

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

By Craig Sodaro

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(APPROXIMATELY TEN MEN, TWELVE WOMEN)

CAROL ROBINSON	Creative, but harried mother of two teenagers. (111 lines)
ANNETTE ROBINSON.....	Oldest daughter. (79 lines)
CORKY ROBINSON.....	Youngest daughter, spitfire. (122 lines)
DIANE	Corky's friend. (56 lines)
KIM.....	Corky's friend. (52 lines)
EDGAR ROBINSON	Carol's husband. (42 lines)
MRS. FINCK.....	Maid and cook, hired for the evening. (43 lines)
LESTER.....	Stranger in a checkered suit. (20 lines)
BRIAN	Annette's boyfriend. (44 lines)
DONNY	Brian's friend. (32 lines)
ELLA	Friends of the Robinson's invited to (26 lines)
NORMAN.....	CAROL'S murder-mystery dinner party. (20 lines)
BRENDA.....	(7 lines)
BOB	(9 lines)
TINA	(18 lines)
AL	(17 lines)
MR. WINKLE.....	Vacuum cleaner salesman, just hired by Mite-E-Clean Vacuums. (49 lines)
MISS DRAPER	MR. WINKLE'S frustrated mentor. (72 lines)
SGT. THORNBURY	Sergeant with the local police department. (27 lines)
OFFICER CLEEVEER.....	THORNBURY'S protégée. (38 lines)
QUEEN BEA.....	Smugglers (29 lines)

STAN SNIVELY (37 lines)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1: The Robinson living room.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2: A short time later.

ACT TWO, SCENE 1: A few minutes later.

ACT TWO, SCENE 2: A short time later.

SET

The Robinson house is a modern home in a pleasant suburb. Carol Robinson is hosting a murder-mystery dinner party that she has written for friends and colleagues. The murder-mystery is set in 1929 thus guests are expected to arrive in costume as gangsters and flappers. If possible, the room should be decorated with items from the twenties including a tiffany-style lamp, old fashioned phone and radio, floor lamps ringed with fringe, etc. Entrance up left leads outside and may either be an actual door or a wing entrance. Entrance down left leads to bedrooms of the house. Entrance right leads to the dining room and kitchen along with a back door. Window is located up center with curtains and a window box underneath. Table and chairs are up right and a desk with a phone are left. Coat rack stands up left by the door.

CASTING

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE is written for a cast of twenty-two, but if you would like a larger cast, extra FRIENDS and GUESTS may be added. For a smaller cast, some of the GUESTS' roles could be combined and DONNY could double as LESTER.

Any number of roles could be played by males or females: CORKY'S friends could become DAVE (DIANE) and KYLE (KIM); MRS. FINCK could become MR. FINCK, a butler/chef; OFFICER CLEEVEVER; and one or two of the murder-mystery GUESTS could be switched. Use the flexibility in casting to meet specific casting needs.

NOTES

With mistaken identities, disappearing bodies, and flashy '20's costumes, this lively two act gives directors an opportunity to stage a fast-paced mystery-comedy with continuous action. As rehearsals progress, different ideas on staging, costuming, or characterization might be suggested from cast/crew, if they work, use them. Add twenties music between scenes and "The Brady Bunch theme song to spice up your production.

COSTUMES

Modern costumes with the exception of a few characters listed here. The murder mystery dinner guests and hosts should don fashion of the roaring twenties, if possible. Suggestions include fishnet tights, fringed flapper dresses, feathered headbands, cloches (helmet-like hats) or fancy combs, and straight dresses with dropped waists for women. Men should wear gangster suits or pin-striped suits with pocket watches, and fedoras or broad-brimmed flat top hats. Movies are a great way to see vintage fashion. Check out *Singing in the Rain*, *The Great Gatsby*, or *Some Like it Hot*.

MRS. FINCK should wear a maid's outfit with white lace apron. SERGEANT THORNBURY and OFFICER CLEEVER should wear police uniforms and STAN and LESTER should be dressed in dark colors. QUEEN BEA wears a small crown with other jewels. MR. WINKLE and MISS DRAPER should wear conservative business suits.

PROPS

Paper bag stuffed with (play) money
Necklace
Twenty dollar bill
Folder with papers
Small plate with biscuits
Newspaper
Vacuum cleaner and attachments
Waste paper basket
Toy guns
Rope
Two large books
Batons (2)
Tray
Notecard with clue (2)
Breath spray
Potted plant
Handkerchief with blood stains
Large trash bag

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

Setting:

The Robinson's living room, early evening.

At Rise:

The stage is empty. The phone rings several times. CAROL ROBINSON limps on right dressed as a flapper. SHE is wearing only one heel.

CAROL: Coming! Coming! I'm moving as fast as Peg Leg Pete! (*SHE answers the phone.*) Hello? Yes, this is Carol Robinson. (*ANNETTE enters left, dressed to the nines.*

ANNETTE: (*Impatiently.*) Mother! This is no time to be standing there on the phone.

CAROL: I'm sorry, but we're really not . . . we're really not . . . no I know . . . you see there's going to be a murder at my house tonight . . . no, don't call the police! It's a murder-mystery dinner party where the guests play different gangsters and there'll be a murder between the salad and the entree.

