

Trouble at the Tropicabana

An Audience-Participation Murder Mystery-Comedy

By Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose



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professionals
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The Lakeside Players

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Dear Murder Mystery Fan:

Thanks for buying a Lakeside Players original murder mystery package. In this package you'll find:

- FAQ's about our audience-participation murder mysteries
- 1 complete murder mystery script that may be photocopied for cast members
- Suggested script for master of ceremonies
- Production Notes (properties, costumes, music, lighting effects, helpful hints)
- Basic floor plan, including set construction directions
- Sample news release
- "Menu" covers, "Rat Poison" box cover, and "Cuban Rum" bottle label

Whether you're a seasoned actor/director or a rookie, this envelope contains everything you need to stage the perfect crime! Happy sleuthing!

Tony & Marylou

FAQ'S (Frequently Asked Questions)

Does performing in an audience-participation murder mystery require lots of acting experience?

No! Our actors range from friends with no experience to people who direct their own theater companies. We usually give inexperienced people smaller roles and then try them in larger roles as they gain confidence. More than experience, we look for the ability to ham it up, to mingle with the audience, to memorize lines, and to perform without stage fright. Once a person meets these qualifications, we work with them on developing their characters.

How many weeks of rehearsals are needed?

Days of rehearsals are all that are needed. All our shows are scripted, one-act plays (not just flow charts), around 30 pages long, and with an average of 8 actors/show. No one has an overwhelming amount of lines. The key is to give actors their scripts a couple weeks before the first rehearsal so they can familiarize themselves with the play and start developing their characters and memorizing their lines early. Four, 2-3 hour rehearsals usually work for us, but you might want to add more, especially if this is your first murder mystery.

Suppose the audience doesn't want to participate?

No problem. Our shows don't depend on heavy audience participation like some murder mysteries do. Early on, we discovered that most people are *afraid* you'll ask them to get up on stage and do something. This fear might even keep them from enjoying a murder mystery. That's why we've designed our shows as scripted, one-act plays. Audience members aren't asked to play parts or do anything but sit and watch, if that's what they want. The audience-participation part of our shows consists of pre-show mingling with the cast; getting people involved in conga lines, mambo lessons, or sing-alongs; and in the end, having them vote on "whodunit" and why. It's all strictly voluntary, and we tell them that up front, before the show begins.

How much ad-libbing is required?

Not as much as you might think. Most ad-libbing is done during pre-show mingling, when actors drift from table to table introducing their characters to the audience. During the show, actors should stick as closely as possible to their scripts, just like in a conventional stage play. Of course, with the audience often only an arm's length away, it's tempting to toss off an ad lib or two. That's fine. Some of our best lines crop up this way--and we keep using them!

What's the best place to perform these shows?

Anywhere! The beauty of our murder mysteries is that they're so adaptable and portable, they can be performed in almost any venue. Admittedly, we do most of our shows in restaurants and country clubs, where dinner is part of the package, but we've also performed in church halls and on theater stages. It's wonderful when we have lots of space, but even our most extravagant shows can be performed in a small area. In fact, our very first murder mystery was performed in an old inn, with most of the action occurring in a doorway between two dining rooms!

Does dinner have to be part of the package?

No! Our shows can be performed just like traditional one-act plays, with the audience sitting in chairs, rather than at tables. No matter what your arrangement or venue, be sure to thoroughly discuss the evening's agenda with the people in charge. They'll be happy to accommodate you, as long as they understand how things are supposed to go and why. Handing them a written schedule of events is also helpful. You'll find a sample handout in this package.

Do you need a Master of Ceremonies?

Yes. Someone needs to welcome the guests, explain how the show works, explain the voting process, announce the prizewinners, introduce the actors, and then say thank you and goodnight. The director is the logical choice. If the director acts in the show as well, he or she **SHOULD NOT** be in character when performing MC duties.

How do you choose the murderer?

Our shows are written so that almost everyone in the cast has a good motive for murder. Changing murderers is especially important if you're performing several shows in the same venue or the same area. Then it won't matter if audience members tell their friends "whodunit."

Agenda for Interactive Murder Mysteries

Dear Restaurant or Theatre Owner:

This tried-and-true format keeps the evening running smoothly and everyone happy—the audience, the restaurant or theatre owners, and the actors. It’s just a suggestion—feel free to revise it to fit your establishment.

Cocktails/Mingling: The cast mingles (in costume and in character) with the audience, setting up the plot for the main show later on. *Suggested time: 30 minutes.*

Dinner: The actors leave the guests alone to enjoy their dinner. This way, the audience can eat in peace and then give their full attention to the show. When the show is performed during dinner, the audience misses half of it because they’re busy eating, waitresses are trying to serve, and there’s a lot of plate and glass noise. *Suggested time: 1 ½ hours*

The Show: As soon as the tables are cleared and you give us the go-ahead, we take over the rest of the evening. We act as MC’s, perform the murder mystery, award the prizes,* and then say thank you and good night. Our shows are essentially one-act plays. The audience sits and watches, absorbing clues, until the murder occurs. Participation is in the form of conga lines, mambo lessons, and sing a-longs. *Approximate time: 1¼ hours, including ballot casting and closing remarks.*

Ballot Casting/Dessert: We instruct guests to fill in their ballot sheets (saying “whodunit” and why) and turn them in as quickly as possible. The judges go through them and determine the winner. **This usually occurs when the restaurant serves dessert.** This keeps people from sitting around idly while the judges determine the winners. It also helps restaurants sell more desserts if they’re served a la cart, because guests have worked up an appetite since dinner.

Closing Remarks: We announce winners, award prizes, introduce the cast, thank everyone, and say goodnight. Then it’s back in your hands.

Ambiance: Some restaurants like to join in the fun by decorating tables or serving drinks to go with the murder mystery’s theme. For example, if the show takes place on a cruise ship, you might hand out leis to the audience, use tropical flower arrangements on tables, or serve tropical drinks with umbrellas.

