



# "Fishin' for Trouble"

## A Whale of a Fatal Tale

by Marylou Ambrose & Tony Schwartz

An Audience-Participation Murder Mystery-Comedy  
*By Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose*  
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Dear Murder Mystery Fan:

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

1. FAQ's about our audience-participation murder mysteries
2. One complete murder mystery script that may be printed and photocopied for cast members
3. Suggested script for master of ceremonies
4. Suggestions for a Christmas version of this show.
5. Production Notes (properties, costumes, music, helpful hints)
6. Labels for Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks box & Doctor Fluke's book.
7. Sample news release and synopsis for program

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 productions. 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 work in close proximity to 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 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. 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!

A few words about "mingling": When we started performing our mystery dinner shows, the entire cast mingled with the audience during the pre-dinner cocktail hour. We've stopped doing this for several reasons. First, if a venue doesn't feed the actors dinner (and not all of them do), we can't expect our cast to come early to mingle and then sit around for hours waiting to perform. Second, when actors mingle, they risk giving away too many details about the show, especially since the audience's questions aren't always the most astute. "So, who committed the murder?" is a common one. We prefer to have a couple key cast members mingle for 10 minutes before each show, but only to look over the audience and choose good candidates for the interactive parts.

### ***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 agenda 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 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 Theater Owner:

This tried-and-true format keeps the evening running smoothly and everyone happy—the audience, the restaurant or theater 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: 15-30 minutes.* **(NOTE: You may choose to omit this. See “A few words about mingling,” above.)**

**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 three prizes.

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

***Fishin’ for Trouble***  
***(A whale of a fatal tale)***

## Cast of Characters:

**Nautical Nick:** Entertainer at annual fundraiser for International Feed the Whales Foundation.

**The Mermaids:** Nick's backup singers, Candi & Bambi

**Sally Crouthers:** Founder & national chairperson of International Feed the Whales Foundation

**Peter St. Croix:** Sally's husband, CEO of Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks Corp.

**Captain Dick Rudder:** Pete's friend & captain of Feed the Whales fishing fleet

**Countess Stella de Marina:** Major benefactor of International Feed the Whales Foundation

**Dr. Myrna Fluke:** Famous whaleologist and head of research for International Feed the Whales Foundation

**Waiter or Waitress:** Doubles as sound person

NOTE: *Fishin' for Trouble* may be converted to a Christmas show with the following easy changes:

- Change the title to ?????????
- Change Nautical Nick's name to Jolly Nick
- Change The Mermaids' name to The Elfettes
- Change MC's line on page 00 to name of Christmas show.
- Change news release & program copy names as appropriate.
- Change the music on page 00 to Jingle Bell Rock & Ho, Ho, Ho & a Bottle of Rum.
- Change The Elfettes' and Nick's costumes to something Christmasy.
- Change set decorations to something Christmasy.

## Setting

**TIME:** The present

**PLACE:** The entire play takes place in a hotel banquet room, where the International Feed the Whales Foundation is holding its yearly fundraiser. Furniture is minimal: a high table with one stool on one side of the stage (where COUNTESS sits for most of play) and a podium (optional) on the other side of the stage. If a podium isn't available, actors can simply deliver their lines from a mic at CENTER STAGE or one side of the stage. A **small table DOWNSTAGE CENTER** holds a goldfish bowl filled with checks and money and a tray of fish sticks cut up in small pieces with toothpicks in them. (See **Production Notes** for details on properties, set decor, and sound effects.)

**NOTE:** This play was written to be performed in a variety of venues, but not all of them will have a real backstage area. Consequently, the script usually only designates *when* the actors enter and exit, not whether they enter and exit stage right, left, or center. That's up to the director and depends on the venue. In our shows, we hang a curtain upstage center as a backdrop, so the actors often enter and exit upstage, from either side of the curtain. However, they also enter and exit stage right and stage left.

**Master of Ceremonies:** Welcome to the (Insert your company's name) production of "Fishin' for Trouble (A Whale of a Fatal Tale)." 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. 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 in more detail after the show.

And now—on with the show!

