tonight?

Leslie:

Other than Harold, the nut job, and Howdy Doody over there? No, it's pretty much a typical night.

Kelly: (*handing her his card*)

Well, if you think of anything, let me know.

Mini-scene 5c: Coleman and Fanny

Coleman:

What's with that thing in your ear, girlie?

Fanny:

It's for my tech support calls.

Coleman:

Your what? Is that how you communicate with your... accomplices? Is that where you got the plan?

Fanny: *(laughing)*

Most of the people I communicate with couldn't plan a party.

Coleman:

Well, what do you know about...

Fanny:

Hold on. I have a call. Microtech Support. May I help you? Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Your E key isn't working? Give me your e-mail address. I'll send you a whole bunch of E's. Just cut and paste. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. No, there should be an @ sign in there somewhere. An @ sign - the circle-A thingie. No. you really need one.

Coleman: *(ripping the bluetooth out of Fanny's ear and yelling into it)*

Just send that e-mail to
LietenantColeman@I'mObstructingJustice.com!
Goodbye. *(click off the bluetooth)*

Fanny:

That is NOT protocol. We have to be much more subtle when we insult the callers.

Coleman:

So, did you see anything related to the murder?

Fanny:

Between working two jobs? I don't think so. Now if you don't mind... *(holds her hand out. Coleman grudgingly gives her the bluetooth)*

Mini-scene 5d: Kelly and Luanne

Kelly:

Excuse me.

Luanne:

What is it, hon?

Kelly: (*irked at being called hon*)

Did you see anything suspicious tonight?

Luanne:

I sure wish I could help you. But, sugar, I've just been working harder than a one-armed wallpaper hanger.

Kelly: (*irked at being called sugar*)

I see. Well, is there anyone you know who had a grudge against the victim?

Luanne:

Against Vic? Why, sweetie, he was just the most darlin' man. I could have just sopped him up with a biscuit. (*lowering her voice*) Tell me, darlin', who do you think did it?

Kelly: (*sarcastically*)

We're still investigating, sweetheart.

Luanne:

Will you tell me if you get any leads, honey?

Kelly:

Sure thing, baby.

Luanne:

Why, I do believe you're getting fresh with me. Watch who you call baby, darlin'. I'll call the cops.

Scene

Scene 6: Cause of Death

Coleman and Kelly enter.

Coleman:

I tell you, Sergeant, this is the strangest case I've ever seen. And the sorriest bunch of suspects. I'd like to lock the lot of 'em up.

Kelly:

And that poor young man who was shot... and stabbed... and strangled... and konked on the head. (*as Hackenbush enters*) We have to determine the cause of death.

Hackenbush:

I have that information right here.

Coleman:

Give it to me, doc.

Hackenbush:

The deceased had a bullet wound entering his back at a 30 degree angle approximately 2 inches from the base of his neck between the shoulder blades.

Coleman:

Well, that would do it. Now we just have to find the gun and trace it...

Hackenbush:

The gun isn't the murder weapon.

Kelly:

Eh?

Hackenbush:

You see he was already dead when he was shot. He had been stabbed. The perpetrator drove a thin serrated blade into the heart from the front. It is clear from the wounds that the stabbing preceded the gunshot.

Kelly:

Hmmm. A serrated blade, you say? I wonder...

Hackenbush:

But he was already dead when he was stabbed.

Coleman:

Now wait a minute...

Hackenbush:

Both the wounds were lacking in blood. I found that the victim had been strangled. Someone sneaked up behind him and garroted him with some type of cloth string. I have fibers! (*holding up the evidence card triumphantly*)

Kelly:

So the cause of death was strangulation?

Hackenbush:

No.

Coleman:

Oh, come on!

Hackenbush:

It couldn't have been with the bruising I observed. What killed him must have been the blow to the head.

Coleman:

Hackenbush, why didn't you just say that in the first place?

Hackenbush:

This is my only scene with lines.

Kelly:

Have you determined the murder weapon?

Hackenbush:

What ever it was, it left two parallel grooves approximately one centimeter apart.

Coleman:

One centimeter. What would that be in... millimeters, Doctor?

Hackenbush:

Ten.

Coleman:

Hmmm. And in meters?

Hackenbush:

One-hundredth.

Coleman:

Fascinating. And in celsio...grams?

Hackenbush looks confused. Kelly comes to the rescue by changing the subject.