* **Prizes:** Prizes are usually the restaurant’s responsibility. Suggestions are a bottle of wine, lunch or dinner for two, or a small gift. We usually have two or three prizes.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to call us!

Trouble at the Tropicabana

CAST OF CHARACTERS

RICKY BICARDI: Cuban-American bandleader and nightclub owner

LUCY BICARDI: Ricky's wife

ETHEL SCHMERTZ: The Bicardi's neighbor

FRED SCHMERTZ: Ethel's husband

CELIA B. DE MILO/COOKIE: Gun moll posing as movie-mogul heiress

MR. BIG: Notorious gangster

ROSITA BICARDI: Ricky's cousin; one of the Cabana girls and an illegal alien

TWO MORE CABANA GIRLS: Club Tropicabana dancers (non-speaking roles)

WAITER or WAITRESS: Non-speaking role

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

TIME: The 1950s

SCENE ONE: The Bicardi's apartment

SCENE TWO: Back room of an Italian restaurant

SCENE THREE: The Club Tropicabana

SETTING

The entire set consists of two tables with three stools at each. The STAGE RIGHT table represents the BICARDI'S apartment (Scene One). The STAGE LEFT table represents the back room of an Italian restaurant (Scene Two). Both tables are used in Scene Three, which takes place at the Club Tropicabana. Tables should be set with tablecloths and "menus." You may use additional nightclub décor (see **Production Notes**).

Trouble at the Tropicabana

Master of Ceremonies: Welcome to the (*Insert your company's name.*) production of *Trouble at the Tropicabana!* Tonight, you're part of the action. So keep your eyes and ears open for

clues, because before the night's over, someone will be ruthlessly murdered. And it's up to you to guess "whodunit" and why.

How many of you have been to a murder mystery before? Well, this show is a little different. We won't ask you to take a part, or get up on stage, or do anything but watch if you don't want to. So you shy people can come out from under your tables now and just relax and enjoy the show. We *will* be doing the conga, giving some dance lessons, and singing along with Ricky, but that's all strictly voluntary. Your main job is to pay attention and play detective—and then to vote at the end. The first (*Insert how many prizes you have.*) people to correctly guess the murderer and the motive will win a prize. I'll explain the voting process to you in more detail after the show.

And now—on with the show!

SCENE ONE

About noon in the BICARDI'S living room (STAGE RIGHT table). LUCY is dusting. RICKY enters from UPSTAGE CENTER.

Ricky: Lucy, I'm home!

Lucy: Hi, honey. You're home early. Is everything okay?

Ricky: (*Very excited.*) Couldn't be better, honey. Have I got some exciting news for you!

Lucy: Not as exciting as what happened to me today. I went shopping and bought the perfect dress that made me look 10 pounds lighter. Then I came home, and Ethel walked in wearing the same dress!

Ricky: (*Interrupts.*) Yeah, honey but that doesn't compare to . . .

Lucy: You know, she should consult with me before buying anything. Oh well, it looked better on me anyway.

Ricky: (*Interrupts.*) No, no, Lucy. Sit down. I've got some really excitin' news.

Lucy: But . . . what did you say? (*Sits.*)

Ricky: You won't believe who came into the club today. Celia B. De Milo--the head of PMS Studios!

Lucy: The movie mogul heiress? (*Pick up movie magazine.*) But it says right here that she's a recluse.

Ricky: Yeah, well, there's nothing reckless about her. But that's not the excitin' news. She's made me an incredible offer, Lucy.

Lucy: Really, what?

Ricky: She's looking for her next big studio star.

Lucy: And she's considering you?

Ricky: Yeah, she's coming to the club tonight with the contract. We're gonna' sign it after she sees the show. She offered me a four-movie contract!

Lucy: (*Jumps up.*) Oh, Ricky!

Ricky: She's gonna' make me the Latin Clark Gable. (*Very dramatic.*) I could be doing the Cuban version of *Breaking the Wind*!

Lucy: What? Don't you mean *Gone With the Wind*? (*As RICKY talks, LUCY'S eyes get wide and she gets a familiar gleam in them.*)

Ricky: Yeah, that one, too. Now listen. We can't let anythin' go wrong. Everythin' has to be perfect. You hear what I'm saying Lucy? Or do I have to 'splain it?

Lucy: No, you don't have to 'splain it. (*Cranky.*) I'll just sit in the audience and behave myself.

Ricky: Lucy, I dun't even want you there!

Lucy: What do you mean, you dun't want me there?

Ricky: That's right. I dun't. I know you by now. You'll only interfere and ruin everything!

Lucy: (*Whining.*) But Ricky!

Ricky: No buts. I'm putting my foot down. And that's final. I'm gonna' tell the bouncer not to let you in.

(Knock on door. FRED and ETHEL enter from UPSTAGE CENTER.)

Ethel & Fred: Hi, Ricky, Hi Lucy.

Lucy: Sit down. Wait till you hear the news!

(Deliver the following 5 lines very quickly.)

Ricky: The movie mogul heiress Celia B. De Milo came to the club today!

Lucy: She thinks Ricky's really talented and wants to make him the studio's next big star!

Ricky: She's coming to the club tonight to see my act!

Lucy: She's going to make him the Latin Clark Gable!

Ricky: And I'm gonna' be *Breaking the Wind*!

(Silence. All look at Ricky.)

Fred: Hey, Rick, that's great news! What studio in New York will you be working at?

Ricky: Er, well, um, it won't be a New York studio. If the deal goes through, we'll be moving to Hollywood.

Lucy: Isn't that great! *(Words sink in.)* Hollywood?

Ricky: Yeah, Hollywood. That's where you make movies, Lucy. Hollywood.

Lucy: *(Whining.)* But we can't just leave Fred and Ethel--they're our best friends!

Ethel: No, no, you can't let us hold you back. You have to think about your career.

Fred: Don't worry about us. This is your big break, Rick!

(LUCY and ETHEL hug and cry loudly.)

