WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

By Dean Dyer

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SYNOPSIS: Fern Standish is in line to inherit her father’s fortune if she can prove herself worthy of the inheritance by successfully creating and managing a start-up company. Her sister stands in her way. Each daughter is given sufficient capital to start a new business. At the end of one year, the daughter who has been most successful will win their father’s $25 million estate. Fern decides to mimic the most successful business in the world: McDonald’s; however, her blatant rip-off restaurant has trademark lawyers up in arms. McDoogal’s has even bigger troubles, mostly due to her policy of hiring virtually anyone who applies for a job. Just when it seems that things can’t get any worse, a customer keels over dead at closing time, and it appears he was...McMurdered!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 MEN, 12 WOMEN, 2 EITHER, 2-4 NON-SPEAKING EXTRAS)

FERN STANDISH (f)......................Mid 20’s, prospective heiress, poor business sense (114 lines)

VIOLET STANDISH (f)..............Belinda’s sister, competing with her for inheritance (28 lines)

ANDREW LEFLEUR (m)..........Violet’s boyfriend. Seedy with a fake French accent (28 lines)

RHONDA MCDONALD (f)..........Attorney from McDonald’s. Redhead, tough and relentless (53 lines)

WILL CAVANAUGH (m)..........Rookie police detective, would-be novelist (106 lines)

REBA CLINE (f).......................Will’s partner, strong Southern accent, clever, tough cop (64 lines)

McDEBBIE (f)...........................Overly enthusiastic teen cashier (60 lines)
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BRITTANY (f) ........................................ Sarcastic, negative, anti-establishment teen employee (30 lines)

DEVO MCGILL (m) ......................... Nerdy, overly helpful, klutzy teen employee (29 lines)

MELANIE (f) .............................. Nerdy new hire, infatuated with Brad (20 lines)

NIKA (f) ........................................ Foreign cook, barely speaks English (7 lines)

BRAD MARKS (m) ........................ “Cool” kid, doesn’t want people to know he’s working here (10 lines)

ROOGAL MCDOOGAL (m): .......... Surly, neurotic chain-smoking clown, mid 30’s, fake accent. (11 lines)

BUFF (m) ................................. Floor mopping specialist, athletic, not too bright (10 lines)

ASHLEY (f) ................................. Chatty teen, does no work, texts constantly. (17 lines)

SIERRA (f) ................................. Chatty teen, does no work, texts constantly. (17 lines)

GEOFF CAMPBELL (m) .......... Customer, henpecked husband, accountant (13 lines)

JOAN CAMPBELL (f) ................. Demanding, dissatisfied customer Geoff’s wife. (35 lines)

LIBBY (f) ................................. Drive-through operator, over-enunciates and talks slowly. (19 lines)

MR. ABERNATHY (m) ............... The restaurant’s only “regular,” and the murder victim. (Non-speaking)
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OFFICER SKRZYNSKI (m/f) ........ Police officer (9 lines)

OFFICER FRANSTED (m/f) .......... Police officer (5 lines)

EXTRAS ......................................... EMTs, cops, police photographer

SETTING

ACT ONE, SCENE 1:  McDoogal’s Restaurant, near closing time, Friday
ACT ONE, SCENE 2:  McDoogal’s Restaurant, late Friday night
ACT ONE, SCENE 3:  McDoogal’s Restaurant, late Friday night

INTERMISSION

ACT TWO, SCENE 1:  McDoogal’s Restaurant, late Friday night
ACT TWO, SCENE 2:  McDoogal’s Restaurant, late Friday night
ACT TWO, SCENE 3:  McDoogal’s Restaurant, late Friday night
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

- Several long, narrow balloons/optional hand pump (Roogal)
- Fake cigarette (Roogal)
- Guns (two police officers, two detectives, Roogal and Nika)
- Handcuffs
- Mini-recorder (Will)
- Food trays
- French fry cartons/bags
- Burger wrappers (and some stale buns to wrap up)
- Various sizes of drinking cups, napkins, etc.
- A couple of McDonald’s bags

COSTUMES

Roogal should be dressed in an outfit similar to Ronald McDonald’s. An easy costume can be made by spray painting a suit vest and dress pants yellow, then having him wear a long-sleeved white shirt underneath, with the sleeves striped with red tape. Likewise, the employee uniforms should be McDonald’s clones (or even real McDonald’s uniforms if available), complete with caps. Fern’s outfits should be a little eccentric, certainly not fashionable, colorful, oddly accessorized, etc. Andrew should be in a suit and Violet should also be well dressed. Will and Reba are detectives, so drab business wear is appropriate. The two police officers need uniforms, as do the two EMTs. Rhonda is an attorney and should be dressed in business attire, nothing too flashy.

SCENE CHANGES

There is minimal change in the appearance of the set between scenes, so they can happen very rapidly. Extra time should be allowed for costume changes when needed.
PRODUCTION HISTORY

Would You Like Fries With Your Murder? had its world premiere at Western High School in Parma, Michigan for four shows from April 25-27, 2013. The original cast and crew (UNDERSTUDIES in parentheses) are as follows:

Fern Standish       Alyssa Tippens (Aubrey Bills)
Violet Standish     Bailey Shepherd (Alex Bott)
Andrew LeFleur      Parker Brue (Andrew Rickard)
Rhonda McDonald     Hannah Riley (Jenna Grannan)
Will Cavanaugh      Parker Ykimoff (Wyatt Ruoff)
Reba Cline          Kiley Ladwig (Hannah Starr)
McDebbie            Grace Coffey (Audrey Febres-Cordero)
Brittany            Annesley Moore-Jumonville
Devo McGill         Preston Swarthout
Melanie             Maddy Glinz
Nika                Chloe Herl
Brad Marks          Anthony Reinker
Roogal McDoogal     Jack Tallman
Buff                Alex Sponsler
Ashley              Emily Giffin
Sierra              Alyssa Benn
Geoff Campbell      Derek May
Joan Campbell       Rachel Barnes (Megan Eddy)
Libby               Rachel Buratovitch
Mr. Abernathy       Sean Burns
Officer Skrzynski   Daniel Rauch
Officer Fransted    Ty Mitchell
Extras:             EMTs: Noelle West, Kalyn Devine
PRODUCTION CREW

Directed by: Dean Dyer
Technical Director: Kellie Wollett
Stage Manager/Head Technician: Josh Rennell
Assistant Stage Manager: Katey Berry
Lights: Becca Shalkofske
Sound: Kellie Wollet
Stage Hands: Abby Leising, Rebecca Riley, Abbie Starr
Publications: Sean Burns
Video: John Waldron
Original Art Work: D’Andra Clark

This play is lovingly dedicated to my children and grandchildren, who make my life an extra-large Happy Meal.
ACT ONE, SCENE 1

SETTING:
McDoogal’s Restaurant, interior, late evening. The counter is up center with two cash registers. The menu board is behind it in the typical fashion of a fast food restaurant. Various cooking equipment, soft drink dispensers, etc. are located behind the counter in the “kitchen,” and the window for the drive-through is against the right wall, mostly obscured from the audience. Above the kitchen counter is the “McMenu,” advertising several items that sound suspiciously close to McDonald’s menu items. Down stage (in front of the counter) is the restaurant area. The walls at right and left each are lined with booths, one right and two left, and two tables with chairs are down center. There is an entrance down right, and a large trash bin (the boxy type common in fast food restaurants with a tray shelf on top, and labeled “McTrash”) down stage from it. A hallway runs upstage along the left side of the counter which leads to the restrooms and also provides an entrance to the area behind the counter. The wall above the booths on the right has a banner reading “McDoogal’s Employee of the Month” and beneath it are twelve identical pictures of McDebbie, with the months appearing below them.