## Fishin' for Trouble (A whale of a Fatal Tale)

*The show begins with NICK, BAMBI, and CANDI at CENTER STAGE. The COUNTESS STELLA DE MARINA sits at a high table on one side of the stage.*

**Nick:** Okay ladies, get ready to perform. I'm sure Miss Crouthers wants us to get this party started.

**Bambi:** But I'm not ready, Nick. I've lost my lucky pantyhose.

**Candi:** How can you have lucky pantyhose? Just wear another pair.

**Bambi:** But . . . .

**Nick:** Not now, ladies, we need to get started. (*addresses audience*) Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the annual fundraiser for the International Feed the Whales Foundation. I'm Nautical Nick, these lovely ladies are the Mermaids, and we're here this evening to entertain you. So let's begin the festivities!

*Sound cue: NICK and the ladies sing two numbers: "Fins" and "Another Saturday Night." They encourage the audience to sing along on the second number. When the song is over, NICK introduces SALLY.*

**Nick:** And now ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce the founder and national chairperson of the International Feed the Whales Foundation, Miss Sally Crouthers! (*encourage audience to applaud; NICK, CANDI, and BANBI exit*)

*SALLY enters and walks behind podium. She's eating a fish stick and licking her fingers.*

**Sally:** Oh, yum, these Fish Sticks are so delicious, they're habit forming! Greetings, greetings one and all, and welcome to the annual fundraiser for the International Feed the Whales Foundation! I'm Sally Crouthers, the founder and national chairperson. Many people only know me as Gloria from the 1970's sitcom *Fall of the Family*. But that was the old me. My life has become so much richer in the last few years!

Let me tell you a little story: It all started 15 years ago when my husband and I were on a whale watching trip off Cape Cod. We were having lunch--an Italian submarine sandwich with onions, black olives, hot peppers, salami (*drools just thinking about it*) -- when I suddenly realized that bastard at the deli had slipped me American cheese instead of the imported provolone I was so lusting for! I freaked out, and in my anger and frustration, I tossed the sandwich overboard! (I hung onto the bag of chips.) To my amazement, the whales in the distance started swimming for the boat! Everyone started screaming -- they thought the whales would capsize the boat! But it wasn't us they were after. No, they wanted that submarine sandwich! They began fighting over it. And that day, then and there, I realized my mission in life. I was put on this earth to feed the starving whales! A monumental task that could not be achieved without the help and support of all you Foundation members. (*claps and encourages audience to join in*)

And now, at this time, I'd like to introduce a man whose tireless dedication, whose commitment to the cause, and whose vision of a more whale-friendly world has helped make all this possible. My inspiration, a true gentleman and scholar, the CEO of Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks Corporation, the suave and debonair man I fell in love with (sorry ladies, he's taken!) . . . my husband, Peter St. Croix!

*PETER enters dressed in a pirate costume. SALLY does a double take and looks embarrassed.*

**Sally:** (*stage whisper*) That's suave and debonair? Where's your tux?

**Pete:** (*to audience, trying to cover up*) This is the way the world recognizes me -- as Pirate Pete.

**Sally:** (*stage whisper*) But not tonight, not at the annual fundraiser!

**Pete:** (*Stage whisper*) All right, I'll explain, cupcake. (*to audience*) The truth is, I've been shooting a new Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks TV commercial all day. My secretary lost my tux -- she's still looking for it. I didn't want to be late, (*to SALLY*) so here I am, muffin!

**Sally:** Are you really going to stay that way all night?

**Pete:** Don't worry darling, as soon as my secretary arrives with my tux, I'll change. Let's not let this little mishap ruin tonight's festivities. Ha, ha, ha (*heartily laugh*).



**Sally:** (*looks at him lovingly*) Okay, sweetie, anything you say. Now, before we go any further . . .

**CAPTAIN RUDDER** *enters from behind audience, a pint in his hand, obviously slightly drunk.*

**Captain Rudder:** (*singing*) Yo, ho, ho and a bottle of booze, Captain Rudder needs to find him a flooze. (*tickles COUNTESS under chin; she looks horrified.*) Any old port in the storm, missy! (*heads for podium*)

**Sally:** (*embarrassed, upset*) Oh, my God, Peter, he's making obscene comments to the Countess, of all people! She's our major benefactor! You promised me you wouldn't bring him here tonight! He's drunk as usual and making a spectacle of himself!