Kelly:

But if the blow to the head killed him, why was he shot?

Coleman:

And stabbed...

Hackenbush:

And strangled? Well, you see. Apparently, when he was struck, he collapsed into the chair (*drops into a chair for dramatic effect*). He died right then, but it must have looked like he was just taking a cat nap. So the strangler sneaked up behind him and (*grabs a patron by the neck*). Then the stabber - do you call it a stabber? (*Kelly and Coleman indicate impatience*) Anyway, the stabber didn't notice he was already strangled, which you'd think would be hard to miss with those (*bulging out his eyes*) bulged out eyes...

Kelly:

And after that the gunman...

Coleman:

Or gunwoman...

Hackenbush:

Right. The force of the gunshot is what finally knocked the body over so that people realized he was dead.

Kelly:

Now what?

Coleman:

Well, we arrest one person for murder and three people for attempted murder and, if I have my way, the rest of them as accessories.

Hackenbush:

But who did what?

Kelly:

I'd like to look at that head wound. Two grooves a centimeter apart, you say.

Hackenbush:

Come this way.

Coleman, Kelly, and Hackenbush begin to exit. Coleman stops and turns back to the crowd.

Coleman:

We'll be right back folks. And when we do (*puts on sunglasses*) I'll reveal the killer. You there, (*getting Chris' attention*) yeah, you, the singer-server-suspect chick. Sing another song for these folks while we round everyone up.

Ernie:

Extra! Extra! More on the murder! Read it here if you weren't paying attention to the last scene.

Chris sings another song.

Scene

Scene 7: The Culprits Revealed

Jacks, Meredith, Alfredo and the servers are in the room working. Coleman, Kelly, Hackenbush, and Billy enter and place four chairs in a row. As Coleman begins his first line, the others come near the center, perhaps still standing amid the tables.

Coleman:

Well, *(putting on sunglasses)* it's pretty clear to me what happened. Alfredo, the next meal you fix will be in the prison cafeteria.

Alfredo:

Me? I killa nobody.

Coleman:

Vic was shot, wasn't he? *(rips off sunglasses for dramatic effect)* And you carry a gun.

Kelly:

Actually, sir, Alfredo's gun is a .38. Vic was shot by a .22, a small gun, a gun that could be concealed in a purse, if you know what I mean.

Coleman: *(turning to Meredith)*

A purse. Meredith, do you carry a purse? No? Jacks? Anyone?

Kelly:

Perhaps the women, sir.

Coleman: *(turning to Anna)*

Anna, you believed those rumors that Vic loved you. May we look in your purse?

Anna reluctantly hands over her purse. Kelly pulls out a .22.

Anna:

I totally thought he loved me. But then he was moving away and taking HER *(indicating Rose)* with him. He led me on. And he was dumping me before we even got started.

Coleman:

Billy. (*Billy escorts Anna to a chair, handcuffs her, and stands guard behind her*)

Coleman:

So that's one crime solved. But, of course, Vic was already dead when Anna shot him. He had been stabbed. And who has access to more knives than a chef - a chef who chafed at Vic's constant digs about his cooking?

Alfredo:

Ah, you crazy.

Kelly:

Actually, Sir, remember the knife was a thin and short serrated blade? Not really like a kitchen knife a chef would use at all. But consistent with a steak knife that a server has access to. Of course, stabbing can get messy - even if you're stabbing a dead man. Chris had changed out of her server clothes into her gown - as if she knew she would be called upon to sing - or perhaps because her server clothes weren't stained with cherries, but stained... with blood.

Chris:

Alright. I confess. I was in line for Vic's job, and it would have been the start of everything I always hoped for. But then I heard he was talking Jacks out of hiring me.

Jacks:

No, he wasn't. The job was yours.

Chris: (*hopeful*)

Oh, Jacks, really!

Coleman:

Well, not now, sweetheart. The only thing you'll be singing... is the Folsom Prison Blues. Hackenbush. (*Hackenbush escorts Chris to a chair, handcuffs her, and guards her*)

Jacks:

Great. Now I have to hire ANOTHER lounge singer.

Coleman:

But he was already dead when you killed him. He had been strangled. Perhaps (*swinging around to face Alfredo*) by someone who had practice strangling chickens?

Alfredo:

What eesa dis? Profiling?

Kelly:

Well, of course, Alfredo isn't the only one who has apron strings around here.