AT RISE:
Mr. Abernathy is seated in the down left booth with his back to the audience. His posture is slumped forward and he appears to be sleeping. Roogal is seated in the up-right booth, drinking coffee, playing solitaire and holding a cigarette. McDebbie is behind the counter at the left cash register, while Nika and Brad are working in the kitchen, occasionally passing behind the counter, and Libby is standing near the drive-through window. Buff is mopping in the hallway up left, and Devo is wiping tables, straightening napkin holders, and generally just trying to look busy. He occasionally also sneaks over to the drink station to practice cup-stacking (badly.). Brittany has arranged three chairs in a row up right and is stretched across them, sleeping. Ashley and Sierra are seated in the booth up left, chatting and texting on their cell phones. MELANIE ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and CROSSES to McDebbie, awkwardly carrying a thick pile of folders, loose papers, etc. She looks curiously at Brittany
as she has to step around her. BRAD ducks down behind the counter as she approaches.

McDEBBIE: Welcome to McDoogal’s. May I take your order?
MELANIE: Actually, I’d like to fill out an application. (She is looking past McDebbie, scanning the kitchen area; after a moment she leans in confidentially to McDebbie.) I heard that Brad Marks works here!

McDEBBIE: Brad? Why, yes— (She is cut off as BRAD clears his throat loudly from his hiding place behind the counter, and his hand comes up to wave her off. Continuing in an official tone.) I can neither confirm nor deny that rumor. (Turning to Devo.) Devo, would you get Miss Standish, please? We have another job applicant. (Pointing Melanie to the UP CENTER table.) Have a seat right there. Miss Standish will be right with you.

DEVO EXITS through the UP LEFT HALLWAY. MELANIE crosses to the table and drops her papers and folders, which scatter. DEVO returns with FERN and immediately helps MELANIE pick up her papers. As he does so, he empties some of the folders, increasing the disarray. He stuffs the papers back in the folders clumsily, then hands them to MELANIE. FERN also picks up some of the papers and hands them to MELANIE. As the papers are finally corralled, they all stand and MELANIE shakes FERN’s hand enthusiastically.

MELANIE: Hi, Miss Standish. (As she awkwardly shakes hands, she pushes some of the papers back on the floor.) I’m Melanie Greene. It’s very nice to meet you.
FERN: It’s nice to meet you, too, Melanie. Please, have a seat.

They sit, and MELANIE puts the massive pile of papers and folders on the table, knocking more of them off as she sits. DEVO quickly bends to pick them up.

MELANIE: (Digging through the mess, bending to pick up some things as she speaks.) Ummm, I have a resume here somewhere. I also brought five reference letters, copies of my report cards and my attendance records, my certificate from 4-H, my membership
plaque from the Doctor Who Fan Club, my Official Admissions Letter to Hogwarts—

DEVO: Dr. Who fan club and Hogwarts...oh, be still my beating heart. (He stares at Melanie and smiles dreamily.)

MELANIE: (Ignoring him, to Fern.) I also have my letter of appreciation from my high school principal for starting the Math is Fun club, and—

FERN: (In a cowboy drawl.) Whoa, slow down, there, lil' cowgirl. You dun' rode right on past the waterhole.

MELANIE: Excuse me?

FERN: (Laughing at her own joke, then sobering up to answer.) You want to work here, right?

MELANIE: Well, yes.

FERN: Why?

MELANIE: (Sounding rehearsed.) Well, I believe that the fast food industry is a great place to start a career. Being a people person, I especially look forward to the opportunity to work with customers on a one-to-one—

FERN: (Stopping her with her hand.) Come on, be honest with me.

MELANIE: (Leaning in, confidentially.) Okay, I really need some money for a new cell phone. I dropped mine in the toilet, and my parents said if I want another one, I have to earn the money for it. I'm going crazy without a phone.

FERN: (Laughing.) Wow, right in the toilet, huh? (She looks around to the other employees.) She dropped her phone in the toilet! (Laughing, turns back to Melanie.) Hey, was it a smart phone? Because that would be really ironic if you think about it. (She stands and points down, as if looking in a toilet.) “Hi, phone, I see you're floating around down there in the toilet. Bet you don't feel so smart now!”

FERN looks around at the rest of the employees for approval, and they all laugh.

MELANIE: (Gaping at Fern.) I... don't know what to say.

FERN: (Standing, extending her hand for a shake.) Welcome to McDoogal’s.
MELANIE: *(Stands and shakes hands with Fern awkwardly.)* That’s it? You’re going to hire me just like that—no background check or anything?

FERN: *(Still holding Melanie’s hand, she pulls her closer.)* Pshaw—we aren’t performing brain surgery in this place. We sell hamburgers. I’d hire anyone who wanted to work here. Well, unless they were a really terrible person, you know, like a serial killer. *(Letting go of Melanie’s hand, and looking at her critically.)* You’re not a serial killer, are you?

MELANIE: No, of course not. *(She pauses, then thoughtfully.)* Although, if I was a serial killer, I don’t think I’d tell you. *(She starts to gather some of her paperwork, knocks it on the floor again, and bends to pick it up.)*

FERN: Hmm. Good point. *(Turning to Devo.)* Devo, would you take Melanie back and get her a uniform, please? *(She pulls him aside and pantomimes repeated knife thrusts, then points to Melanie.)* And watch your back.

DEVO: *(Oblivious to the warning, still beaming at Melanie.)* My pleasure!

*DEVO escorts MELANIE through the UP RIGHT HALLWAY and they EXIT, followed by FERN who watches them closely for a moment, then turns and shrugs before EXITING.*

BRITTANY: *(Without rising.)* Is it ten o’clock yet? Somebody please tell me it’s ten o’clock.

McDEBBIE: It’s nine fifty-seven. And you should really get up, Brittany. We have a customer in the restaurant. You know what the McManual says about how we should behave when there are customers in the restaurant.

*DEVO and MELANIE ENTER from UP LEFT HALLWAY. DEVO tries to impress her with his cup stacking skills, dropping cups on the floor repeatedly.*

BRITTANY: Why don’t you take the McManual and stick it in your Mc—
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DEVO: (Interrupting her, showing Melanie his watch.) —actually, it’s only nine fifty-five. I calibrate my watch to the atomic clock at school every Wednesday. It’s accurate to within eleven one-thousandths of a second.

BRITTANY: Eleven one-thousandths of a second. Hmmm. What a coincidence. That’s exactly how long it would take me to jump up off these chairs and kick your skinny butt, geek.

McDEBBIE: (Ignoring her, turning to up left.) Ashley and Sierra, don’t you think you should find something to do?

ASHLEY/SIERRA: (Simultaneously, looking around as if searching for something to do.) Ummmm . . . . no.

SIERRA: We’ve had what? Like three people in here all day? (As she texts this.) Status update: OMG, this is so boring.

ASHLEY: (As she texts this.) Lol!

MELANIE: (Sidling up to ASHLEY, escaping DEVO.) Wow, that’s an awesome phone. (She slides in and sits next to ASHLEY.)

LIBBY: I had a drive-thru order about two minutes ago. It was the first one since I came on shift . . . . at four. (A buzzer sounds.) Ooooh, wait! Another one. Welcome to McDoogal’s. Can I take your order?

ANDREW: (His fake French accent is heard through the speaker.) Oui, oui, my cool, creamy McFlurry. I would like one order of your sweet lips. (He makes kissing noises.)

LIBBY: (Annoyed, shutting off the speaker.) Oh, gross. It’s that creepy Mr. LeFleur again. I can’t stand that guy!