ANNETTE: (*Whispers.*) Mother!

CAROL: (*Into phone.*) I know it doesn't sound appetizing . . . oh I forgot about the appetizers . . . no perhaps later.

ANNETTE: Please, mother!

CAROL: All right dear. (*Into phone.*) Oh, no I didn't mean you.
(*CAROL hangs up sheepishly.*)

ANNETTE: Another telemarketer?

CAROL: Oh someone trying to sell a vacuum.

CAROL begins to braid ANNETTE'S hair or ties her dress or hands her money.

ANNETTE: I can't believe you even give those people the time of day.

CAROL: I have to be civil.

ANNETTE: Why? Mona Danforth's mother gives them a Bronx cheer and slams down the phone whenever she gets one of those stupid calls.

CAROL: Mona Danforth's mother used to be a lady wrestler.

ANNETTE: Is there anything wrong with that?

CAROL: I'm sure anything a man can do, a woman can do better.

ANNETTE: You're old fashioned.

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CAROL: Just because I never wrestled?

ANNETTE: No, because you're the one doing all of the work for the party tonight.

CAROL: It's fun.

ANNETTE: It's absurd. Dad should help, you're hosting this party for his clients.

CAROL: But it's my idea. I was watching an old rerun of the Untouchables one night and well, I threw together a few recipes and voila . . . a murder mystery dinner!

ANNETTE: And you speak French, too, you're so talented.

CAROL: I want everyone to think I paid money for the script and recipes. You know how people get when they think you created something. They're so . . . sympathetic.

ANNETTE: This is great! You'll be rich and famous. And if anything goes wrong, just blame Dad.

CAROL: Nothing's going to go wrong.

ANNETTE: With Corky running loose?

CAROL: That's no way to talk about your little sister.

ANNETTE: She's not little anymore, Mom. She's a freshman in high school.

CAROL: It seems just like yesterday she was running around the yard chasing the cat up a tree.

ANNETTE: That was yesterday. Corky's caught in a time warp. She's permanently eight years old.

CAROL: Oh, one day she'll grow up and -

ANNETTE: - and what? Marry Dennis the Menace?

CAROL: Corky Menace. It has a nice ring to it.

ANNETTE: *(Thanks her mom for braiding her hair or fixing her dress or the money.)*

Thanks, mom. Now all I need is my necklace. Do you know where it is?

CAROL: The opal on the silver chain?

ANNETTE: Corky said she gave it to you.

CAROL: I don't remember that.

ANNETTE: Why that little -

CAROL: You look fine without it, dear.

ANNETTE: But I'd look a whole lot better with it! Tonight's the most important night of my life! *(Grandly.)* The annual Honor Students Dinner Dance and Brian Fowler's taking me! The most wonderful man in our school!

CAROL: Man?!

ANNETTE: Well he's practically a man. He's seventeen!

CORKY enters carrying a paper bag stuffed with something.

CORKY: Hi guys! You'll never guess what -

CAROL: Oh, Corky, where have you been?

CORKY: Mom, you won't believe it.

CAROL: *(Appeasingly.)* Try me.

ANNETTE: Mom, why are you only wearing one earring?

CAROL: Corky, have you seen my other earring?

CORKY: Mom, you gotta listen.

ANNETTE: And what about my necklace?

CORKY: I borrowed them.

CAROL: Would you un-borrow them please?

CORKY: But you'll never guess what I found!

ANNETTE: They're going to find what's left of you inside that paper bag if you don't get my necklace.

CORKY: Yes, Godzilla, right away.

CORKY exits right. The doorbell rings.

CAROL: That can't be the guests already. *(CAROL hobbles left.)*

ANNETTE: Mother, you're limping. Are you all right?

CAROL: Nothing my other shoe wouldn't cure.

CAROL exits left, immediately returns with DIANE and KIM. DIANE holds CAROL's other shoe.

DIANE: *(Hands CAROL the shoe.)* Corky thought you might need this tonight, Mrs. R.

ANNETTE: *(Sarcastically.)* I can't imagine why.

CAROL: Thank you, Diane. Was this a clue in a mystery?

KIM: The Countess of Cookamonga was last seen wearing that shoe.

CAROL puts on the other shoe. EDGAR enters left.

EDGAR: Hi everybody!

CAROL: Edgar! It's about time! You're late.

EDGAR: And you're about seventy years late in that get-up.

ANNETTE: Dad, did you forget about the dinner party tonight?

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CAROL: Come on, Edgar, you've got to get dressed. The victims will be here soon.

CAROL leads EDGAR off left.

DIANE: You're looking mighty spiffy tonight, Annette.

ANNETTE: I'm going to a dance.

KIM: With Brian?

ANNETTE: It's none of your business.

KIM/DIANE: Brrrrrian.

ANNETTE: You're just jealous.

CORKY enters with the stuffed bag and necklace.

CORKY: Here's your stupid necklace.

ANNETTE: You better hope it's not scratched.

ANNETTE flounces off left.

CORKY: Now I know how Cinderella felt.

MRS. FINCK enters right. SHE wears a black maid's costume with a white lace apron.