Jimmy: (*holding his apron*)

I did it! I did it!

Kelly:

No, you didn't.

Jimmy:

I didn't? That's a relief.

Kelly:

But I noticed one person with abrasions on his hands that look like they came from pulling apron strings very tightly.

Kelly moves to Harold and turns Harold's hand over, revealing red lines.

Harold:

I'm a patriot. He was a spy, a spy I tells ya. All our national secrets were on their way to Montreal.

Jacks:

Ottawa.

Harold:

Ah-ha! Caught you in my trap. No real American would know the capital of Canada. You're all in it together, aren't you? It's an international conspiracy! A conspiracy! You can shut me up, but you can't shut up the truth!

Kelly:

Oh, shut up.

Jacks:

My whole service staff is going to jail.

Coleman: (*Kelly escorts Harold to a chair and handcuffs him. Coleman moves behind it to guard him*)

But even if he was a spy...

Kelly:

Which he wasn't.

Harold:

Oh, yes he was.

Coleman:

He was already dead when you wrapped your apron strings around his throat. Somebody konked him on the head. Somebody (*turning toward Alfredo*)...

Alfredo:

You know... there's an Italiano Defamation League.

Kelly:

Somebody hit him hard enough to kill him. It would take a heavy object - an object that left two small grooves in his skull a centimeter apart. There's one object in this room like that. And it is the sole possession of one person.

Kelly strides to the reservation podium and snatches up Meredith' reservation book.

Kelly:

Just as I thought - dented. You were the puppet master, weren't you, Meredith? Spreading lies about Vic - he loved Anna, he was dumping Rose, He was lobbying against Chris, he was a spy. You kept hoping someone would knock him off. And then on his last night you thought it was your last chance and you had to do it yourself. You didn't know that's what everyone else was also thinking.

Jacks:

Meredith? Now I need a Maître d'.

Meredith:

Oh, yes, it's all about you, Jacks. But I am not saying another word. I will not implicate myself like these other fools. You don't have any proof.

Kelly:

Actually, we have those grooves in his skull that exactly match your reservation book... and the M.E.'s report that lists the blow to the head as the cause of death... and I think we can trace all those rumors back to you, Mister.

Meredith:

Oh. Then at least I'll get my say. Yes, I started all those rumors. I manipulated all these rubes like puppets on a string.

Andy: (*Mr. Fisty voice*)

I'm no puppet on a string!

Meredith:

Oh, shut up. I thought they were all too chicken or too dim-witted to go through with it. So I took my reservation book and...

Jacks:

But why, Meredith? Why oh why?

Meredith:

I couldn't stand to see that troglodite make the big time - the Philistine.

Harold:

Not Philistine! He's a Canadian I tells ya!

Jacks:

Man, I have to get a new employment agency.

Coleman: (*as Kelly handcuffs Meredith*)

Well, I guess I (*puts on sunglasses*) wrapped up this. Let's take them away, boys.

Ernie enters.

Ernie:

Extra! Extra! Murder solved. Police prepare for final production number.

This Old Town/Heaven Tonight

Sung to the tune of New York, New York

(During intro prisoners do hand choreography with handcuffs)

Kelly & Coleman: We're cuffing them up

Kelly & Coleman: We're taking them in

Coleman: We'll book and lock them up tonight

Kelly: In this old town

Chris: I want my one call

Anna: I want a lawyer (*Leslie runs up with her card*)

Harold: Is it too late to plead the fifth?

Chris, Anna, Harold, Meredith: In this old town

Coleman: You're gonna wake up in a chilly 10-by-10.

Meredith (*referring to Harold*): Just as long as I don't share a cell with him

Alfredo: I told you, "not-a me"

Jules: Zeeze Americans are crazy

Everyone but police and prisoners: We have our lives ahead of us

Everyone but police and prisoners: In this old town

Chris, Anna, Harold, Meredith: If I can (*pause*) just post bail

Chris, Anna, Harold, Meredith: Then I'll get (*pause*) out of jail

Coleman: But don't you dare skip this old town.

During bridge of song Hackenbush wheels in gurney, feet under sheet moving to the beat, then Vic sits up from under the sheet

Well I've been shot dead

Stabbed, strangled, konked head

I won't make Branson but I'll make

Heaven tonight

Won't make the Great White Way

But watch out, Milky Way

I'm headlining in

Heaven tonight!

Fade to Black