**Pete:** It's a special occasion, dear, and he's my friend. Don't be such a party pooper!

**Captain Rudder:** (*muscles in between SALLY and PETE*) Capt'n Dick Rudder. I'll never steer ya wrong! (*bows gallantly*) At yer service, Silly.

**Sally:** That's *Sally*.

**Captain Rudder:** Yeah, whatever. Hey Pete, time to go feed them whales?

**Pete:** Ha, ha, uh . . . not now, Dick. We'll talk later. But right now, I . . .

**Captain Rudder:** (*goes up to audience member*) Yup, it's quite a sight to see us feedin them whales. When we gets down to that there beach, and them there whales spot them there submarine sandwiches . . .

**Pete:** (*puts hand over Rudder's mouth*) Yes, er, maybe it *is* time to go discuss our next whale feeding expedition -- over a cup of strong, black coffee. (*hustles RUDDER backstage; RUDDER protests*).

**Sally:** (*flustered, trying to cover up*) Uh . . . now I'd like to introduce our guest of honor for the evening, the Countess Stella de Marina, one of the most generous supporters of the International Feed the Whales Foundation. Countess, would you be kind enough to step up to the podium and say a few words? (*COUNTESS goes to podium. SALLY steps to the side.*)

**Countess:** (*speaks with slight Italian-type accent and is very flighty.*) Thank you, thank you. I'm very happy to be here tonight helping to support an organization I truly believe in. As all you other filthy rich people in the audience know, countesses are always in great demand at benefits. Why, this week alone I attended the Institute for Incredible Diseases bike-a-thon, the annual cocktail party for People Against Cruelty to Crustaceans, and the opening night gala for the Flying Folk Dancers of Tasmania. I've been so busy! (*fans herself*) Oh my, just give me a

minute to catch my breath! Now, where was I? Oh yes, I'm so happy to be here at the (*confused; looks at SALLY for help*). Just where *am* I dear?

**Sally:** The International Feed the Whales Foundation, Countess. (*sucking up*) And may I say you're looking especially radiant tonight. (*to audience*) Isn't she wonderful? Just how does she do it? (*get them to clap.*) And may I also say, we're just thrilled to have you making such a generous donation tonight. The Hopeless Diamond . . . remember?

**Countess:** Hopeless? Diamond? (*finally remembers*) Of course, of course! Now, I wonder where I put that thing? (*rummages through her purse while SALLY looks worried.*)

**COUNTESS** pulls out several other things first, including a medicine bottle.) Oh, there that is! I've been looking all over for my cholesterol medicine! It was stuck to a fish stick! (*pulls out fish stick and takes a bite*) You know, I heard a rumor that there's a *secret ingredient* in these Fish Sticks -- maybe that's why you can't eat just one! (*puts fish stick back in purse; finally finds diamond*) Here it is! (*pulls out a jewelry box and shows everyone the diamond. SALLY'S eyes get like saucers.*)

**Sally:** Uh, would you like to give that to me for safekeeping, Countess?

**Countess:** (*stuffs box back into purse and then wanders absently back to her seat.*) Oh, that won't be necessary, dear. I'll just hold onto it until later.

**Sally:** (*Returns to podium. Obviously nervous about diamond, but doesn't want to push the issue.*) Well, uh, I guess now it's time to introduce our other special guest for the evening, someone who actually needs no introduction, one of the world's leading whaleologists, Dr. Myrna Fluke! (*SALLY steps aside.*)

**Myrna:** (*Enters from BACKSTAGE and goes to podium*) I'm so thrilled to be here tonight and to announce that I've been named head of research for such a worthy organization as The International Feed the Whales Foundation. You know, from the first time I saw Flipper on TV as a child, I knew that marine mammals were my calling. And being named head of research is the culmination of a life's dream! Oh, by the way, since I'm up here I might as well plug my book that's been on the NY Times bestseller list for 40 weeks (soon to be a major motion picture starring Russell Crowe!) (*takes book out of lab coat pocket and shows audience*) -- "Moby's Dick, the Intimate Portrait of a Sperm Whale."