SIERRA: Ugh, me either. He’s always hitting on me.

ASHLEY: He’s always hitting on everyone. I don’t know how Miss Standish’s sister can be so blind. (As she texts this.) Some people just don’t have a clue.

SIERRA: (As she texts this.) Lol!

ASHLEY: (As she texts this.) Like!

LIBBY: (Looking toward the drive-thru window then backing away in disgust.) Disgusting! He left lip prints on the window. (Looking more closely.) What kind of guy wears peach lipstick?

DEVO: Buff—change spots.

BUFF: (Looks up, then looks at his mop, and then to a spot a few feet downstage.) Oh, right. Thanks, Devo. (He moves the bucket and begins mopping the new spot.)
BRITTANY: So how long was Buff on that spot? New record?
DEVO: *(Looking at his watch.)* Nah, only 47 minutes. The record is one hour and 16 minutes.
BRITTANY: Figures. This day has been a complete waste.
DEVO: On the bright side, it is over. It’s officially 10:00 p.m. We are closed!

ASHLEY, SERRA, BRITTNEY and BRAD all cheer, but McDEBBIE cuts them off.

McDEBBIE: Sorry, guys. The McManual says that the restaurant must remain open until the last customer leaves. And we’re not supposed to start any visible closing procedures, either, because that could make them feel uncomfortable.

BRITTANY: *(Sitting up and pointing at Mr. Abernathy.)* Uncomfortable?! He’s been asleep for like two hours. If he gets any more comfortable, we can start charging him rent!

ASHLEY: Shhhh. He might hear you!

BRITTANY stands and turns toward MR. ABERNATHY.

DEVO: You know how Miss Standish feels about Mr. Abernathy. He was our first customer. She’s not going to like it if you’re rude to him.

BRITTANY stops advancing on ABERNATHY and rolls her eyes. GEOFF and JOAN ENTER DOWN RIGHT. JOAN is pulling GEOFF along, as she advances purposefully on the counter. GEOFF is holding a fast food bag.

McDEBBIE: *(To Geoff and Joan.)* Welcome to McDoogal’s.

BRITTANY steps behind GEOFF and JOAN and gestures wildly at McDEBBIE, as if to wave her off. DEVO also looks to McDEBBIE and points to his watch.

McDEBBIE: *(Looking around Geoff and Joan to address Devo.)* The McManual clearly states that we should serve customers who
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come in up till five minutes past closing time, because they were technically on the grounds in time. Besides, we’re not really closed until Mr. Abernathy leaves.

SIERRA:  (As she texts this.) Status update: I hate the McManual.

ASHLEY:  (As she texts this.) Lol!

BRITTANY: I hate my life. (She lies back down across her chairs.)

McDEBBIE:  (To Joan.) May I take your order?

JOAN:  We’re not here to order, you ridiculous twit. We did that ten minutes ago at your drive-thru.

LIBBY:  (Peering at them brightly from her station and giving a little wave.) Oh, hi there!

JOAN:  Give me that! (Reaching back to grab the bag from GEOFF, then turning back to McDEBBIE.) We’re here because you imbeciles can’t get a simple order correct. (She fishes a sandwich from the bag, puts it on the counter, and unwraps it.) Look at this Big Mac. Can you tell me what these round, green things are?

McDEBBIE:  I’m sorry, ma’am. We don’t serve Big Macs here. It’s called a Big Mc. No “a.” (She pronounces it “muck.”)

JOAN:  I don’t know what your game is with this stupid restaurant and your obvious attempt to rip off McDonald’s, but I’ll tell you what these round, green things are called: they’re called pickles. I distinctly asked for a Big Mac—Big Mc—without pickles. Not only that, but my husband ordered a six piece Chicken McNuggets and there were only five in the box.

LIBBY:  Chicken McChunks. We don’t have McNuggets.

GEOFF:  It really isn’t a big deal. I’m not that hungry anyway.

JOAN:  (Giving him an angry look.) It certainly is a big deal. He ordered six McChunks, he paid for six McChunks, and he should get six McChunks!

McDEBBIE:  (Turning to kitchen.) Brad?

BRAD:  I told you, don’t use my name. Somebody could hear you. I can’t let it get around school that I work in this dump. That would totally destroy my swag.

MELANIE:  Ohmygosh! Brad Marks does work here!

ASHLEY:  Obviously, everybody already knows, Brad. Stuff gets around. Besides, these are old people—they don’t care about your swag.

JOAN:  Old people? Why you obnoxious little—
McDEBBIE: Roogal? A little help here?

ROOGAL crosses to JOAN and GEOFF. He pulls a balloon from his pocket and stretches it.

ROOGAL: (In his bad “Hungarian” accent.) Roogal make special balloon for you.

ROOGAL blows up the balloon then turns his back and goes through a series of complex gestures as if he’s fashioning something intricate from it. However, when he hands the balloon to JOAN it is just a straight tube.

JOAN: What is this supposed to be?

ROOGAL produces a marker and makes two “eyes” at one end of the balloon.

ROOGAL: Is snake. (He makes the balloon “slither” while hissing.) Very scary, ya? (Turns to GEOFF.) Roogal make balloon for mister, too.

ROOGAL goes through the same routine, producing another straight balloon and handing it to GEOFF. GEOFF looks at it, puzzled, and ROOGAL takes it back and draws a ring around it a few inches up for a “handle.” ROOGAL then sweeps it through the air a few times like a sword, making a light saber noise.

ROOGAL: Is light saber. (He hands it back to GEOFF, and then places his hand on GEOFF’s shoulder.) Use the Force, Luke.

GEOFF: (Holding the balloon out and admiring it.) Cool! Thanks, Roogal.

JOAN has been watching this exchange disdainfully. She turns to McDEBBIE.

JOAN: May I have a fork, please?

McDEBBIE: Sure.
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McDEBBIE hands the fork to JOAN. JOAN turns to GEOFF, who is still admiring his balloon, waving it through the air like a light saber. She looks at him, smiles, and then pops the balloon with the fork. GEOFF hangs his head, heartbroken. ROOGAL pats his shoulder then returns to his seat.

JOAN: Now, I want a Big Mc with no pickles. Do you think you can handle that?

NIKA advances to the counter with a bag and utters a string of unintelligible syllables, ostensibly in some obscure foreign language, to McDEBBIE. During this exchange, she nods her head toward JOAN and rolls her eyes.

McDEBBIE: Oh, thanks, Nika. (Looking in the bag.) Here’s your Big Mc, ma’am. No pickles. And two extra McChunks for your trouble. I’m very sorry for the mistake.

NIKA utters an obviously derogatory series of words in her odd language while nodding her head toward Joan.

JOAN: (Pointing at Nika.) What did she say?

McDEBBIE: I have no idea.

JOAN: That’s it. I’d like to speak to your manager, please.

McDEBBIE: Certainly. (Turning to Brad.) Brad, would you please get Miss Standish?

BRAD: The name. (Peering around the restaurant to see who might have heard.) You keep using my name!

BRAD disappears down the UP LEFT HALLWAY, and quickly returns followed by FERN, who steps up next to McDEBBIE at the counter.

FERN: May I help you?

JOAN gives GEOFF an annoyed look. VIOLET and ANDREW ENTER DOWN RIGHT. ANDREW is carrying a McDonald’s bag and sipping on a drink in a McDonald’s cup.
JOAN: I would just like to let you know that this has been the worst experience I’ve ever had in a restaurant, and you can rest assured that my husband and I will never come here again.

GEOFF waves this off from behind JOAN. She turns and he drops his right hand and pretends to be scratching his head with his left. JOAN turns back to McDEBBIE.