FINCK: Mrs. Robinson? Yoo-who. Oh, who are you?

CORKY: I'm Corky, I live here so from now on I'll be asking the questions.

FINCK: So you're the other one.

CORKY: The better one.

FINCK: Well, I'm Mrs. Finck.

DIANE: Why are you dressed like that?

FINCK: I am preparing Mrs. Robinson's dinner for the party tonight.

KIM: Pretty uptown having a cook in the house, Corky.

CORKY: *(To FINCK.)* Can you rustle up a pizza?

FINCK: The menu tonight is Capone caviar, Speakeasy salad, Bootlegger Chicken Barbeque, and Bonnie and Clyde potatoes.

CORKY/DIANE/KIM: Yuck!

DIANE: I'm going home to order a pizza.

CORKY: But what about - *(CORKY holds up the paper bag.)*

KIM: Shhhh!

FINCK: What are you girls up to?

CAROL enters left.

CAROL: Oh, Mrs. Finck, you've met the girls?

CORKY: Yeah, she gave us a rundown on the menu. I think we'll order a pizza.

CAROL: *(To FINCK.)* We need to put the Elliot Ness relish tray out and put the Ma Barker biscuits in the oven.

CORKY: Mom, do you have a minute?

CAROL: Let me get Mrs. Finck started on the biscuits and then we'll have plenty of time to chat.

CAROL exits right followed by a suspicious MRS. FINCK who stops to look back at CORKY.

DIANE: So what's up Corky?

KIM: It must be important if you put out an S.O.S.

CORKY: It is. Take a look at what I found.

CORKY opens bag on table and dumps out thousands of dollars.

KIM: Wow! That's a lot of babysitting.

DIANE: This is how Madonna *(Or current celebrity.)* feels everyday.

KIM: Wait a minute, maybe it's not real.

CORKY: Wrong. I stopped by the store on the way home and bought a candy bar with a twenty from the bag. It's real cash, all right. Here's the change to prove it.

CORKY shows them the change.

DIANE: Pizza for everyone! We're the richest people on earth!

KIM: Not quite.

DIANE: Well, at least in Westmont.

KIM: Doubtful.

DIANE: *(Deflated.)* Well, at least in this house.

CORKY: But it's not ours guys.

KIM: You stole it?

CORKY: Heck no. I was walking through the park and I took a shortcut over the

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rocks by the swings. I kicked a rock loose
and there it was.

DIANE: Someone put it under the rock deliberately.

CORKY: I guess we should call the police.

KIM: They get to have all the fun.

DIANE: Can we order a pizza first?

KIM: What the police don't know won't hurt them.

CORKY: Maybe we should find out whose money it is.

DIANE moves to the window and looks out.

KIM: We don't have anything else to do.

CORKY: All right. Where do we start? Any ideas, Diane?

DIANE: Do you know anybody who drives a big, black van?

CORKY: No, why?

DIANE: That black van has been sitting out there since we got here.

CORKY moves to the window and looks out.

CORKY: Big deal, it's driving away.

DIANE: Maybe they . . . nah . . . how would anybody know you found the money.

KIM: Sooner or later somebody's gonna miss it.

ANNETTE: *(Offstage left.)* I don't know how to put on those suspenders, Dad.

CORKY: Quick! Hide the money!

CORKY, DIANE, and KIM stuff the money in their pockets, down their shirts, up their sleeves. A single twenty falls to the floor as ANNETTE enters wearing a necklace.

ANNETTE: Any sign of Brian yet?

CORKY: No Godzilla. C'mon guys.

CORKY moves right.

ANNETTE: What are you up to?

CORKY: Us? We're not up to a thing.

ANNETTE: That's what they told the king before the French Revolution. What are you hiding?

CORKY: Get a life.

DIANE: I think I hear Brian now.

The doorbell rings. CORKY, DIANE, and KIM race off right. ANNETTE puts on a big smile.

ANNETTE: *(Calling.)* Come in! *(ANNETTE turns right as LESTER enters left.)* Oh, darling, how I've waited for this moment!

SHE turns to LESTER.

LESTER: Hellllllo

ANNETTE: Who are you??!!

LESTER: Uh . . . I am a representative for the Handy Dandy Food Slicer Corporation.

ANNETTE: I was expecting someone else.

LESTER: Well, I have something very interesting to show you.

ANNETTE: And so do I . . . the door. *(Pushes LESTER out.)* **ESTER:** Please ma'am, I -

ANNETTE: Out!

LESTER exits left as BRIAN enters. ANNETTE turns right, but shouts back over her shoulder.

ANNETTE: And don't come back!

BRIAN: Well that's a fine hello.

ANNETTE: Oh, Brian! I wasn't talking to you. Some salesman just dropped by.

BRIAN: Wow! You look great!

ANNETTE: Thank you, so do you.

BRIAN: I'd feel a whole lot better if my criminology project was done.

ANNETTE: I think you need a night off from the project. The dance is going to be fun. Let Donny type it up.

SOUND of tapping at the window.

ANNETTE: What's that?

BRIAN: I've got a headache.

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ANNETTE: No, that tapping.

BRIAN: It's a throbbing headache. Do you have any aspirin?

ANNETTE: I'll bring you two.