Ricky: All right, all right, wait a minute. I got it all figured out. Fred, you got 'sperience, you were in vaudeville. You can be my business manager. We can all move to Hollywood together!

(LUCY and ETHEL hug and jump up and down in glee. RICKY and FRED slap each other on the back.)

Ethel: But Fred, what about our apartment building?

Fred: You know, Ethel, your brother's been after me to sell the building to him for years. Just last night he told me again that he'd buy it on the spot. He's got the papers all drawn up, just waiting for me to sign. We'll go talk to him this afternoon!

(Knock at door. CELIA B. DE MILO enters from UPSTAGE CENTER. RICKY is surprised.)

Ricky: *(Rushes up to her.)* Miss De Milo, what a surprise! I wasn't 'specting you! Sit down! Can I get you a drink? Some coffee?

(LUCY clears her throat.)

Ricky: Oh, honey, this is Miss De Milo. Miss De Milo this is my wife Lucy and our friends Fred and Ethel.

Fred: (*Eyes popping.*) Pleased to meet you Miss De Milo.

Ethel: (*Under breath.*) I'm sure you are.

Lucy: Are you sure I can't get you a drink?

Celia: (*Condescending.*) How domestic of you to offer. But I'm on my way to luncheon with Frank and Dean at the Waldorf. I just stopped by to make sure we were still on for tonight, Ricky. Remember, we need to work late after the show. (*She touches under his chin.*)

(*LUCY is mad.*)

Ricky: (*Fawning.*) Of course, of course. I'm looking forward to it. I'll see you tonight at the club, Miss De Milo.

Celia: I'm counting the hours. And you can call me Celia. (*Exit UPSTAGE CENTER.*)

Fred: Va va voom! (*Ethel slaps his arm.*)

Ricky: Yeah, quite a looker isn't she?

Lucy: You never said she was so beautiful!

Ricky: (*Hedging.*) Beautiful? Is she? I hadn't noticed, Honey.

Lucy: Yeah, sure. And what's this about working late tonight?

Ricky: Uh, we're just going over the contract. It's business honey, you wouldn't understand.

Lucy: (*Crosses her arms.*) I wouldn't understand? Oh, I'm beginning to understand all right.

Fred: Hey, Rick, I'm going over to my brother-in-law's to sign those papers and sell the building. You want to come along? I may need a witness.

Ricky: Sure, Fred. (*Turning to LUCY nervously.*) Now honey, don't be mad. I told you, it's just business. Let me handle it, okay? And no trying to sneak into the club tonight! I don't want a scene at the door.

Lucy: Okay, Ricky. (*Acts resigned.*)

(FRED and RICKY exit UPSTAGE CENTER. As soon as they're out the door, the women rush together and start plotting.)

Ethel: Wow! Did you think she'd be so beautiful? And did you see the effect she had on Fred and Ricky?

Lucy: She sure made Ricky's temperature rise, and he's already hot-blooded.

Ethel: I wouldn't trust her in a crowded room with Fred. You're actually going to let Ricky be *alone* with her after the show tonight?

Lucy: Not if I can help it. But Ricky made me promise I'd stay home. He's afraid I'll ruin the deal. But we have to get in there anyway! *(Her eyes get big and round. She taps lip or teeth with finger.)*

Ethel: Uh, oh. I've seen that look before Lucy, and it always gets us into trouble. I don't want any part of whatever you're thinking.

Lucy: Why should the men have all the glory? Somehow, we have to sneak into the club and perform in the show so Miss De Milo can discover *us*, too. I have a plan!

(LUCY grabs ETHEL'S arm and they exit as lights dim. Where they exit depends on location of dressing room.)

SCENE TWO

An hour later in MR. BIG'S "office" located in the back room of an Italian restaurant (STAGE LEFT table). MR. BIG is counting money as CELIA enters from UPSTAGE CENTER.

Mr. Big: Well, Miss De Milo, so nice to see you again. Won't you have a seat?

Celia: *(Drops sophisticated act and speaks in gun moll voice.)* Cut out the De Milo crap. I hate that name. When we're alone, call me by my *real* name.

Mr. Big: Okay, Cookie. Why doncha' take a load off?

Cookie: *(Sits on his lap.)* That Miss De Milo name makes me feel like some marble statue.

Mr. Big: You ain't no marble statue, baby. You got arms.

Cookie: The better to hug you with, my dear. *(Hugs him.)*

Mr. Big: So, doll, how'd everything go?

Cookie: Piece a' cake. I've got Ricky eating out of the palm of my hand. The jerk actually thinks he's gonna' be the Latin Clark Gable!

Mr. Big: Oh yeah, Gable. He was good in *Breaking the Wind*.

Cookie: (*Do a take.*) We should get out more, baby. Anyway, I told Ricky we're signing the contract tonight, after the show. Just like we planned.

Mr. Big: Remember, I'll be at the front table, watching the show. I'll keep an eye on things, just in case you get in trouble. (*Pats gun in shoulder holster or pocket.*)

Cookie: Okay. But I don't think there'll be any trouble. Ricky melts like butter when he's around me.

Mr. Big: Oh, yeah? You're not fallin' for this guy, are ya?

Cookie: Don't be silly, baby. (*Kisses him on cheek.*) You know you're the only man for me. (*Gets up and moves around as she talks.*) Now listen--I'll get him to give me a complete tour of the building. I'll also find out where the burglar alarm is, so I can shut it off later.

Mr. Big: Good. And you should case the joint and draw a map of the inside so we don't waste time findin' the right room and the right *wall*.

Cookie: I noticed he keeps his keys in his jacket pocket. I'll dance with him tonight and steer him over to you so you can pick his pocket. He'll think he lost them.

Mr. Big: Right, good idea. Then with the keys, the map, and burglar alarm shut off, the boys can work without being disturbed.

Cookie: This is gonna' be like taking candy from a baby.

Mr. Big: No, this is gonna' be like taking a million bucks from the First National Bank.