**Countess:** (*stands up*) Oh, I just love romance novels! (*rummages through bag and produces book. Goes up to MYRNA.*) Would you please autograph my copy?

**Myrna:** I'd be happy to. (*signs book*)

**COUNTESS** goes back to her seat. **PETER** and **CAPTAIN RUDDER** enter from **BACKSTAGE** and listen to **MYRNA**. Make sure audience can see them eavesdropping.

**Myrna:** But enough about me. Let's talk about my work! As the new head of research for the International Feed the Whales Foundation, my first task is to investigate the whale's insatiable appetite for submarine sandwiches. To do this, I'll need to study the feeding frenzy first hand,

and so I'm delighted to say that I'll be putting out to sea with Pirate Pete and Captain Rudder on their next feeding expedition!

**Peter:** What?!

**Captain Rudder:** She said she'd be "putting out" for us at sea. Heh heh heh . . .

**Peter:** She said putting out *to* sea. She wants to come with us to feed the whales!

**Captain Rudder:** (*approaching MYRNA*) Quarters is tight aboard ship, Ma'am. But don't you fret none, you can bunk with me, heh, heh, heh . . .

**Myrna:** I'd rather sleep in the bilge with the rats!

**Countess:** (*stands*) Oh, this is just like a seafaring romance novel! The heroine stowing away aboard ship, the handsome captain stripped to the waist, crushing the heroine to his manly chest, ripping her bodice . . .

**Myra:** (*starts to get excited, then catches herself and cuts COUNTESS off*) Countess, please! No one's ripping anyone's bodice on this expedition! I'm a whaleologist, not a sexologist!

**Countess:** (*maybe not as flighty as she looks*) Whatever . . . we'll see.

**Peter:** (*winking at RUDDER. as if trying to get him to play along*) Dick, a ship at sea is a very dangerous place, too dangerous for the Doctor. I'm sure that as Captain of the whale feeding vessel, you'll have no choice but to forbid her from coming with us!

**Captain Rudder:** (*still thinking about what COUNTESS said, so he says the next few lines dreamily, to himself*) Manly chest, ripping her bodice . . . Oh, uh, yeah, dangerous, Missy. No place for a dainty lady like yourself. Besides, womens on ships is bad luck. I'm afraid you'll have to stay ashore.

**Myrna:** But how can I proceed with my research if I can't observe the feeding?

**Peter:** We'll take some pictures for you. No, Doctor Fluke, I'm afraid joining us on our next feeding expedition is absolutely out of the question!

**Myrna:** Well, I'm afraid you can't stop me. Sally herself gave me permission. And since she's the head of the Foundation and owns the Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks fishing fleet -- which makes her your boss, Captain Rudder -- I'm afraid you have no choice but to take me along.

**Peter:** Nope. Sorry. Can't be done. End of story.

**SALLY goes up to PETER and joins in the conversation.**

**Sally:** Peter, darling, I see you've been getting acquainted with Doctor Fluke.

**Peter:** Pancake, what's all this nonsense about Doctor Fluke joining us on our next feeding expedition? Tell her she can't go.

**Sally:** But Peter, how can she conduct her research?

**Peter:** (*offhandedly*) That's *her* problem. (*catches himself*) I mean, it's dangerous. She can't go.

**Captain Rudder:** (*to MYRNA*) You just stay on dry land Missy, and when I return, we can have a little rendezvous (*pronounces it ren-dez-vus*) together, just the two of us, and I'll tell you all about it.

**MYRNA:** *looks disgusted and indignant.*

**Peter:** That's what I'm afraid of.

**Countess:** Oh, this is so romantic! I'm tempted to make a play for the Captain myself!

**Sally:** Peter, I'm afraid this is one of those times when I'm going to have to exercise my authority. The Doctor goes.