SIERRA: (As she texts this.) Status update: Some people are so grouchy.
ASHLEY: (As she texts this.) Like!
MELANIE: If I had a phone, I would so totally like that. And lol, too!
JOAN: And furthermore, I think it’s a complete fraud that you are so obviously trying to trick people into thinking this is a McDonald’s. (Pointing out the door.) You even have the golden arches for Pete’s sake.
DEVO: Golden beams. Ours are called golden beams. There’s a difference.

JOAN rolls her eyes and begins leading GEOFF toward the DOWN RIGHT exit. As they maneuver around BRITTANY, who is lying across her chairs again, JOAN stops and looks at her in disbelief.

JOAN: Disgusting.

JOAN EXITS DOWN RIGHT. GEOFF stops briefly and gives a sad wave to ROOGAL before following her. ROOGAL returns the wave.

VIOLET: (Laughing.) Another satisfied customer, I see.
ANDREW: Yes, zis establishment eez building a wonderful reputation. Maybe you should all think about trying to get a job at a real restaurant before it eez too late. (He crosses to Ashley and Sierra.) Perhaps if you give me your phone numbers, I can try to make some connections on your behalf.

ANDREW winks at them, then spins around, raising his McDonald’s bag and also slurping loudly on his straw as he finishes his drink.
BRITTANY: You can have my phone number, LaFleur. It’s 1-800-Get-Lost.

ANDREW shrugs and writes the number on his palm.

VIOLET: You’re forgetting, Andrew. These people couldn’t get a job anywhere else. That’s why they’re here.

BRITTANY: (Standing.) Kiss my McButt, Violet. As if you would know anything about getting a job.

ANDREW: Oh, how disrespectful. Zat is no way to talk to a customer.

SIERRA: Since when are you two customers?

ASHLEY: Yeah, you never order anything here. You come in like twenty times every day, carrying your McDonald’s bag and telling us how terrible this place is.

VIOLET: I need to keep an eye on my— (She spins around, rolling her eyes sarcastically.) —competition.

ANDREW: (Pulling VIOLET into an embrace.) You are being too kind, darling. Zee contest has been over for months. Zis restaurant will never show a profit. Why, I am surprised she can keep zee lights on. Zee inheritance, it is all yours, my little Cheeseburger Happy Meal.

ANDREW begins smothering VIOLET with small kisses on her face and neck, as she giggles happily. He is also making deliberate eye contact with McDebbie, Ashley and Sierra, flirting with them over Violet’s shoulder. The workers all react with disgust.

SIERRA: You two need to get a room.

LIBBY: Yeah, and make it one without any windows. Even a Peeping Tom wouldn’t want to see that.

VIOLET: (Pushing Andrew away gently but firmly.) That’s enough, Andrew. I told you that the celebration has to wait until the competition is officially over. We still have three days.

ANDREW: It will seem more like three years, my delicious crisp, hot apple pie. (He continues kissing down her arm to her hand as he moves away.)

BRAD: That’s it. I’m going to hurl. (He runs to the UP LEFT hall, passing Buff.) New spot, Buff.
BUFF: Oh yeah. Thanks, Brad. *(He moves the bucket and begins mopping a little further DOWN.)*
BRAD: *(As he disappears up the hall.)* Don’t use the name! *(He retches loudly.)*

*FERN crosses DOWN CENTER to meet VIOLET and ANDREW.*

FERN: Violet, Andrew. It’s really nice of you guys to stop in—again—but I’m afraid it’s after closing time.
ANDREW: But why so short with your sister? You should love each other. We should all love each other. *(He raises his eyebrows at Fern, obviously intending this as innuendo.)* Come, give me a hug.

FERN just stares blankly at him.

VIOLET: We’re not here to eat anyway—like we’d even consider that. *(She turns to Andrew and they both chuckle.)* Gee, sis, aren’t you happy to see me? I mean it’s been what . . . three hours?
FERN: And three hours is a long time?
VIOLET: Long enough for me to close the deal on another wedding. Let’s see Andrew—how many does that make?
ANDREW: Zis eez lucky number seven, my juicy McNugget.
VIOLET: Seven. Yes, that sounds about right. And at $4,000 per wedding, taking away expenses and taxes, that should leave about . . . *(She punches buttons on her phone.)* . . . $19,999.98 in profit. Such a nice word, profit. Of course, judging by the number of losers you have hanging around drawing paychecks, I’m sure you wouldn’t know anything about that, would you Fern?
BRITTANY: Who are you calling losers, filet-o-fish breath?
FERN: Leave my employees out of this, Violet. You told me your wonderful news, so now you and Pepe LePew can get out. Like the sign says, we’re closed.
McDEBBIE: Actually, we didn’t put the sign up yet, Miss Standish. The McManual says when we have customers still in the restaurant at closing time, we’re not supposed to do anything to make them uncomfortable. *(She nods toward MR. ABERNATHY in the corner booth.)*
ANDREW:  *(Pretending he has just noticed Mr. Abernathy.)*  Ah, yes. A customer who is actually staying in your restaurant! And he looks so excited to be here! I should take a photo! *(He pulls his phone from his pocket and lines it up to take a picture of Mr. Abernathy.)*

FERN:  *(Crossing to Mr. Abernathy.)*  Mr. Abernathy? Sir? Mr. Abernathy, we have to close up now. *(She shakes his shoulder.)* Mr. Abernathy?

FERN pushes MR. ABERNATHY back gently and looks at him. He slowly tilts over and falls out of the booth, sprawling on the floor with his body positioned parallel to the audience. FERN shrieks and takes a step back. McDEBBIE and DEVO run to him. McDEBBIE is on the upstage side of the body, checking the pulse on his left wrist, and DEVO is leaning over his face with his ear to his mouth. DEVO looks up and shakes his head at McDEBBIE. She stands in shock, facing the audience, but then gives a deranged smile.

McDEBBIE:  Oh my gosh. He's . . . McDead!

ALL exchange looks of shock as lights fade. BLACKOUT.
ACT ONE, SCENE 2

SETTING:
McDoogal’s Restaurant, very early Saturday morning.

AT RISE:
MR. ABERNATHY’s body has been bagged, and EMT 1 and 2 are hauling it out on a gurney. A chalk outline has been drawn on the floor where the body lay. PHOTOGRAPHER is taking pictures of the crime scene, and OFFICER SKRZYNSKI and OFFICER FRANSTED are taking notes, talking to the restaurant staff. McDEBBIE is at the counter, and FERN is seated at the UP CENTER table, facing the audience, with her head in her hands. DEVO is seated with her. BRITTANY is stretched back out on her chairs, and ROOGAL is in his booth with an unlit cigarette. WILL and REBA ENTER DOWN RIGHT. SKRZYNSKI CROSSES DOWN RIGHT to meet them at the door. WILL makes a big production of entering, looks the place over, then steps downstage and speaks into a small recorder.

WILL: (In his “author” voice.) Of all the burger joints, in all the towns, in all the world, Tommy walked into this place. (Clicking the recorder off and looking up at the others for approval, getting none.) What’s the story, Skryzynski?
SKRZYNSKI: The deceased is Charles Abernathy, age 61. He’s a retired custodian from the high school, lives just down the block, corner of West and Elm. No family. The staff says he’s in here pretty much every day, always orders a Big Mc and fries and sits in the same booth.
WILL: Did you say he orders a “Big Muck”?
SKRZYNSKI: Yes, sir. Some goofy thing with this place. You ain’t seen nothing yet.
WILL: (Pointing back at Roogal) Anyone tell the clown that it’s illegal to smoke in a public restaurant?
SKRZYNSKI: It isn’t lit. I think he eats them. And get this—his name is Roogal. Roogal McDoogal. Like I said, the place is goofy.
WILL: (Eying Roogal thoughtfully.) Hmmmm. He’d make a great character for my novel. (Author voice, into his recorder.) His hair was red, and so was his nose. His shoes were a couple sizes too...
big. Yeah, he was a clown—but that unlit cigarette in his hand told Tommy that he also had something to hide.