Cookie: Your plan is brilliant! The wall of the club's storage room is the same wall as the bank vault next door. We break through the wall, get into the vault, take the money, leave some incriminating evidence linking Ricky to the crime, and while he's rottin' in jail, we'll be in South America. You're brilliant, baby.

Mr. Big: Yeah. And people said I'd never amount to nothin'.

Cookie: What were they thinking?

Mr. Big: We still have a lot of work to do. I'm takin' this money here (*stuff money in pocket*), and I'm gonna' go rent a truck and tools. The kind of tools you use to break through a concrete wall. Ha, ha, ha!

Cookie: Don't forget to wear your gloves, baby.

Mr. Big: But it's July, doll!

Cookie: (*Rolls eyes.*) No, no, so you don't leave any fingerprints!

Mr. Big: Oh, yeah, right. I knew that. (*Hands her a wad of money.*) Here--take this money and go buy two airline tickets to South America. Get a flight first thing in the morning.

Cookie: Yeah, right. *Two* tickets. (*Laugh at him surreptitiously.*) Sure honey. With a million bucks we should be able to spring for first class.

Mr. Big: Whatever you want, doll face. And while Ricky's in the slammer, we'll be spendin' the rest of our lives under a palm tree sipping drinks with them little umbrellas in them. Just the two of us, right doll?

Cookie: Yeah, sure, baby. Just the *two* of us.

Mr. Big: (*Gives her a shove.*) Okay, now beat it, I'm busy.

(*They exit UPSTAGE CENTER as lights dim.*)

Scene Three

That evening at the Club Tropicabana (BOTH TABLES). FRED sits at STAGE RIGHT table, and MR. BIG sits at STAGE LEFT table. From CENTER STAGE, RICKY sings a medley and three Cabana Girls dance. (For music suggestions, see #1 and #2 in Production Notes, page 37.)

Ricky: Thank you, thank you ladies and gentlemen. I'm glad you enjoyed those numbers. And now, we'd like to do another number for you . . . (*CELIA enters from UPSTAGE CENTER and walks to STAGE RIGHT table and sits. RICKY'S eyes follow her.*) But first we're gonna' take a little break! We'll be right back ladies and gentlemen.

(*CABANA GIRLS exit BACKSTAGE.*)

(*LUCY and ETHEL enter dressed as men. They stop and look around, notice that there are two empty seats at MR. BIG'S table STAGE LEFT, and then sit down. LUCY sits in middle between ETHEL and MR. BIG.*)

Ricky: (*Goes to STAGE RIGHT table where CELIA sits and kisses her hand.*) Miss De Milo, it's a pleasure to see you again. You're just in time for the next set. (*Snaps his fingers.*) Waitress, waitress, champagne!

(WAITRESS arrives with champagne and three glasses and places them on table.)

Celia: Thank you, Ricky. I'm looking forward to hearing you sing. And remember, call me Celia. *(Winks at him.)*

Ricky: Okay, Celia. I'm going to dedicate the next song to you.

Celia: That's sweet, Ricky. And do you think you can give me a tour of the club later?

Ricky: Sure . . . Celia. Anything you want. In fact, I'm on break. Why not right now?

(Action shifts to STAGE LEFT table, where LUCY, ETHEL, and MR. BIG sit. RICKY and CELIA walk past STAGE LEFT table. LUCY and ETHEL start to follow them but are stopped by MR. BIG.)

Mr. Big: *(Smoking a cigar.)* Say, you boys look familiar. Haven't I seen you somewhere before?

Lucy: *(In man's voice.)* Nooooo, I don't think so.

Ethel: *(In man's voice.)* Yeah, we're new around here.

Mr. Big: Yeah, you're new all right. You boys are from across town. You're the Tortellini Brothers. Don't deny it. I've seen your pictures in the post office.

Lucy: You look kind of familiar, too. What did you say your name was?

Mr. Big: I didn't say. Besides, you know who I am and I'm telling you right now, you're not muscling in on my territory!

(LUCY and ETHEL get wide-eyed as they realize who he is.)

Lucy: *(To MR. BIG.)* Excuse us a minute. *(Grabs ETHEL and drags her a few feet away from table.)* Ethel, do you know who that is? That's Mr. Big, the notorious gangster. He just escaped from prison!

Ethel: Oh Lucy, you did it again! Why do I listen to you? Now what are we going to do?

Lucy: Just play along, Ethel. Remember what we're here for. To keep an eye on Ricky and Fred around Miss De Milo and to see if we can get in the show!

Ethel: Right, right. Okay, I just hope you know what you're doing.

Lucy: Who are these Tortellini Brothers anyway?

Ethel: I don't know, but he sure doesn't like them!

Lucy: Ethel! You don't think he has a gun do you?

(They both turn simultaneously and look at MR. BIG. MR. BIG reaches into his coat. The girls scream and jump. MR. BIG pulls out two huge cigars.)

Mr. Big: Cigars boys? I just got a shipment from Cuba. You ever had a Cuban?

(LUCY and ETHEL approach MR. BIG'S table cautiously.)

Lucy: *(Takes cigar. Speaks in man's voice again.)* Er . . .ah . . .yeah **(Jauntily.)** I had one just last night!

(MR. BIG reaches into his pocket and pulls out a cigarette lighter in the shape of a gun. LUCY and ETHEL scream again.)

Mr. Big: Whatsa' matter? It's only a cigarette lighter. *(He lights LUCY & ETHEL'S cigars.)*

(LUCY and ETHEL sit down, start smoking, and get a little green around the gills.)

Mr. Big: Something wrong boys?

Lucy: I think these were made with last year's crop failure.

Ethel: I don't feel so good.

Mr. Big: I've got the cure for that. Waitress, three shots!

(WAITRESS brings 3 shot glasses and puts them on table.)

(Action shifts to STAGE RIGHT table, where FRED sits. ROSITA is hiding behind a plant or pillar, trying to get FRED'S attention. She holds a large box of rat poison.)