**Peter:** Women aboard ship are bad luck. The Captain said so himself. That's why we never take you.

**Sally:** You never take me because I get seasick. I'm happy just to stay on dry land knowing those poor, hungry whales are being fed by you and the Captain. That's all the reward I need. But the Doctor needs to complete her research. She goes and that's final!

**Peter:** But pumpkin . . .

**Sally:** Now Peter, stop whining.

**Myrna:** (*smugly, because she won*) Yeah, boys, cheer up. Let's party!

**Peter:** (*sarcastically*) Yeah, well, we can't party without music. Where's Nautical Nick? Shouldn't he be entertaining our guests?

**Sally:** You're absolutely right, dear. I'll go find him. (*NICK enters from BACKSTAGE*) Wait -- there he is. Nautical Nick, can you do a song for us?

**Nick:** Well, I'd like to, but I seem to have misplaced the Mermaids. They must be in the ladies' room. As soon as they come back, we'll sing something. Oh, there they are. We'll get right to it.

**SALLY exits BACKSTAGE; PETER AND RUDDER exit STAGE RIGHT OR LEFT. NICK is joined CENTER STAGE by the Mermaids, BAMBI and CANDI. They both carry tote bags.**

**Nick:** Where have you two been?

**Bambi:** In the gift shop. Buying new panty hose to replace the ones that are missing.

**Candi:** They just vanished from her costume bag. You know, I should check mine, too, maybe there's a thief around.

**Nick:** A pantyhose thief? Look, I'm sure you just forgot them.

**Countess:** (*produces a ripped pair of pantyhose from her bag and waves them*) You can borrow mine, dear, I always carry a spare! (*eats more fish sticks, licks fingers, and wipes them on pantyhose*)

**Bambi:** Uh . . . thanks anyway, but I don't think we're the same size.

**Candi:** (*looks in her bag*) Hey, wait a minute, my ultra push-up wonder bra is missing!

**Nick & Bambi:** What?!?

**Candi:** My bra is missing. It's not in my costume bag!

**Countess:** (*rummaging in bag*) I think I have a spare . . .

**Bambi & Candi:** (*cutting her off*) We're not the same size!

**Nick:** You two are losing it. Look, forget the underwear. We have to sing. Miss Crouthers is bugging us to sing another number.

**Bambi:** I'm sick of entertaining. And I'm sick of the Poconos. (*or insert the name of your area if it's in the snow belt.*)

**Candi:** Yeah, I'm tired of shoveling snow.

**Nick:** Me, too. And if everything goes according to plan, this will be the last time any of us have to do this Nautical Nick and the Mermaids crap.

**Bambi:** Are you sure this plan of yours will work?

**Nick:** Have I ever failed you?

**Bambi & Candi:** Before or after the Viagra?

**Nick:** Will you two shut up! Now, we have to sing.

**Candi:** Not till I find my lucky bra. It lifts and separates (*make "lift-and-separate" hand gestures*).. Come on Bambi, let's check our room.

*They exit BACKSTAGE, and NICK is approached by PETER and CAPTAIN RUDDER.*

**Peter:** Nautical Nick, shouldn't you be singing or something?

**Nick:** Uh, yeah . . . The girls just went to freshen up a bit, and as soon as they get back, we'll sing a song for everyone. But while we're waiting (*drags PETER to podium or mic*), why don't you tell the audience about Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks. A true American success story!

**Peter:** Well, I don't want to bore the audience with business talk, but if you insist! When I was a boy growing up Catholic, my Mom cooked fish every Friday, and I hated it. But my Dad used to say, "Son, eat your fish. It's brain food. You'll be the smartest in your class." So I began to eat my fish. Before long, I was honor roll student! After graduating from the Culinary Institute with high honors, majoring in seafood, I had a vision. What if everyone in the country ate fish? We'd be the smartest nation in the world!

**Nick:** Wow! The smartest nation in the world. Why, maybe the smartest on the planet, too! You know, as a kid I never ate fish.