SKRZYNSKI: (Rolling his eyes.) Yeah, whatever.

REBA: What’s the time of death?

FRANSTED: Near as we can tell, somewhere between eight and ten p.m. He came in about seven thirty, and the kids just thought he fell asleep. Nobody realized he was dead until the manager came over and tapped his shoulder. He spilled right out on the floor over here. Body was already cold and starting to stiffen up. (S/he waves WILL and REBA over to the chalk outline and they follow.)

WILL: Heart attack? (He begins roaming around the restaurant, looking things over. He goes behind the counter and emerges with a drink and a burger, taking a huge bite of the burger.)

REBA: Seems kind of young for that. Any word from the EMTs?

SKRZYNSKI: Bobbie said it looked like it might be something he ate. It appeared that he vomited a little before he croaked. Coulda’ been some kind of poison.

WILL coughs and spits up the burger in the trash can and throws the drink in behind it.

REBA: (Looking around the restaurant.) Why am I not surprised? (Looking at WILL.) Please tell me y’all were not just eating a burger on a crime scene.

WILL holds his hands out innocently.

REBA: (Turning her gaze to Mr. Abernathy’s booth.) If that’s the booth he was in, where’s his food?

FRANSTED: The kid over there—Devo McGill—he cleaned it up.

REBA: What?!! (Turning to DEVO.) Get over here!

DEVO drops the cups he was stacking and starts to cross to them nervously.

BRITTANY: (Remaining on her chairs.) Don’t listen to the fascists, Devo. You don’t have to tell them anything. Stick it to the man.
REBA: I don’t know who y’all are calling “the man,” honey, but y’all better start exercising your right to remain silent, or y’all be spending the rest of the night in a jail cell.

BRITTANY: Oooh, now I’m scared.

DEVO looks back and forth between them, then CROSSES DOWN CENTER to REBA.

DEVO: Yes, ma’am?
REBA: Y’all cleaned up this table?
DEVO: Yes.
REBA: Did it ever occur to y’all to leave things alone?
DEVO: No.
REBA: A man died here. It didn’t even cross your mind that someone might want to know what killed him?

McDEBBIE: The McManual clearly states that when guests fail to clean up after themselves, the floor staff should clear their tables as soon as they are gone.

WILL: Well, he was definitely “gone.”
REBA: Which trash bin did y’all use when y’all cleared the table?
DEVO: (Pointing to the trash can down right.) That one right over there.

SKRZYNSKI CROSSES to trash bin and takes off lid.

SKRZYNSKI: It’s empty.
WILL: (Cutting McDebbie off as she raises her hand to speak.) Don’t tell me—the McManual says you have to empty the trash bins as soon as the restaurant closes.

McDEBBIE: (Impressed.) Wow, you’ve read the McManual?
SKRZYNSKI: So who emptied the trash?
DEVO: Buff.
WILL: And is Buff here?
McDEBBIE: No, he left after he finished mopping and took out the trash.
SKRZYNSKI: (To Devo.) Can you show me where he dumped it?
DEVO: Yes sir.
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

DEVO and SKRZYNSKI EXIT UP LEFT. WILL CROSSES UP LEFT to look at the spot on the floor where BUFF was last mopping.

WILL: What happened over here? Something took all the finish off the floor.

McDEBBIE: That’s where Buff was mopping. When Mr. Abernathy died we kind of got distracted, and nobody reminded him to move.

WILL: Reminded him to move?

BRITTANY: He got a new record—two hours and ten minutes mopping the same spot. At least something interesting happened in here today.

SKRZYNSKI and DEVO ENTER UP LEFT. SKRZYNSKI is carrying a nearly empty trash bag.

REBA: That was quick. Did y’all secure the dumpster in case y’all missed anything?

SKRZYNSKI: Not necessary. This was the only bag. The kid says that the victim was their only customer since noon.

REBA: (Taking the bag and looking briefly inside, then hands it back to SKRZYNSKI.) Will, we’d better get the health department in here.

FERN jumps up from her seat and CROSSES DOWN CENTER to join them.

FERN: Health department? Why do we need the health department?

WILL: And you are?

FRANSTED: This is Fern Standish, the manager.

REBA: I’m Detective Reba Cline, and this is my partner, Will Cavanaugh. Standish? As in Standish Industries?

FERN: That’s my father’s company... was my father’s company.

WILL: (Recalling.) Right, Merlin Standish. The big plastics factory. He passed away last year, right? I’m sorry for your loss.

FERN: It’ll be a year next week. And I’m over it. We weren’t what you’d call close.
REBA: If y’all don’t mind my asking, what’s Merlin Standish’s daughter doing managing a (She almost says “dump,” but catches herself.) place like this.

FERN: I don’t mind. And I don’t just manage this “place.” I own it.

WILL: (Looking around at the restaurant.) Oh, one of those tax write-off things, huh?

FERN: Something like that. But what were you saying about the health department?

REBA: Standard procedure in a case like this. Until we know the cause of death, we can’t take the chance that it might be related to something he ate here. We’re going to have to shut y’all down pending the results of the autopsy.

FERN: But that could take weeks!

WILL: That’s only on television, Miss Standish. They’ll have a toxicology report for us in 24 hours or less. Besides, you wouldn’t want to endanger any of your other customers, would you?

RHONDA ENTERS DOWN RIGHT, carrying a briefcase. She looks around the restaurant critically, then approaches the counter.

McDEBBIE: I’m sorry, ma’am. We’re not open anymore.

RHONDA: I’m not here to order anything. I need to speak with Ms. Fern Standish, please.

McDEBBIE: (Pointing to Fern.) She’s right over there, talking to those detectives.

RHONDA crosses purposefully down to FERN, ignoring REBA and WILL.

RHONDA: Miss Standish? I’m Rhonda McDonald.

She extends her hand and she and FERN shake briefly.

FERN: (Suppressing a laugh.) Rhonda McDonald?

RHONDA: (Annoyed, but ignoring it.) Yes, I’m here on behalf of the McDonald’s Restaurant Corporation. I’m sure you received the numerous registered letters we sent you.

FERN: Oh, right. Yeah, you guys really spend a lot on postage.
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

RHONDA: It’s a legal necessity. So you admit that you have received our letters. *(She opens a small notebook and makes a note.)*

FERN: Yeah, they’re around here somewhere. I haven’t had a chance to read them yet. What are they all about, anyway?

RHONDA: For starters, my company would like to know exactly what gives you the right to lure people into this pathetic restaurant under the guise that it’s a McDonalds?

FERN: I’m sorry . . . McWhat?

RHONDA: McDonalds. The biggest restaurant chain in the world.

*FERN shrugs and shakes her head.*

RHONDA: Ronald McDonald, the Hamburglar, Mayor McCheese? *(With increasing intensity.)* Golden Arches? Chicken McNuggets? Big Mac?

FERN: I’m afraid I’ve never heard of it. Wait a minute—you said your name is Rhonda McDonald? It must be named after you!

RHONDA: No, that’s just a coincidence. Miss Standish, there’s a McDonald’s in almost every city and town in America. Several in most. You’re trying to tell me you’ve never been to one?

FERN: I had a very sheltered childhood.