Rosita: Psssssst! Fredo! Psssssst!

(FRED thinks he hears insects and starts swatting.)

Rosita: No, no Senior Fredo. Over here!

Fred: Oh, Rosita! What are you hiding for? Come on out here! Hey--why are you walking around with that rat poison?

Rosita: Oh, I hear the cook say he smell a rat, so I get the poison. But Senior Fredo, I think I smell even bigger rats! Did you see those men in the suits over there? (*Points to table where LUCY, ETHEL, and MR. BIG sit.*) I think they may be from Immigration and Neutralization! I dun't want to be neutralized!

Fred: That's Naturalization, and they don't neutralize you, they deport you. What makes you think they're from INS?

Rosita: I dun't know. I'm just so jumpy. I dun't want to go back to Cuba. (*Pronounced "Cooba."*)

Fred: You worry too much. Ricky will take care of you. Go and work on your next routine with the other Cabana girls. There's nothing to worry about.

Rosita: Okay Fredo, if you say so. But those men they make me very nervous.

Fred: And get rid of that rat poison before the guests see it!

(ROSITA fades UPSTAGE behind plant or pillar but continues eavesdropping on and off throughout rest of show. RICKY and CELIA enter STAGE LEFT and walk past MR. BIG'S table. LUCY and ETHEL pull their hats down so RICKY won't recognize them. He looks at them curiously as he passes by; then shrugs his shoulders. CELIA and RICKY join FRED.)

Fred: Hey Rick! Ooooh, hello Miss De Milo! Where have you two been?

Celia: (*To FRED*) Looking for you handsome.

Ricky: Miss De Milo—I mean, Celia—wanted a tour of the building.

Celia: You were a wonderful tour guide.

Ricky: I've never seen anyone so interested in the storage room!

Celia: A girl can't ever have too much storage space.

Fred: So, have you signed the contracts yet?

Celia: Contracts? What contracts? Oh, the *contracts*. No, but there's plenty of time for that. I want to see some of the show first. When Ricky sings, it really sends me.

Ricky: Oh, I bet you say that to all the Cuban night club entertainers. But you *did* bring the contracts with you, didn't you?

Celia: Oh sure, but let's have some champagne first.

Ricky: Okay, I'll pour. Fred, do you want some? (*RICKY looks in MR. BIG'S direction.*) Say, look over there Fred. Isn't that Mr. Big, the notorious gangster?

Fred: Wow Rick, I think you're right!

Celia: (*Looks panicky; then quickly recovers.*) Mr. Big? Do you really think so? Why Ricky, I didn't know you catered to that type of clientele.

Ricky: I dun't! I've never seen him here before.

Fred: (*Acts fearless.*) Don't worry Miss De Milo. You're safe here with me and Rick.

Celia: (*Tries not to laugh.*) That's soooooo reassuring. I think I'll go powder my nose. (*CELIA exits STAGE LEFT past MR. BIG'S table and gives him a knowing look. FRED and RICKY go from tough guys to wimps.*)

Ricky: Ay yi yi yi yi ! That's a real gangster over there!

Fred: And look at the two hoods he brought with him! They must be his bodyguards!

Ricky: I dun't want no trouble, Fred. Lucky we got a good bouncer at the door.

Fred: Yeah, otherwise Lucy and Ethel would be here too, and that's all we need.

Ricky: Your tellin' me. Ya' know somethin', Fred, those bodyguards look familiar.

Fred: Nah, all hoods look the same. It's the suits.

Ricky: I dun't know, maybe. Oh well, let's get back to business. Did you notice that Celia didn't want to discuss the contracts? You dun't think she's changing her mind, do you?

Fred: You never know with these big Hollywood types. Why don't you sing another number? Show her what you got, Rick.

Ricky: Good idea, Fred. (*RICKY goes to CENTER STAGE and introduces next number. CABANA GIRLS enter from BACKSTAGE and take their places.*)

Ricky: Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to dedicate this next number to Miss Celia B. De Milo!

(*LUCY and ETHEL gasp.*)

Mr. Big: She has him eatin' out of the palm of her hand. (*LUCY and ETHEL react.*) Say, ain't yooz gonna' drink them shots? (*MR. BIG downs the other two shots.*)

(*RICKY sings romantic song as CABANA GIRLS dance. [For music suggestions, see Production Notes, page 37.] MR. BIG gets up and stands in front of STAGE LEFT table.*)

During musical bridge, CELIA makes RICKY dance with her and steers him over to MR. BIG so MR. BIG can pick RICKY'S jacket pocket and get keys to storage room. This action should be obvious to audience. MR. BIG pockets keys and continues standing STAGE LEFT. RICKY and CELIA dance to CENTER STAGE, where RICKY leaves her to sing again. CELIA casually approaches MR. BIG and they whisper together, trying to appear inconspicuous.)

Ricky: Thank you, thank you ladies and gentlemen. The orchestra is going to take a short break, and then we'll be back to do another number. *(RICKY joins FRED at STAGE RIGHT table.)*

(CABANA GIRLS except for ROSITA go BACKSTAGE. ROSITA peeks around plant or pillar and eavesdrops, making it obvious that she sees CELIA and MR. BIG talking together. Then she panics and hides behind band equipment. LUCY and ETHEL also eavesdrop on CELIA and MR. BIG'S conversation.)

Celia: *(Talks in gun moll voice to MR. BIG.)* Did you get them? Did you get the keys?

Mr. Big: *(Patting his pocket.)* Yeah, I got them. Right here.

Celia: Great. We have the keys to the storage room, and I know how to turn off the burglar alarm. Now all we have to do is come back after closing, turn off the alarm, and then waltz right in and get down to business.

Mr. Big: Yeah, this is gonna' be a piece of cake. Say, you better get back to your Latin lover boy and keep him happy till closing.

Celia: Yeah, and what are you gonna' do?

Mr. Big: *(Sarcastically.)* Powder my nose.

Celia: It's gonna' take more than powder to fix that mug.