BRIAN: And a glass of water.

ANNETTE exits right. BRIAN exits left, returns immediately with DONNY who carries a folder.

BRIAN: I told you I can't work on the project tonight, Donny.

DONNY: But I need to pick up this part.

Points to paper in folder.

BRIAN: *(Reading.)* Procedural, for the criminal activity you selected.

DONNY: We chose smuggling, Brian.

BRIAN: How could I forget. *(Reading.)* Set up a scenario based on fact and complete a step-by-step procedure for surveillance and apprehension of the accused. *(To DONNY.)* I thought you were doing this part.

DONNY: No, I did all of the definitions.

BRIAN: I did the definitions.

DONNY: Well, at least everything is well-defined.

BRIAN: This is due Monday!

DONNY: What are we going to do?

CORKY, DIANE, and KIM enter right.

CORKY: What if the money was stolen?

DIANE: Blood money.

CORKY: Oh, hi Brian. Where's Godzilla?

BRIAN: She's getting me an aspirin.

CORKY: She makes you sick, too, huh?

BRIAN: Just a headache.

CORKY: Hey, you're taking criminology, aren't you?

DONNY: So am I.

CORKY: Well, we've got a hypocritical question.

BRIAN: Hypothetical?

CORKY: Yeah that too. Why would somebody hide a lot of money under a rock?

DONNY: They don't trust banks.

BRIAN: Logically, they probably don't want anyone to know they have the money.

DIANE: But what if they left it out in the rain.

BRIAN: Maybe they were in a hurry.

KIM: Yeah!

BRIAN: What's this about guys?

CORKY: Nothing, not a thing. Nope. *(The GIRLS concur.)*

DIANE: *(To CORKY.)* Then your plan might work.

ANNETTE enters right with glass and aspirin.

ANNETTE: Here, Brian

DONNY: Hi, Annette.

ANNETTE: Hi, Donny. Brian's not working on the project tonight, okay?

DONNY: Uh-huh.

ANNETTE: You probably need the whole bottle of aspirin after talking to - *(Nods to CORKY and FRIENDS.)* - them.

BRIAN: It's okay. I feel much better.

CORKY: He just needs some fresh air. You're wearing too much Obsession.

ANNETTE: Why don't you crawl back into that cave of yours.

CORKY: Not tonight. We're going out. Have fun, zilla.

CORKY, DIANE, and KIM exit left.

ANNETTE: What are they up to?

DONNY: Search me.

ANNETTE: I'd rather not. *(To BRIAN.)* I guess we're ready.

BRIAN: Yeah, sure. Oh, do you have the directions?

ANNETTE: No they're upstairs. We can find it without them.

BRIAN: I'd feel better with the directions.

ANNETTE: All right, all right. I'll be right back.

ANNETTE exits left.

BRIAN: *(To DONNY.)* Get going!

DONNY: Where?

BRIAN: Follow those kids!

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DONNY: Why?

BRIAN: They're up to something.

DONNY: How do you know?

BRIAN: Intuition.

DONNY: Mr. Smidley said there's no room for intuition in police work.

BRIAN: That's why he's a teacher and not a detective. Get going!

DONNY: But what about the project?

BRIAN: Take notes on everything they do. We'll figure out something in the morning.

DONNY: All right, chief!

DONNY exits left. BRIAN spots a bill on the floor and picks it up. EDGAR enters left dressed as a gangster, using his finger as a gun, he sticks it in BRIAN's back.

EDGAR: *(Affecting accent.)* It's curtains, buster!

BRIAN: *(Raises his arms.)* Excuse me?

EDGAR: Swipin' the boss's cash, eh?

EDGAR grabs bill from BRIAN's hand.

BRIAN: No, it was laying -

EDGAR: You know what happens when you steal from the boss?

ANNETTE enters with a piece of paper.

ANNETTE: Dad! What are you doing?

BRIAN: Mr. Robinson?!

EDGAR: Pretty good, huh?

ANNETTE: Honestly, this place is a nuthouse.

CAROL enters right with a small plate of biscuits.

CAROL: Here, everyone try a Ma Barker!

BRIAN: No thanks, ma'am, I just lost my appetite.

EDGAR: *(Takes one.)* Mmmm, tasty.

ANNETTE: C'mon Brian. Let's get out of here.

BRIAN: Good night. Have fun doing . . . whatever.

EDGAR: Knocking off the guests, right honey?

CAROL: By the time you get back, the place will be littered with corpses. Have fun!

ANNETTE and BRIAN exit left.

CAROL: Come along, Scarface. Help me mix the punch.

CAROL and EDGAR exit right. LESTER sneaks on left. HE moves to the phone and dials.

LESTER: I've traced the cash to a house on Meadowlark Drive. I don't know where they're hidin' it, but it won't take long to find out from these flakes. We'll be on that plane before you know it and Queen Bea and her stooge won't know what happened. Just you an me, baby. This is the chance we've been waiting for. Nah . . . there won't be any trouble. I've got it all under control.

LESTER hangs up as MRS. FINCK enters right.

FINCK: Oh, welcome. You're the first to arrive. How'd you get in without the password?

LESTER: I just walked in.