**Countess:** You know, neither did I . . .

**Peter:** No surprises there.

**Nick:** But thanks to you, I love it now.

**Countess:** Me, too!

**Peter:** (*rolls eyes*) Too little, too late . . .

**Nick:** But starting a business is hard. Where did you come up with the money to start the Pirate Pete empire?

**Peter:** Well, Nautical Nick, my vision would never have become a reality if Sally hadn't walked into the seafood buffet and into my life.

**Nick:** Was it one of those "all-you-can-eat" buffets?

**Peter:** As a matter of fact, it was. As I recall, things slowed down a bit and I had time to leave the kitchen and mingle with the guests. Suddenly, I gazed over the salad bar, and there she was, sucking on a king crab leg, a mound of devoured crab carcasses on the plate in front of her. Our eyes locked and . . .

**Nick:** It was love at first sight?

**Peter:** For me it was. The minute I saw her I knew what I wanted . . . I mean, I knew I wanted her forever.

**Nick:** So it was Sally who helped you start your business?

**Peter:** Yes, you might say she was the wind beneath my wings. And speaking of Sally, I need to talk to her. Excuse me, Nick. (*exits BACKSTAGE*)

**Nick:** Yeah, I've got to go find the Mermaids.

*MYRNA walks onstage as NICK is leaving.*

**Myrna:** Nautical Nick, do you take requests?

**Nick:** Sorry, not now . . . (*exits*)

*CAPTAIN RUDDER joins MYRNA.*

**Captain Rudder:** Hello my little angelfish. Did I mention that you shiver my timber?

**Myrna:** (*girlishly*) Why Captain, I'm . . . how dare you! (*goes to slap him*)

**Captain Rudder:** (*grabs her hand before it connects to his face*) Oh boy, I likes me women feisty. But yer gonna have to curb that temper if we're gonna bunk together.

**Myrna:** Does that mean you've accepted the fact that I'm going to sea with you?

**Captain Rudder:** No, that means I've decided to invite myself up to yer hotel room, heh heh heh . . .

**Myrna:** Captain, you have a one track mind. Is sex all you think about?

**Captain Rudder:** Long sea voyages can do that to ya. So - - why all the interest in the whale feedin'?

**Myrna:** I've already told everyone that studying whales has been my life-long passion. It was a wonderful stroke of luck to have the International Feed the Whales Foundation agree to fund my research. Now, I'll be able to not only study the feeding habits of whales, but also the mystery of why they beach themselves.

**Captain Rudder:** (*alarmed*) Beach themselves? Uh, do they do that?

**Myrna:** Why, Captain, you of all people should be aware of that phenomenon! It's such a tragedy, all those majestic mammals lying helpless on the beach.

**Captain Rudder:** Oh, yeah, I guess I did see that on National Geographic Explorer.

**Myrna:** Anyway, I'm sure some people think my research this is a waste of time and money, that there are more important things to study than whales. For example, why the nation's cholesterol levels are off the charts. I agree that's important to study, too. In fact, my doctor just informed me that my cholesterol is way too high! (*eats fish stick off tray, then says next line to herself*) I guess I'll have to lay off the curly fries. Anyway, I don't have time to find the solution to saturated fat -- maybe Oprah will tackle that next. One passion at a time, I say, and my true passion is whales.

**Captain Rudder:** If you like fish so much, why don't you get a goldfish. It's a lot safer.

**Countess:** Goldfish? (*rummages in purse*) I think I might have one . . .

**Myrna & Captain:** Never mind!!!!

**Myrna:** Why would studying whales not be safe?

*PETER enters from BACKSTAGE.*

**Peter:** (*stage whispers to RUDDER*) Loose lips sink ships, Captain.

**Captain Rudder:** I didn't say nothin.

**Peter:** Doctor, I think my wife is looking for you.

**Myrna:** (*suspiciously*) Really? We'll talk some more later on, Captain.

**Peter:** Dick, we can't let Doctor Fluke feed the whales with us. If she finds out the truth, we're in big trouble.

**Captain Rudder:** I know, but how do we stop her without drawing attention to ourselves?

**Peter:** I don't know. But we have to do something before she learns too much.

**Captain Rudder:** I know, but I don't want her to get hurt. I kinda like her.

**Peter:** This is no time to get sentimental. I'm not losing the entire Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks empire because you've got a crush on The Little Mermaid!