Mr. Big: With a million bucks, I can get a whole new face! Ha, ha, ha, ha!

(MR. BIG exits STAGE LEFT, and CELIA goes BACKSTAGE. Action shifts to STAGE LEFT table.)

Ethel: Lucy, did you hear what I heard?

Lucy: Yeah, movie mogul heiress my foot! She's in cahoots with Mr. Big!

Ethel: But what do you think they're up to?

Lucy: I don't know. He stole the keys from Ricky so they can break into the club tonight, and she knows how to turn off the burglar alarm. But what are they going to steal? Ricky always takes the money to the bank after closing. There's nothing left to steal.

Ethel: I don't know, but they're up to no good. We've got to warn Ricky! (*Gets up and walks toward CENTER STAGE.*)

Lucy: (*Follows ETHEL and grabs her arm.*) Yeah, but let's not blow our cover yet. Let's find out what they're up to. If Mr. Big thinks we're the Tortellini Brothers, let's *be* the Tortellini Brothers!

Ethel: Oh Lucy, I don't know . . . I've got a bad feeling about this.

Lucy: Look Ethel, if we keep Ricky from getting himself into a big mess, he'll be so grateful, he'll *have* to let us be in the show!

Ethel: If we're still alive to be in the show.

Lucy: Oh Ethel, you worry too much. (*LUCY taps teeth with finger, thinking.*)

Ethel: Really Lucy, how are we going to find out what they're up to?

Lucy: (*Big round eyes; light bulb goes off.*) Ethel, I've got it! Mr. Big likes his booze. We'll get him drunk and pump him for information.

Ethel: Nobody likes to drink alone. He'll expect us to drink with him. He'll drink us under the table.

Lucy: No, no, Ethel. When he's not looking, we'll pour our drinks into that potted plant. (*Points to plant behind STAGE LEFT table.*) Only *he'll* get loaded, and then we'll grill him!

Ethel: And we'll just *pretend* we're drunk. Lucy, how do you come up with this stuff?

Lucy: (*Proudly.*) It's a gift!

Ethel: Shhhhhh . . . here he comes!

Lucy: Okay, now remember, just play along! Waitress! A bottle of Cuban rum!

(*MR. BIG enters from STAGE LEFT and stands behind STAGE LEFT table. Action shifts to STAGE RIGHT table.*)

Fred: Great number, Rick. I'm sure it impressed Miss De Milo.

Ricky: Yeah, Fred, our dreams are about to come true. And for once, Lucy and Ethel aren't here to screw things up! (*They both laugh.*)

(*ROSITA rushes to STAGE RIGHT table in a panic. She still carries rat poison.*)

Rosita: Cousin Ricky, Cousin Ricky!

Fred: What is it now, Rosita? (*Sarcastic.*) Did you see more immigration agents? And what did I tell you about that rat poison? Give me that box before someone sees it! (*FRED takes box and places it under table.*)

Rosita: Yes, yes! I see more agents! That woman, she is immigration. I see her talking to the other immigration man in the suit!

Fred: Oh, Rosita, he's not immigration. He's . . . say Rick, what *was* Celia doing talking to Mr. Big?

Ricky: I dun't know.

(*CELIA enters from BACKSTAGE and goes to STAGE RIGHT table. ROSITA scampers backstage.*)

Celia: (*To Ricky.*) Hi, handsome. You gonna' sing to me some more?

Ricky: Yeah, yeah, sure. Uh, Celia, why was you talkin' to that fella' over there? (*Points to MR. BIG.*)

Celia: (*Cautious.*) Who? Oh, him. Just bumped into him. Idle chit chat. Why?

Fred: Well, you'd better stay away from him. We told you before, that's Mr. Big, the notorious gangster!

Celia: Are you sure? In a respectable place like this? Can't be true, but if it *is* . . . well , *you'll* protect me, won't you, Ricky?

Fred: (*Sarcastic*) Yeah, Rick, won't you?

Ricky: I wun't? Ah . . . (*Suddenly very manly.*) Yeah! I wun't . . . I mean, I will!! Dun't worry Celia, you're safe with me!

Celia: Oh you Latin men are so brave! I'm going to make a phone call to Hollywood. Be right back, hero. (*CELIA exits STAGE LEFT.*)

Ricky: (*Calls to CELIA.*) And if you get in any trouble, you just yell my name! (*To FRED, frantically.*) What am I, crazy? He probably has a gun over there!

Fred: (*In a woman's voice.*) My hero!

Ricky: Shut up Fred! This is serious. I dun't want any trouble.

Fred: It could be worse.

Ricky: Yeah, how's that?

Fred: Lucy could be here.

(Action shifts to STAGE LEFT table.)

Lucy: Okay Ethel, I think Mr. Big's coming back to the table. Now, it's time to put our plan into action! I've got some of Ricky's high octane Cuban rum. Two or three shots of this will knock anyone off their feet! This won't take long.

Ethel: Oh Lucy, I don't know . . .

Lucy: When did I ever let you down?

(ETHEL starts counting on her fingers. Ad libs about times LUCY let her down.)

Lucy: *(Cuts ETHEL off.)* Oh, knock it off. Get ready.

(MR. BIG sits down at STAGE LEFT table.)

Mr. Big: I see yooz two boys are still here.

Lucy: Yeah, yeah , we were just about to have another drink. Care to join us? *(Elbows ETHEL to prompt her to say something.)*

Ethel: Uh . . . yeah! We've got a bottle of Cuban rum!

Mr. Big: Well, Cuban rum! Don't mind if I do, boys.

(LUCY and ETHEL exchange knowing looks.)

Lucy: Okay, I'll pour. *(LUCY pours three shots.)* Cheers!

(They toast. MR. BIG downs his in one gulp and reacts like he just drank gasoline. As MR. BIG'S head spins, LUCY and ETHEL toss their shots behind them into the potted plant, then wipe their mouths on their sleeves.)

Lucy: *(Smacking her lips.)* Ahhhhhhhhhhhh . . . good stuff!