FINCK: Name?

LESTER: Lester.

FINCK: Just like a gangster! Sit down, Scarface and his moll will be here in a minute.

LESTER: Scarface?

FINCK: And don't pull anything funny!

LESTER: Scarface?!!

Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

Setting:

The room is the same as SCENE 1.

At Rise:

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A short time later. CAROL and EDGAR enter right followed by MRS. FINCK.

FINCK: His name's Lester.

EDGAR: Looks like Lester flew the coop.

CAROL: You're sure he was here?

FINCK: I might look like some kind of zebra in this getup, but there's nothing wrong with my eyes.

EDGAR: You know I think he might be a friend of Al and Tina's. Al said something about a friend visiting from Alabama.

LESTER enters left.

LESTER: Nice place you've got here, Mr. . . . Mr. . . .

EDGAR: Robinson. Edgar Robinson. And this is my wife, Carol.

LESTER: Please to meet you.

CAROL: I'm sure Al and Tina will be here soon.

LESTER: Al and Tina? *(Catches on.)* Oh, Al and Tina. Great people. Love 'em!

EDGAR: I thought Al said you were from Alabama.

LESTER: *(Affecting southern accent.)* I sure am, sir. And now that the cat's out of the bag, so to speak, I can drop that annoyin' Yankee accent.

CAROL: You just make yourself comfortable.

FINCK: *(Suspiciously.)* Whereabouts in Alabama are you from?

LESTER: You know someone from Alabama?

FINCK: My sister lives there.

LESTER: I don't know her.

FINCK: What part are you from?

LESTER: What part is she from?

FINCK: Up north, Hazel Corners.

LESTER: Then I'm from down south, the other corner.

Doorbell rings.

CAROL: The fun begins! Mrs. Finck, the password.

FINCK: Honestly, the things I do for money. *(Off left.)* The password?

ELLA: You're a gonner, Bugs!

CAROL: Isn't this fun? It's just like they used to do in the speakeasies.

LESTER: It's just like I do every day.

ELLA and NORMAN enter dressed as a flapper and gangster.

ELLA: Oh, Carol! This is so exciting. The room looks marvy!

NORMAN: *(Flatly.)* Just marvy.

ELLA: Oh, Norman, you're being such a poop. You should have seen me trying to get him into that costume!

EDGAR: What's the matter, Norm, can't dress yourself yet?

NORMAN: Hardy har har. At least my suit fits.

CAROL: You look wonderful, Ella. Wherever did you get that dress?

NORMAN: Her senior prom.

ELLA: Oh, I love it when you exaggerate, Norman.

NORMAN: Who's exaggerating?

Doorbell rings.

CAROL: Mrs. Finck?

FINCK: *(Dryly.)* No end to the fun, is there.

MRS. FINCK exits left.

ELLA: Where'd you find her, the morgue?

FINCK: *(Off left.)* What's the password?

BOB: *(Off left.)* You're a gonner, bugs!

TINA: *(Off left.)* I wanted to say it.

CAROL: This is going to be a night to remember.

BOB and BRENDA enter left followed by AL and TINA. BRENDA wears a flapper dress while TINA is dressed like Bonnie Parker. AL looks like Clyde Barrow, BOB wears a dark suit and fedora.

TINA: Guess who we are!

NORMAN: George and Martha Washington?

TINA: No, Bonnie and Clyde.

NORMAN: I never would have guessed.

FINCK: You're missing the five hundred bullet holes.

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MRS. FINCK exits right.

EDGAR: How about some Elliott Ness hors d'oeuvres?

ELLA: You two are so clever. *(To NORMAN.)* Who's Elliott Ness?

NORMAN: FBI agent.

General ad-libs as ALL exit except LESTER. After THEY exit, someone knocks on the door. LESTER shrugs, moves left to answer the door.

LESTER: What's the password?

STAN'S VOICE: *(Off left.)* You're a gonner, Lester.

Desperately, LESTER looks around for a hiding place and runs for cover. HE notices the window box and climbs in. The lid drops as CORKY, DIANE, and KIM enter left.

CORKY: I didn't see anybody hanging around the front door.

KIM: I know I saw two people run around the side of the house and hide in the bushes.

Optional: Through the window two unidentifiable figures appear. This would be STAN and QUEEN BEA.

DIANE: I wish I had your imagination, Kim.

The figures quickly duck down.

CORKY: *(Looks out the window.)* There's nobody there. Now, let's get down to business.

CORKY hands each of the girls a newspaper.

KIM: What are we looking for?

CORKY: Anything that mentions \$75,000.

The GIRLS scan the newspapers.

DIANE: Here's something!

CORKY: (*Excitedly.*) What?!

DIANE: House for sale, \$75,000.

CORKY: Get real.

KIM: Maybe nobody even knows it's gone.

CORKY: I know when I'm short a nickel.

KIM: You're cheap.

CORKY: I'm conservative.

DIANE: You need to find something else to do.

KIM: Well the note that we left under the rock should get some action.

DIANE: Yeah, you left your address on it.

Doorbell rings.

CORKY: I bet it gets results!

CAROL enters right.

CAROL: Someone at the door?

CORKY: (*Covering.*) No, Mom, we were just goofing around.