*SALLY enters.*

**Sally:** Peter, darling, you two look like you're having a serious discussion. (*sarcastically*) Is that actually possible for the Captain?

*(The next lines go very fast)*

**Captain Rudder:** Pardon my askin', Silly . . .



**Sally:** It's Sally, not Silly -- Sally!

**Peter:** Calm down, Sally. You're acting silly.

**Sally:** I'm not acting silly!

**Captain Rudder:** Yes you are, Ma'am. You're acting very sally, Silly.

**Sally:** See? There he goes again calling me Silly.

**Peter:** I believe he called you Sally, Sally.

**Captain Rudder:** Yeah, I definitely called you Sally, silly.

**Sally:** There he goes again. He's always calling me silly when my name is Sally. I keep telling him it's Sally but he keeps calling me silly. I know my own name. Everyone does. I was a famous TV star! And he can't get it right. It's Sally, Sally, Sally, not silly, silly, silly. Get it right! There'll be no more calling me Sally! It's Silly!

**Captain Rudder:** Right! Silly it is. I got it now. Heh heh heh . . .

**Sally:** (*screams*) Watch your step my good Captain! The only reason you have a job is because my husband insists on it. But just remember who has the final say around here. Me! Push me too far and the only boat you'll be commanding is a toy boat in your bathtub! Do I make myself clear, Captain?

**Captain Rudder:** Loud and clear, *Sally*. Just why is it you don't like me?

**Sally:** Because you're rude, nasty, insubordinate, a drunk, a womanizer, and you smell like dead fish. But for some reason, my husband likes you, so I let him keep you around. But push me too far Captain, and I'll . . .

**Peter:** Right, dear. He gets the message. *Don't you Captain?*

**Captain Rudder:** Right. I'll, uh . . . get myself all shipshape for ya, Ma'am. You'll see.

**Sally:** I won't hold my breath. Oh! All this shouting has made me dizzy. I need my cholesterol medication. I don't understand it. How can I have high cholesterol when I eat such a healthy diet? All that fish! I'm just one of millions of Americans with high cholesterol, and the doctors can't seem to figure out why!

**NICK enters from BACKSTAGE and lurks in the background, eating a fish stick and eavesdropping. The following is a "private" conversation between PETER and SALLY.**

**Peter:** Yes, it is a mystery. But I'm sure someone out there eating our "brain food" will solve the nation's cholesterol problem. The entire country is "hooked" on Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks. Ever since we began adding our *secret ingredient* to the fish sticks, sales have skyrocketed! Our fish sticks are the number one food item in the country! People can't get enough of them. They're addicted!

**Sally:** Peter, why won't you tell me what the secret ingredient is? Don't I have the right to know?

**Peter:** The less you know, the better. There are corporate spies everywhere. Don't think for a minute that Mrs. Paul wouldn't love to get her hands on our secret!

**Captain Rudder:** Yeah, yer better off stayin ignorant, Si . . . ally. Heh heh heh.

**Peter:** Come dear, I'll help you find your cholesterol medication. (*PETER and SALLY exit BACKSTAGE*)

*NICK walks CENTER STAGE eating a fish stick. He joins CAPTAIN RUDDER.*

**Nick:** Captain, I have to hand it to you folks at Pirate Pete's. These fish sticks are delicious. And I used to hate fish.

**Captain Rudder:** Uh, yeah, ain't they somethin'?

**Nick:** I eat them all the time. So do the Mermaids. Everyone says we should eat more fish because it's good for your heart, so I eat Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks every day. But my cholesterol is through the roof! The Mermaids', too! The doctors can't seem to get it under control. Just what's in these fish sticks anyway?