Ethel: Yeah, good stuff! A bit mild though, don't you think?

Lucy: Goes down like soda pop. I could drink this stuff all night.

Mr. Big: *(Looks at LUCY and ETHEL in disbelief.)* Yooz guys must have cast iron guts.

Lucy: What's the matter, this stuff to potent for ya'?

Ethel: Yeah, we can get ya' somethin' else to drink if this stuff's too powerful for ya'.

Mr. Big: Nothin's too powerful for Mr. Big! Gimme another shot!

Lucy: Sure . . . we'll join ya'. (*LUCY pours three more shots.*)

Mr. Big: Salute! (*They toast. MR. BIG downs his shot and starts gasping for air while the women dump their drinks into the potted plant and wipe their mouths with their sleeves. MR. BIG regains his composure and looks at them in amazement.*)

Ethel: How about another?

Lucy: I'm in. How about you Mr. Big? Another round, or have you had enough?

Mr. Big: (*Slurring his speech.*) If yooz two are having another one, I'm having another one.

(*LUCY pours three more shots.*)

Ethel: Up yours! (*They toast.*)

(*MR. BIG drinks his in one gulp and falls off the stool while the women pour their drinks into the plant again and wipe their mouths. MR. BIG struggles back onto the stool.*)

Ethel: Gee, the bottle's almost empty.

Lucy: Yeah, I'll order another. Waitress!

Mr. Big: (*Really drunk*) No, no, not for me, I've had enough! You two ain't human! But I'll tell you somethin'. Ha, ha, ha, I'm feeling pretty good. And you know somethin' else? I like yooz guys. Anybody who can drink like that and still be on their feet is all right in my book.

Lucy: Well thanks, Mr. Big. That's quite a compliment coming from you. So, what's a guy like you doing in a place like this?

Ethel: (*ETHEL is off stool and around front of table to MR. BIG in a flash. She leans into him threateningly as a she delivers next line.*) Yeah, we come here all the time and we've never seen *you* here before.

Mr. Big: Well, I'm gonna' let you in on a little secret. (*Puts his hand on ETHEL'S shoulder.*) Hey--ha, ha, ha--I feel that strap. What are you packing?

Ethel: 38 C cup. (*Returns quickly to her stool.*)

Mr. Big: What?

Lucy: 38 C! Uh . . . C stands for caliber. 38 caliber! (*Stage whisper.*) Ethel, are you crazy?

Ethel: I thought he was talking about my bra strap, not a holster strap!

Lucy: (*To MR. BIG.*) So . . . what's this big secret you wuz gonna' tell us?

Mr. Big: Okay boys, I like you, and I could use a couple of good men like yooz guys. How'd you like to work for me and help me pull off a heist here tonight after the club closes?

Lucy: (*Gasps.*) You're going to rob the club?

Mr. Big: Naw . . . there's nothin' here worth stealin'. We're going to break through the wall after closing and get in next door.

Ethel: You're breaking into a pizzeria?

Mr. Big: The other side.

Lucy: The First National Bank?

Mr. Big: That's right, the bank. The wall of the storage room here is the same wall as the bank's vault. We're going to break through the wall, steal a million bucks, head for South America, and leave Ricky holding the bag. He'll be a suspect anyway, and when we leave evidence in the bank vault pointing to him, no one will even look for us.

Ethel: Wow! That's brilliant!

(*LUCY elbows ETHEL, bringing her back to reality.*)

Mr. Big: Yeah . . . brilliant! So, you boys want in? Cookie and I could use a few good men to help us tonight, and we'll cut you on a piece of the action.

Lucy: Cookie? Who's Cookie?

Mr. Big: Miss De Milo is really my babe, Cookie. She's been setting up the whole heist right under Ricky Bicardi's nose. What a dame. (*Wiping his eyes.*) I've been truly blessed.

Ethel: What if someone was to catch on and call the cops?

Mr. Big: The first sign of cops or any other kind of trouble and I start shootin'. And the first one to get plugged is Ricky Bicardi!

Lucy: Why him?

Mr. Big: I hate that song, "Babalu." If he sings "Babalu," I might just shoot him anyway.

(Ricky takes CENTER STAGE.)

Ricky: The band is back, ladies and gentlemen. And now we'd like to do for you a song called Baba . . .

Lucy: *(Stands up and shouts.)* "Mambo # 5!" Teach us "Mambo # 5!"

(For information on this music, see # 3 in Production Notes, page 37.)

Ricky: Well . . .ah . . . if that's what everyone wants?

Lucy: Yeah! *(Starts clapping and encouraging the audience to clap, too.)* We want "Mambo # 5."

Ricky: Okay, then, "Mambo # 5" it is!

(CAST, with exception of MR. BIG, does "Mambo # 5" along with selected audience members.)

Ricky: Thank you ladies and gentlemen. That was "Mambo # 5." And now the orchestra and I would like to do . . .

Mr. Big: *(Shouts drunkenly.)* A conga!

Ricky: Ha, ha, ha . . . well, no sir, actually right now the orchestra and I would like to do . . .

(MR. BIG gets up and puts his hand into his jacket as if he's going to pull out a gun.)

Ricky: *(Terrified)* We would like to do . . . a conga!

(CAST, with exception of MR. BIG, leads conga and pulls audience members into the line. For music suggestions, see # 5 in Production Notes, page 37.)

Ricky: *(Glancing nervously at MR. BIG.)* Thank you, band. And now we're gonna take a short break ladies and gentlemen. We'll be back after a short break. *(RICKY runs to STAGE RIGHT table where Fred is sitting.)*

Fred: Holy cow Rick, I saw what happened! I thought Mr. Big was going to plug you right there on the dance floor.

Ricky: I know, I know! What I do to him? This whole night isn't going the way I planned. I was supposed to sign a movie deal with Miss De Milo and celebrate later. Instead, I got a gangster threatening to shoot me, another pair of shady looking characters over there, and I can't get Miss De Milo to show me the contract. I tell you Fred, something's fishy in Denmark!