CAROL: Be careful . . . there's going to be a murder soon.

CAROL exits right.

CORKY: Get the door, Diane.

DIANE: Why me?

CORKY: What, are you chicken?

DIANE: How about Kim?

KIM: Bring on the teriyaki sauce and put me on the grill.

Doorbell rings again. CORKY exits left.

DIANE: After all, Corky's the one that found the money.

KIM: Yeah and maybe if we run now nobody will know we're involved.

DIANE: What if they have guns?

CORKY enters trying to tell the other girls with her eyes that SHE's being followed by very dangerous characters. MISS DRAPER and MR. WINKLE enter behind CORKY.

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

WINKLE carries a vacuum cleaner and box of attachments.

KIM: Or a vacuum cleaner?

DRAPER: *(Smiles brightly.)* Good evening!

DIANE: They're going to suck us up into that vacuum cleaner!

KIM: We're dust for sure.

DRAPER: Pardon me?

CORKY: Oh don't mind them. *(Points to DIANE and then KIM.)* She's afraid of vacuum cleaners and she's allergic to dust.

WINKLE: Oh, that's too bad.

DRAPER: *(To CORKY.)* Certainly, you're not the lady of the house.

CORKY: I'm the kid of the house. The lady of the house is . . . tied up at the moment.

EDGAR: *(Off right.)* Kiss that bum again, Baby Doll, and I'll tie you up and fill you with more lead than a tank of gasoline.

CAROL: Oh, yeah? Well, watch this!

Roars of laughter off right. DRAPER and WINKLE are horrified.

CORKY: *(Blandly.)* See what I mean?

WINKLE: But, Miss Draper, her exact words were perhaps later. Now is later.

DRAPER: You're right, Mr. Winkle. A good salesperson thinks positively.

WINKLE: It's hard to be positive when you've had four doors slammed in your face and been chased by seven dogs!

DRAPER: Six dogs. That last one was a guinea pig.

WINKLE: Well it had teeth like a German Shepherd.

CORKY: Sounds like you've had a bad day.

WINKLE: I haven't sold a single vacuum cleaner.

DRAPER: The glass is half full, Mr. Winkle, not half empty.

WINKLE: I am going to sell my first vacuum cleaner today.

CORKY: Well, we'd like to see your demonstration, wouldn't we, girls?

KIM: We do?

CORKY: Why not? I clean my room once a year.

WINKLE: Really? It would be good practice, Miss Draper.

DIANE: I'll bet you make a lot of money selling vacuum cleaners.

DRAPER: If he does, he's hiding it from me.

CORKY: Like where? In the park?

WINKLE: The park?

KIM: Sure. Maybe you hid it under the rocks by the swings.

DRAPER: Ridiculous! Money belongs in the bank.

CORKY: Unless it's stolen.

DRAPER: Are you girls all right?

SOUND of gunshots off right.

NORMAN: *(Off right.)* What'd you do that for?

ELLA: *(Off right.)* You said it wasn't loaded!

Laughter off right.

CORKY: Yeah, we're fine. Couldn't be better. Just give us the low-down on the machine you've got there.

DRAPER: *(Moves right, looking off.)* Go ahead, Winkle.

WINKLE: Gladly, Miss Draper. Girls, this is our Mite-E-Clean cordless vacuum cleaner. The long, tangled electric cords are a thing of the past. Mite-E-Clean is battery operated rechargeable four horse power motor. It comes with five attachments including a poker for those hard to reach corners. Now, in order to see the real power of this machine, I need some dirt.

CORKY: I'll go get my trash can, it's full of dirt!

CORKY runs off left.

DIANE: *(Nervously.)* We'll go help her!

KIM: It's really heavy.

DIANE and KIM run off left.

DRAPER: Something very strange is going on in this house, Winkle.

AL: *(Off right.)* So, Edgar, did your people bump off that Mugsy McGurk creep that was movin' into your territory?

EDGAR: *(Off right.)* We got him good.

TINA: *(Off right.)* And his partners.

Laughter off right.

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

WINKLE: Maybe we should go.

DRAPER: And leave these vulnerable young people to THOSE kind of parents?
There comes a time when we MUST intervene for the good of all society!

DRAPER moves to phone, dials.

WINKLE: What are you doing?

DRAPER: (*Dramatically.*) Get me the police!

Laughter off right.

CAROL: You won't be laughing long, you bums!

DRAPER: Hello, officer? This is Miss Louella Draper, and I represent the Mite-E-Clean Vacuum Cleaner Company. No, I'm not trying to sell anything. I am at 328 Meadowlark Lane and I've overheard what appears to be a very sinister conversation concerning the unfortunate death of a Mr. Mugsy McGurk. Why are you laughing? I am a citizen of the highest repute and I demand you investigate - hello? Hello?!

DRAPER hangs up as CORKY, DIANE, and KIM enter. CORKY carries a waste paper basket.

CORKY: You weren't calling long distance, were you?

DIANE: Her dad gets REALLY mad when we make long-distance calls.

KIM: (*Ominously.*) He'll make you pay for it!

DRAPER: (*Terrified.*) I - I was just calling our home office. Local - just down the street. Here's a quarter!