RHONDA: What about television? Our ads are all over the place.

FERN: My father never let us watch anything but documentaries and other educational programs. PBS—you know, no commercials.

RHONDA: What about the internet? Surely, you use the internet for your *(Looking around the restaurant, sarcastically.)* . . . business.

FERN: Yes, but we have dial up . . . and my computer has Windows Vista.

RHONDA: *(Suspiciously.)* Well played. So you just came up with all of this—the clown, the name McDoogal’s, your whole . . . McMenu?

FERN: I guess it’s just a crazy coincidence. You know, like your last name.

RHONDA: You really expect me to believe that?

FERN: Well . . . wait a minute. You guys call your restaurant McDonalds, which is a lot like McDoogal’s. And you say your menu is just like ours. *(Pointing toward Roogal.)* And you have a clown, too. You’re right, that all can’t just be a coincidence. *(With feigned suspicion.)* Hey, are you trying to copy us or something?
RHONDA: (Sighs purposefully.) It doesn’t matter if you want to continue this charade. As I said, my company has sent you several registered letters, and we have the forms you signed acknowledging that you have received them. Whether you’ve read them or not is irrelevant. Those letters were sent to inform you that you are in violation of our trademark and copyrights, and that you must cease operations immediately.

FERN: Wow, that sounds serious. (Deepening her voice.) “Cease operations immediately.” (Putting her hand on Rhonda’s shoulder, and looking around, conspiratorially.) Level with me, girl to girl—you don’t really think they mean it, do you?

RHONDA: (Pushing Fern’s hand off her shoulder.) Miss Standish, I can tell you with great certainty that my company is serious about this matter. Now what do you intend to do about it?

FERN: Gosh, you know I guess I’m going to have to think about it. Why don’t we get together for lunch in a couple weeks? We could even try that restaurant of yours—McDonald’s was it?

RHONDA: (Losing it.) Are you impaired? What part of immediately don’t you understand? Miss Standish, you are failing to grasp the seriousness of this situation, and I’m going to have to—

WILL: (Cutting her off, coming to Fern’s rescue.) Miss McDonald, I’m afraid I am going to have to ask you to leave. We’re in the middle of an investigation that could potentially involve a homicide, and we still need to question Miss Standish and some of her employees. Until we know otherwise, we have to treat this restaurant as a crime scene.

RHONDA: This restaurant is definitely a crime scene. You can tell that the minute you see those golden arches. (She pauses, then reluctantly crosses RIGHT toward the EXIT.)

DEVO: (Standing.) Beams. We call ours “beams.”

RHONDA turns to reply, but McDebbie cuts her off.

McDEBBIE: Thanks for coming to McDoogal’s. We hope to see you again McSoon!

RHONDA: (Looking briefly at McDebbie, then turning a cold stare on Fern.) Oh, I’ll be back. That much you can take to the Mcbank, sweetie.
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

RHONDA exits down right.

FERN: (To WILL.) Thanks for getting rid of her.
WILL: Don’t mention it.

FERN begins laughing. At first she tries to hold back, but then lets loose with a series of guffaws.

WILL: Miss Standish?
FERN: (Through her laughter.) Red hair. She has . . . red hair! (She points at her own hair, and continues laughing.) Her name is Rhonda McDonald and she has red hair!

WILL also laughs, but REBA glares at him and he puts his hand over his mouth to stifle it. This is the start of the romantic energy between FERN and WILL.

REBA: Miss Standish, can I ask why y’all are pretending that you’ve never heard of McDonald’s restaurants?
FERN: (Still fighting laughter.) Two words: Plausible deniability.
REBA: I see. Well, I guess that’s really not my concern. We’re going to need some information about your employees and a list of anyone else who was in the restaurant this evening.
FERN: (Pointing blindly toward the counter.) You can get everything you need from McDebbie.
WILL: “McDebbie”?
FERN: (Shrugs.) Her idea. (She crosses back to her table and sits.)
WILL: (Approaching McDEBBIE.) Okay, we’ll need a list of all the employees in the restaurant—names, addresses, phone numbers.
McDEBBIE: (Scribbling on a tablet.) Okay.
WILL: Also the shifts they worked each day for the past week.
McDEBBIE: Got it.
REBA: And we’ll need y’all to give a description of any customers that were in the restaurant this afternoon, as well as anyone else who may have had access to the kitchen—vendors, repairmen, and so on.
McDEBBIE: Would you like fries with that? (Explaining herself.) The McManaul says you should always ask customers if they want fries with their orders.

REBA: Yeah. Well, we’re not customers, Sweetie.

McDEBBIE: Oh, but the McManaul also says that everyone who comes through our door should be treated as a customer.

REBA: What say we just forget the McManaul for awhile, okay? (Turning to Fern.) Miss Standish, go ahead and send the rest of your employees home. As soon as we get the information, we’ll have y’all secure the building. We won’t put up any crime scene tape as long as y’all promise not to open for business until we get the lab reports on the deceased.

BRITTANY: They can’t tell you when to send us home, Miss Standish. This is private property.

SKRZYNSKI and FRANSTED approach Brittany’s chairs and dump her on the floor.

BRITTANY: Ahhhh! I’m wounded. Police brutality. You all saw it—you’re my witnesses.

FERN: Brittany . . . just go home, please.

BRITTANY: (Standing up as if in great pain and looking at the detectives and police officers.) I’m going, but only because Miss Standish told me to. This isn’t over!

DEVO, BRITTANY, and ROOGAL all EXIT DOWN RIGHT. FERN joins McDEBBIE and they EXIT UP LEFT into the “office.” REBA waves to WILL and they step DOWN STAGE. SKRZYNSKI and FRANSTED follow the employees and EXIT DOWN RIGHT.

REBA: So, what do y’all make of this, rookie?

WILL: (Lost in thought about the novel he’s writing.) The setting is a little drab, but I can add some details to make it work. And these characters—yeah, I can definitely see it all coming together. Especially Fern Standish—a little weird, but strikingly attractive at the same time.
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

FERN ENTERS from UP LEFT to pick up her sweater, which was left on her chair. The detectives don’t see her, but she is in time to hear the following.

WILL: (Into his recorder, author voice.) She was the daughter of a millionaire, but as sweet and innocent as the girl next door. And behind those glasses, what a gorgeous pair of peepers! Tommy knew he was falling for this dame—falling hard. She made him laugh, something that didn’t happen often enough in his line of work. But he was forgetting that “laughter” and “slaughter” are just one letter away from being the same thing.

FERN takes off her glasses, looks WILL over, then quickly and quietly EXITS back UP LEFT.

WILL: (Changing to his normal voice and looking up at Reba.) Man that’s good—really good. Did you see what I did there? “Laughter and slaughter are just one letter away from being the same thing.” You know . . . because you just have to put an “S” in front of “laughter” and it spells “slaughter.” I just made that up.

REBA: Yeah, I got it. (Sarcastically.) You’re a genius. Now, can we get back to talking about the dead man. That’s why we’re here, remember? Y’know, “genius” and “ex-cop” are just five letters from being the same thing.

WILL: (Confused, counting this out on his fingers, then getting her meaning.) Oh, right. The case. (He pauses, then confidently.) It was the creepy clown. Definitely.

REBA: What? We don’t even know this is a murder yet! How in the world did y’all come up with that?

WILL: (With exaggerated suspense, into his recorder.) How? Because in Tommy Gunn’s world, partner, it’s always the creepy clown.

BLACKOUT.
ACT ONE, SCENE 3

SETTING: 
McDoogal’s Restaurant, early Saturday afternoon.