Fred: Rotten in Denmark.

Ricky: There's rotten fish in Denmark?

Fred: Never mind!

(CELIA has been behind the sound equipment watching MR. BIG'S table.)

Mr. Big: Well boys, I think I'll go find Cookie and tell her you guys are in on the action. *(He leaves table and goes BACKSTAGE. LUCY and ETHEL get up and hurry toward STAGE RIGHT table on the following lines.)*

Lucy: Now's our chance, Ethel. We've got to tell Ricky and Fred the whole story and warn them.

Ethel: Yeah! Now's our chance. Come on. Let's . . .

(CELIA enters from BACKSTAGE and heads them off at CENTER STAGE.)

Celia: *(Talks in gun moll voice.)* So, you two are the Tortellini Brothers.

Lucy: That's right. What's it to you, doll face?

(MR. BIG enters from BACKSTAGE but stays in background, eavesdropping, unobserved by CELIA, LUCY, and ETHEL.)

Celia: Oh, tough guy, huh? I like that. Listen, I overheard your conversation with Mr. Big. He's going to offer you peanuts compared to what I'm willing to pay you.

Ethel: What are you talking about?

Celia: Mr. Big's an idiot. I'm pulling off this heist alone. That is, unless you're willing to go in with me fifty-fifty.

Lucy: You're offering us half a million dollars?

Celia: That's right. Half a million is enough for me if I don't have that albatross around my neck. You guys rub out Mr. Big and help me get through that wall and into the vault next door, and I'll give you half. What do you say?

Lucy: But what about Ricky?

Ethel: And Fred?

Celia: Those Banana heads? What about them? That part of the plan stays the same. We set them up to take the fall. They'll be in prison and we'll be living the high life. Think about it, boys. But don't take too long. There's not much time. And don't try to double cross me. I'll tell Mr. Big it

was all your idea and he'll start shooting like a maniac. He's crazy. I better go find my drunken lover before he messes everything up. I'll be back for your answer.

(CELIA exits BACKSTAGE. LUCY and ETHEL, looking scared, scurry behind the STAGE LEFT plant and eavesdrop on MR. BIG's conversation with himself. MR. BIG walks to CENTER STAGE and begins thinking out loud.)

Mr. Big: Find your drunken lover, huh? Well my dear, you may wish you'd never found me! You and the Tortellini Brothers think you're gonna' double cross me? Well, if anyone's doing any double crossing, it's gonna be me! Before this night is over, I'm afraid the *Cookie* just may *crumble!*

(MR. BIG walks BACKSTAGE. Action shifts to STAGE RIGHT table, where RICKY and FRED are sitting, looking nervous. ROSITA enters from BACKSTAGE and walks to STAGE RIGHT table.)

Rosita: Hey cousin Rick. 'Splain to me again what I have to do to become legal citizen.

Ricky: Not now, Rosita. I have no time to 'splain anything.

Fred: Someone better 'splain to me what gangsters are doing in the club. And where our movie contract is!

(LUCY and ETHEL rush from behind plant toward RICKY and FRED.)

Lucy: We'll 'splain it to you!

Ricky: *(Scared.)* Now, now look fellas, we dun't want any trouble from you two Tortilla Brothers.

Ethel: We're the *Tortellini* Brothers.

Lucy: *(Elbows ETHEL.)* Ethel, this is no time to play games!

Ricky: Lucy, is that you?

Fred: Ethel?

Lucy & Ethel: It's us!

Ricky, Fred, & Rosita: Ay Carumba!!

Ricky: Lucy, you have some 'splainin' to do!

Lucy: Eeeeeeeuuuuuuuw . . . now Ricky, listen to what . . .

Ricky: Lucy, I dun't know what you're up to, but whatever it is, save it for some other time! We have enough trouble right now.

Ethel: Yeah Ricky, more than you know.

Fred: What are you babbling about Ethel?

Ricky: Yeah, what's this all about?

(LUCY and ETHEL ad lib rapid explanations at the same time.)

Ricky: Hold it! Hold it! Quiet! *(The women stop talking.)* Now, one at a time.

(LUCY and ETHEL do the same thing all over again.)

Ricky: Stop! *(The women stop.)* Now Lucy, you go first.

(The following explanations are delivered quickly.)

Lucy: We wanted to keep an eye on you and Fred when you were around Miss De Milo . . .

Ethel: Who isn't really Miss Di Milo but Cookie, Mr. Big's girlfriend . . .

Lucy: Who's planning on double crossing Mr. Big tonight by rubbing him out . . .

Ethel: And then she's going to break through the wall of your storage room to get into the bank vault next door . . .

Lucy: And then she plans to steal a million bucks and frame you and Fred . . .

Ethel: And Lucy and I are going to help her!

Ricky, Fred, & Rosita: What?

Ricky: Are you loco?

Fred: Ethel, have you lost your mind?

Rosita: I should have stayed in Havana!

Lucy: Oh, we're not really going to help her. It's a long story. Right now we have to think of some way to stop her!

Ethel: Or else you boys will go to jail!

Rosita: And I'll be deported!

Lucy: And Ethel and I will be all alone. Wahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! (*LUCY and ETHEL hug and cry loudly.*)

Fred: All right, all right! Take it easy. We'll just call the police!

Lucy: No! No police! The first sign of police and Ricky gets shot! That's what Mr. Big said.

Ricky: Why me?

Lucy: Mr. Big hates "Babalu."

Ricky: What's wrong with "Babalu?"

Ethel: Who cares! Whatever you do, just don't sing "Babalu!"

Ricky: Dun't worry. No "Babalu." Now, I want you girls to stay away from Mr. Big and Celia, or Cookie, or whatever her name is. It's too dangerous. You two have gotten yourselves into enough trouble for one night. I'll think of something. (*Thinks for a moment.*) Say, Fred, I have an idea.

Fred: Make it a good one.