CORKY: Keep it, lady. We got your dirt.

DRAPER: What dirt?

CORKY: For the demonstration.

CORKY dumps waste paper basket. Money cascades to the floor.

DRAPER: Why . . . that's . . . that's -

DIANE draws a toy gun from behind her back.

WINKLE: MONEY!

DRAPER: Lots of money!

The GIRLS are now behind MR. WINKLE and MISS DRAPER who bend down to pick up some of the cash.

WINKLE: Looks like somebody robbed the bank!

CORKY grabs two loops of rope and gives one to KIM. CORKY stands behind WINKLE, KIM behind DRAPER.

CORKY: And we know who!

CORKY and KIM drop the loops over WINKLE and DRAPER and pull them tight.

DRAPER: What are you doing?

WINKLE: *(Terrified.)* You don't have to buy a vacuum cleaner if you don't want to!

The GIRLS wrap the remaining rope around DRAPER and WINKLE.

DRAPER: Help! Police!

DIANE: Don't worry, we'll call the cops for you.

WINKLE: *(To DRAPER.)* I told you we should have quit while we were ahead.

DRAPER: When were we ahead? Now girls, let's be reasonable about this. Why are you tying us up?

CORKY: Because you're the thieves who hid \$75,000 under a rock in the park.

DIANE: And you fell into our trap so you're not that smart after all.

WINKLE: Who said we were smart?

DRAPER: Speak for yourself, Winkle! But we don't know a THING about the money.

WINKLE: Nope, nothing, money, what's money.

CORKY: Don't listen to them, girls. They'll deny everything!

DIANE: Hey, maybe we should gag them so we don't have to listen to their lies.

DRAPER: Young ladies, when the police find out what you've done, they'll . . . they'll . . . arrest you!

CORKY moves two chairs back-to-back at the center of the room.

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

CORKY: Sit down.

DRAPER: I prefer to stand.

DIANE points toy gun at DRAPER'S nose. She sits down immediately.

DRAPER: My feet are a bit tired.

KIM: *(To MR. WINKLE.)* You, too!

MR. WINKLE sits down immediately. CORKY ties them together so they are now back-to-back.

WINKLE: You've got to believe us. I'm just learning to be a salesperson. Miss Draper's teaching me.

DRAPER: We might not be the best salespeople, but we're not thieves.

DIANE: That's what they all say.

CORKY picks up the phone.

WINKLE: What are you doing?

CORKY: Calling the police.

WINKLE: *(Starts crying.)* I've never been arrested before!

DRAPER: This is so humiliating!

CORKY: *(To KIM and DIANE.)* Something's wrong.

KIM: What?!

CORKY: The phone's dead.

DIANE: Let's try upstairs.

KIM: Yeah . . . they're not going anywhere.

CORKY, DIANE, and KIM exit left.

WINKLE: What does the sales manual say about this situation, Miss Draper?

DRAPER: Nothing, you pea head. We sell vacuum cleaners, not weapons to terrorists!

CAROL: *(Off right.)* Everybody! Everybody! Now that we've had our appetizers . . . I smell murder!

Laughter off right.

WINKLE: (*Terrified.*) I don't smell anything.

DRAPER: Let's get out of here!

WINKLE: Good idea!

THEY each begin hopping in a different direction and get nowhere.

DRAPER: Winkle, stop! Stop!

WINKLE: Why? I don't want to stay here anymore.

DRAPER: We have to move to the door. That way! (*DRAPER tips her head left.*)

Now, on the count of three. One, two, three!

THEY make one hop left.

DRAPER: Good! Again . . . one, two three!

Another hop. THEY inch left. As they are almost at the exit, DONNY runs on left, terrified, and trips over MR. WINKLE and MISS DRAPER.

DRAPER: Young man!

DONNY: Sorry, ma'am, but I've got to hide!

DONNY races to the window box. HE opens it, looks inside, screams, and races off right.

DRAPER: Come on! We've got to -

CORKY, KIM, and DIANE enter left.

CORKY: - stop right there!

DIANE: You cut the phone lines, huh?

KIM: They're trying to escape!

CORKY: We should check their van! It's probably full of TV's, stereos, everything they've ripped off in the neighborhood!

KIM moves to the window.

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

DIANE: Yeah, we could call the police from their van on a stolen cell phone.

DRAPER: We don't have a van!

WINKLE: We drove my 64 Nova. It's parked four blocks south.

KIM: That so? What's the big black van doing in front of the house?

CORKY: Let's get this cash picked up and go check it out.

CORKY and DIANE pick up the money. THEY put it in the bag, then put the bag in the waste paper basket.

DRAPER: Girls, all you have to do is call our head office.

WINKLE: They know right where we are.

DIANE: You should have thought about that before you cut the lines.

DRAPER: We *didn't!*

CORKY: If you didn't, who did?

KIM: *(Looks out window, frightened.)* How about those two figures moving around out there in the bushes.

CORKY: You're on that kick again?

KIM: I'm not kidding, Corky. There's somebody out there! And they're coming to the door.

CORKY runs to the bookshelf and grabs two huge books.

CORKY: Here, Diane!

DIANE: This is no time to be reading!