AT RISE: 
The scene looks much like the start of SCENE 1, except that FERN and McDEBBIE are seated at the UP CENTER table in front of the counter. The other employees are arranged as they were in ACT ONE, SCENE 1: Roogal in his booth; McDebbie behind the counter at the left cash register; Nika and Brad in the kitchen; Libby standing near the drive-through window; Buff mopping in the hallway up left; Devo is at the drink station, stacking cups and generally just trying to look busy; Brittany sprawled on her three chairs; Ashley, Melanie and Sierra seated in the booth up left, chatting and texting on their cell phones.

SIERRA: Wow, this place is even more boring when it’s closed.
BRAD: (Coming out from behind the counter.) Quit complaining. Miss Standish didn’t have to let us come to work today.
ASHLEY: You’re just glad because you don’t have to worry about anyone seeing you here. Brad Marks, the Phantom Fry Cook.
MELANIE: I think he looks so cute in his uniform!

BRAD turns and retreats into the kitchen to hide again.

LIBBY: I hope we’re not closed down for too long. I could lose my drive-thru (She squawks this.) voice. (She tries again, and emits a deep growl.) Voice. (She tries again, and emits a high pitched squeal.) Voice! Oh my gosh—it’s happened. (She begins tapping at her throat, singing “la la la,” attempting to get her voice back as she fades into the kitchen.)

BRITTANY: Can you please knock off all the racket? Channel 7 was running a Buffy the Vampire Slayer marathon last night, and I didn’t get any sleep.
BUFF: I did it, Miss Standish! I mopped the whole floor and nobody had to remind me to move a single time!
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

McDEBBIE: Buff, the floor looks kind of dry. *(She looks around the floor.)* Did you remember to put any water in the bucket?

BUFF: *(Slaps his head.)* Dang it.

_BUFF drags the bucket noisily up the UP LEFT HALL, nearly colliding with DEVO, who is followed closely by ANDREW and VIOLET._

ANDREW: Look, Violet, it eez exactly zee same. When it eez open, no customers. When it eez closed, no customers. *(He laughs.)*

VIOLET: Now don’t be so hard on them, dear. After all, the dead guy was a customer . . . for awhile.

FERN: Like the French Fry said, we’re closed. Devo, I told you not to let anyone in here.

DEVO: They snuck in while I was putting out more rat poison by the dumpsters. Boy, there must be a ton of rats out there. That’s the third box this week.

FERN: *(Looking at Andrew and Violet.)* Yeah, there are plenty of rats running around here all right.

VIOLET: Now that’s no way to talk to your loving sister—especially when she’s just days from becoming a multi-millionaire.

FERN: I wouldn’t start spending it just yet, sis. We had a pretty profitable month here at McDoogal’s. I might just surprise you.

VIOLET: It doesn’t matter if you don’t reopen by next Tuesday.

FERN: Excuse me?

VIOLET: Poor Fern. You never were very good at remembering the details, were you? *(She holds her hand out to Andrew, and he hands her a sheaf of papers.)* It’s right here in the second paragraph of Daddy’s will. “If the business fails to remain in operation at the end of one year from the date of this document for any reason, said business is considered to be a failure, and the owner is disqualified from receiving any further proceeds from my estate.” Now I’m not a lawyer, but I do believe that being closed by order of the health department would fall under “any” reason . . . wouldn’t you agree, dear?

FERN: But this is only temporary—I can’t help it that a man died in my restaurant.
ANDREW: (Looking over Violet’s shoulder at the will.) Hmmmm . . . (Mimicking Fern.) “temporary”? “I can’t help it”? (In his own voice.) No, I do not see zeez things in zee will.

FERN: (To Violet.) And you would actually hold me to a technicality like this? Me…your own sister?

VIOLET: You bet I would, sweetie. And don’t bother trying to snow me with that sister crap. You’d do exactly the same thing if the shoe was on the other foot.

FERN: No I wouldn’t. And it doesn’t matter anyway. The detectives promised me that the toxicology report would be back in a day or two. Once that’s done, we’ll be able to open back up. Today’s only Saturday.

VIOLET: That’s only if they find he died from natural causes. (She looks around at the employees.) Considering your hiring practices, I’d say the odds are pretty good that it was something he ate. And if it was . . . well, I guess this place will just fold up and disappear.

McDEBBIE: You can’t keep talking about us like that. We are well-trained, hard-working food service professionals.

BRITTANY snores loudly, then rolls over and falls on the floor. She looks up, confused, then puts her head back down. ASHLEY and SIERRA use their phones to snap pictures of BRITTANY then go back to texting, and DEVO knocks over the tower he’s building with cups. BRAD turns to go back into the kitchen and collides with LIBBY, and they knock over a stack of cooking utensils. NIKA lets loose with what sounds like profanity in her weird language.

BUFF: (Entering with the mop bucket from the UP LEFT hall.) I’m sorry it took me so long to get back, Miss Standish. I got the faucets confused and accidentally filled up the mop bucket with rootbeer. Man, I hate it when I do that.

ANDREW: (Grabbing Violet and pulling her along.) Come, my savory Egg McMuffin. We should be getting back to our work.

ANDREW and VIOLET CROSS DOWN RIGHT to the EXIT. VIOLET turns back to Fern before leaving.

VIOLET: No hard feelings, sis. Y’know, it’s just business.
VIOLET and ANDREW EXIT DOWN RIGHT, as RHONDA ENTERS, pushing past them.

FERN:  *(Looking down, head in hands.)* Business. Wow, I really *hate* that word.
RHONDA:  Miss Standish?
FERN:  *(Looking up, then back down.)* Oh great.
RHONDA:  Oh, you're not happy to see me?  Gee, that really hurts.
BRITTANY:  Could you lower your voice, please?  Some people are trying to sleep in here.
RHONDA:  *(Looks briefly at Brittany.)* Unbelievable. *(Turning to Fern.)* Miss Standish, I hope you didn’t think I was going to just go away. This is a serious matter.
FERN:  I’m sorry—who are you again?  *(She looks around to the other employees to get their attention.)* I'm really bad with names.
RHONDA:  My name is Rhonda McDonald.

FERN laughs, looking around at the employees as if to say, “See, I told you!” and they all join in her laughter. She turns back to RHONDA and wilts in her stare.

RHONDA:  I’m here as special counsel for McDonald’s Restaurant Corporation.
FERN:  Oh yeah. The company that sends all the letters. I really need to start reading my mail.
RHONDA:  *(Pausing, looking sternly at Fern.)* Miss Standish, we’re done playing games here. You know who I am and why I’m here.
FERN:  *(Shrugging.)* If you say so.
RHONDA:  I don’t know why you thought you could get away with infringing on our trademarks and, frankly, I don’t care. I have plenty of evidence to destroy you in court, and if you don’t start cooperating, that’s where we’re going to be on Monday morning.
FERN:  Monday?  No, it can’t be Monday. I thought these court things always take years!  Please, you can’t take me to court on Monday!
RHONDA:  Well, it’s nice to see that I finally have your attention. May I?  *(She pulls out a chair and Fern waves her approval. Rhonda sits.)* It’s probably best if we discuss this alone.
FERN:  McDebbie, give us a moment, would you please?
McDEBBIE: Sure, Miss Standish.

McDEBBIE waves to ASHLEY, SIERRA, DEVO and BUFF, and they all EXIT through the UP LEFT hallway. BRAD, NIKA and LIBBY all disappear into the kitchen. McDEBBIE approaches BRITTANY, kicking the chair beneath her head.

BRITTANY: Seriously? I was just getting comfortable. It’s not like I care what Miss Corporate Nazi has to say, anyway.