CORKY: Hit the lights!

DIANE: Especially in the dark!

DIANE turns off lights. Room is now dimly lit.

CORKY: *(To DRAPER and WINKLE.)* Say anything and it better be your prayers.

DRAPER: Like mother, like daughter!

SARGEANT THORNBURY and OFFICER CLEEVE enter slowly left.

CLEEVE: I'll bet that call's worth checkin' out, Sarge. I don't like it here -

THORNBURY: Women's intuition again, Cleeve? What a laugh!

CORKY and DIANE slug THORNBURY and CLEEVE with the books. The police

officers fall to the floor.

CORKY: Lights, Diane!

DIANE turns on the lights.

KIM: Uh-oh!

DIANE: They're cops!

EDGAR: *(Off right.)* All right, everybody! The plot thickens . . . to the parlor.

KIM: What'll we do?!

CORKY: Quick! Hide the evidence!

CORKY, KIM, and DIANE drag THORNBURY off left.

DRAPER: Mr. Winkle! This is HARDLY the time to get fresh!

WINKLE: I'm not trying to hold your hand, Miss Draper, I just remembered my Swiss Army knife.

DRAPER: Better late than never, Winkle!

CORKY, KIM, and DIANE return as WINKLE tries to cut the ropes.

KIM: What if they're real cops, Corky?

CORKY: What would real cops be doing here?

DIANE: Corky's right. They're probably accomplices.

CORKY, DIANE, and KIM drag CLEEVEVER off left. WINKLE finally cuts the ropes.

WINKLE: Now what?!

DRAPER: Hide!

WINKLE: Where?

DRAPER: Behind the curtains!

WINKLE and DRAPER hide behind the curtains as EDGAR, CAROL, AL, TINA, BOB, BRENDA, ELLA, and NORMAN enter right. THEY all play their roles as indicated by their lines.

CAROL: *(Haughtily.)* It's over, Edgar.

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

EDGAR: That so? You won't be able to survive without my money.

CAROL: We'll see about THAT!

NORMAN: Besides, it's not YOUR money.

AL: You stole it from us!

TINA: And we're gonna get it back, Toots!

BOB: No matter WHAT it takes!

EDGAR: You all talk a tough game, but you don't even know the rules.

BRENDA: Yeah, well we wrote the book.

CAROL: And all it takes is one misstep! C'mon everybody . . . I'll show you to your rooms.

AL: Separate rooms?

CAROL: That's right. You can freshen up before the main course and this way there won't be any alibis.

EDGAR: You go ahead. I think I'll stay here and read the paper.

CAROL: Suit yourself, you sitting duck!

AL: Dead duck!

CAROL exits left followed by AL, TINA, BOB, BRENDA, ELLA, and NORMAN.

ELLA: *(Trots off with NORMAN in tow.)* Oh, this is so exciting! *(NORMAN follows ELLA, begrudgingly.)*

THEY'RE gone. EDGAR turns the light out and moves to the window box. HE opens it and gets inside. A moment later we hear a muffled scream. The box flies open. EDGAR jumps out and backs off, right, horrified. Moments later, BRENDA enters left taking off her feather boa or long necklace.

BRENDA: *(Dramatically.)* All right, you rat, Edgar! You took every last cent ma left me. Where are you? Hiding, huh? If I were a rat, a male rat, where would I hide? Only one place - the window box. *(Plans to strangle EDGAR.)* So long Edgar! *(SHE hears noises offstage and races off left. MRS. FINCK and EDGAR enter right and snap on the lights.)*

FINCK: I don't have time for these silly games, Mr. Robinson.

EDGAR: But . . . but . . . in there! *(HE points to the window box.)*

FINCK: I think you've had a few too many biscuits, Mr. Robinson.

EDGAR: In there!

MRS. FINCK moves to the window box.

FINCK: Let me guess . . . two old blankets, a stack of sheet music - (*SHE opens the window box.*) - and a DEAD BODY!

FINCK screams, EDGAR screams, and they both race off right as CAROL, AL, TINA, BRENDA, BOB, ELLA, and NORMAN enter left.

ELLA: What happens now?

NORMAN: We find the body, Ella. It's a murder-mystery dinner party, remember?

TINA: Where's Edgar?

CAROL: I don't know. Edgar? Edgar?

AL: (*With mock suspicion.*) Hey, look! The window box is open!

BOB: I thought I heard footsteps over here.

CAROL moves to the window box.

CAROL: You're not in there, are you Edgar?

CAROL peeks inside and screams horrendously.

ELLA: Oh, you should have been an actress, Carol. That was the most realistic scream-poo I've ever heard!

CAROL: But . . . but . . . but!

AL looks into the box.

AL: That's not Edgar!

NORMAN: Who is it?

CAROL: It's Al's friend from southern Alabama . . . Lester somebody.

AL: My friend? I don't know anybody from Alabama.

CAROL: Southern Alabama.

AL: Southern or northern, I've never seen him before.

EDGAR enters right.

TINA: Let's just wake him up and find out who he really is!

I DON'T HAVE A CLUE

EDGAR: We can't, I think he's dead.

Except EDGAR, the entire dinner party gasps. BLACKOUT.

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