McDEBBIE just looks at BRITTANY and points toward the UP LEFT hall. BRITTANY utters a groan and EXITS.

McDEBBIE: (Turning to Roogal.) Roogal?

ROOGAL responds by getting out of his booth slowly, and McDEBBIE EXITS to the UP LEFT hall. ROOGAL pulls out a balloon, turns his back to the audience, and repeats his routine of manipulating the balloon. He then turns and walks to RHONDA, and hands her the unchanged balloon.

RHONDA: The clown’s name is Roogal?
FERN: He’s Hungarian.
ROOGAL: Roogal make for you special balloon.
RHONDA: (Looking the balloon over, perplexed.) Okay. Uhhh, what’s it supposed to be?
ROOGAL: Is stick, so you can stick it in your—
FERN: Okay, Roogal. That’s enough.
ROOGAL: (To RHONDA.) I was not going to say “ear.”

ROOGAL grunts and EXITS through the UP LEFT hall way.

RHONDA: (Tossing the balloon on the floor.) Well, your employees certainly seem to be loyal to you. (Clearing her throat.) Miss Standish, I’m going to level with you. The people at McDonald’s Corporation are nice. They don’t have anything against you personally, and they definitely don’t want the public to perceive
them as a big, mean corporation coming in and crushing a small, local restaurant.

**FERN:** (With a sigh of relief, grabbing Rhonda’s hand.) Oh my gosh, that is so great to hear. I really don’t want any trouble.

**RHONDA:** You didn’t let me finish. The people at McDonald’s are nice. That’s why they hired me. I’m not nice. I had to bust my butt to get through law school and I’ll still be paying off student loans when I’m sixty. I didn’t have a mansion to grow up in, or a rich daddy to set me up in business and give me everything my spoiled little heart desired. (Pause, then much more harshly.) I despise you and your crummy little burger dump, and if you don’t stop infringing on McDonald’s trademarks immediately, I am going to come down on you like two all-beef patties on a sesame seed bun. (She looks at Fern’s hand, which is still on her own.) Still want to hold hands, girlfriend?

**FERN:** (Pulling her hand away.) I wish life was half as easy as you think it is. So what do you want me to do?

**RHONDA:** Get rid of anything that remotely connects this place to the McDonald’s Corporation—right now.

**FERN:** I can’t possibly do it all right now. I’ll have to get a construction crew in here—that could take weeks.

**RHONDA:** (Pauses, considering this.) All right, then show me that you’re serious. Call your ridiculous employees back in here and tell them they’re fired. You can start with that creepy clown.

**FERN:** Fire my employees? But they depend on this job. They have rent, car payments, student loans. I can’t just fire them without a good reason.

**RHONDA:** You have a great reason. You’re going out of business.

**FERN:** (Thinks this over, then reluctantly yells to the back.) McDebbie, would you bring everyone up front, please?

**McDEBBIE:** (Off stage.) Sure, Miss Standish.

**FERN** and **RHONDA** both stand. **RHONDA** backs UP RIGHT a few steps. The employees ENTER from the UP LEFT hallway in pairs, forming a funnel as they approach. **SIERRA, MELANIE** and **ASHLEY** are first, then **NIKA** and **BRAD**, then **LIBBY** and **DEVO**, then **BUFF** and **ROOGAL**. McDEBBIE and BRITTANY are last, and they are carrying a ridiculous trophy, made from sandwich boxes, French fry
cartons and bags, etc., with a lone, straight balloon sticking up the middle. On it is scrawled “World’s Greatest Boss.” Roogal counts on his fingers to lead them, and they all yell, “Surprise!”

LIBBY: Miss Standish, we just wanted to express our sincere thanks for letting us come to work today, even though the restaurant is closed.

ASHLEY: Yeah, that was really cool. I have to get new tires on my car, so I need all the money I can get.

McDEBBIE: (Bringing the trophy to the UP CENTER table, and spinning it around to show FERN.) And look—everybody signed it. Even Brad . . . (She spins the trophy, trying to find Brad’s name.)

BRAD: It’s on the bottom.

McDEBBIE: (She pulls her face close to the trophy.) . . . and really small, too. (She frowns at Brad.)

BRITTANY: I stayed awake the whole time we were making it.

DEVO: I didn’t even drop any of the cups!

SIERRA: And Ashley and I put our phones away!

MELANIE: If I had a phone, I would definitely have put mine away, too!

ASHLEY: Of course, you can’t get service in the kitchen anyway.

NIKA utters an exuberant string of nonsense.

BUFF: (Approaching FERN and picking her up in a bear hug.) We love you, Miss Standish!

The EMPLOYEES all clap and cheer, pat FERN’s back, etc. ASHLEY and SIERRA use their phones to take pictures of the trophy and begin texting.

McDEBBIE: What did you need us for, Miss Standish. Would you like us to pick up the parking lot . . . again? The McManual says the parking lot can never be too clean, because that’s the first thing our customers see.

RHONDA: (Seething, to Fern.) You have a McManual!

FERN: (Ignoring Rhonda.) No, no, the parking lot is fine. What I have to tell you is . . . (She trails off.)
WOULD YOU LIKE FRIES WITH YOUR MURDER?

DEVO: Go ahead, Miss Standish. We’re all listening.

WILL and REBA ENTER DOWN RIGHT

FERN: (Looks at RHONDA, who gives her a nod.) Well, I just have to let you know that . . . (She pauses again, then takes on a defiant tone and turns to the employees.) . . . that we made a big profit this month, and after I win that contest on Tuesday, I’m going to give you all a raise!

The EMPLOYEES all cheer, hug, etc. RHONDA stands, glares at FERN.

RHONDA: If I were you, I wouldn’t go spending those raises just yet. I’ll see you Monday morning, Miss Standish.

FERN: Oh yeah? Well what if I don’t show up?

RHONDA: That’ll just make things easier. I’ll get my injunction whether you’re there or not. Have a pleasant final weekend.

RHONDA EXITS DOWN RIGHT, pushing past REBA and WILL as they cross to Fern.

McDEBBIE: What did she mean, “final weekend,” Miss Standish?

FERN: Nothing. She’s delusional.

BRITTANY: It’s probably the hair. (She crosses back to her chairs and lies down.)

REBA: Miss Standish, can we get a word with y’all, please?

FERN: (In despair.) Oh, why not. (To the employees.) On second thought, why don’t you guys take another shot at the parking lot. I’d never want to argue with the McManual.

The EMPLOYEES all EXIT DOWN RIGHT.

WILL: (Stepping DOWN RIGHT as the employees exit, and speaking into his recorder.) To the untrained eye, they might have appeared to be just a random group of teenagers, maybe even a traveling band of carnies, but Tommy Gunn saw things through a different lens, a lens colored with murder.
REBA shakes her head as WILL puts away his recorder and CROSSES UP CENTER to join her.

REBA: We got the results of the toxicology screen, Miss Standish. Mr. Abernathy died from consuming zinc phosphide.

FERN: (Standing.) And what does that mean?

WILL: Somebody fed Mr. Abernathy a burger full of rat poison.

REBA: The same kind of rat poison y’all use around your dumpster outside.

FERN: Oh my gosh! Are you trying to say that someone who works here . . . (She trails off, unwilling to say it.)

REBA: It would appear so.

WILL: (Crossing DOWN CENTER with dramatic flair, delivering this to the audience.) You may think they’re just a bunch of happy-go-lucky burger-flippers, Miss Standish, but one of your employees is guilty of cold-blooded, pre-meditated . . . McMurder!

As the lights fade, REBA shakes her head and starts to reach for her gun as if to shoot WILL, then thinks better of it and relaxes. BLACKOUT.

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