**Captain Rudder:** Fish.

**Nick:** No, I mean that secret ingredient I've heard about? What is it?

**Captain Rudder:** How do you know about a secret ingredient?

**Nick:** I get around. I hear things.

**Captain Rudder:** Well, I don't know nothin' about no secret ingredient.

*MYRNA enters and joins them.*

**Myrna:** (*looks worried*) Say, I seem to have lost something -- a little vial of liquid that was in my pocket. It was part of an experiment I'm doing on the poisonous Pocono Blowfish. (*If your company is located near a body of water, substitute a local name instead of Pocono.*)

**Captain Rudder & Nick:** *(look at each other and shake heads)* We haven't seen anything like that.

**Countess:** Wait! Let me look! *(starts rummaging through purse again)*

**All:** Never mind!

**Myrna:** I'd hate to think that vial is lying around somewhere. It's highly toxic!

**Captain Rudder:** Avast there, Missy. Maybe it's in your room. How about we steer a course back there and search for it together?

**Myra:** With you at the helm, we'd probably run aground. *(searches her pockets again.)* Oh well, it's probably just in my other lab coat.

**Nick & Captain Rudder:** We'll keep our eyes open for it. *(they both exit BACKSTAGE)*

**Myrna:** The Captain is quite a character.

**Nick:** I think he's harmless.

**Myrna:** I hope so. *(changing subject; trying to be friendly)* So, what about you Nick? Have you always entertained at fundraising events?

**BAMBI and CANDI walk onstage.**

**Nick:** No, this is just getting us by until there's a revival of the music we used to do.

**Myrna:** Wait, let me guess -- you were disco performers.

**NICK, CANDI, and BAMBI strike a John Travolta pose.**

**Myrna:** You're expecting a disco revival?

**Nick:** It could happen!

**Myrna:** Don't hold your breath.

**Nick:** *(staring at COUNTESS)* Actually, Reggae and Calypso are music to my ears these days. Maybe I'll head south. Maybe the tropics, the Caribbean. *(starts daydreaming)*

**Myrna:** Good idea. Try Reggae or Calypso. I don't think there's much of a market for disco music in the Caribbean.

**Nick:** *(snaps out of daydream)* Uh, what about you? Why all the interest in whales?

**Myrna:** It's my passion! I've wanted to study whales since I was a little girl. One day, I saw on the news how a whole pod of whales beached themselves. No one could explain why. And it's happening more and more! From the first time I observed this strange phenomenon, I decided to make it my quest to solve the mystery.

**Nick:** Yeah, well, if I see any beached whales in the Caribbean, I'll call you. But about the only thing I plan on beaching there is myself!

**Myrna:** (*fervently*) But it goes way beyond the beachings. I want to study everything I can about whales. I want to be the world's leading whaleologist! Being connected with Sally's International Feed the Whales Foundation is a dream come true. It will give me access to information and funding to continue my work! And my first mission is to discover why the whales love Sally's submarine sandwiches so much!

**Nick:** Well, forgive me for being nosy, but didn't I overhear Pirate Pete and Captain Rudder say you can't go to sea with them to study the feedings?

**Myrna:** Yes, they did said that, but Sally straightened them out. Still, there's something very strange going on. You'd think Pirate Pete would *want* me aboard, along with a camera crew. I mean, everyone loves whales. Shamu is a household name! My research would only bring more attention to Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks. I don't get it. It's like he doesn't *want* the publicity.

**Nick:** (*to himself*) I can understand not wanting to draw attention to yourself.

**Bambi:** Excuse us, Doctor Fluke, but we need to talk to Nick. Alone.

**Myrna:** Of course.

**MYRNA exits BACKSTAGE.**

**Bambi:** Nick, something strange is going on.

**Candi:** Yeah, this can't be a coincidence.

**Nick:** What are you talking about?

**Bambi:** Now my lucky panties are missing!

**All three clam up suddenly and turn in unison to look at COUNTESS, who this time is only studying the Fish Sticks box.**

**Countess:** (*mumbling to herself as she runs her finger down list of ingredients*) Brown dye #19, partially hydrogenated soybean oil, sodium benzoate as a preservative . . . but no secret ingredient . . .

**Nick:** Your panties are missing?

**Bambi:** Yeah, from our room.

**Candi:** Right out of her costume bag.

**Nick:** Wow. There must be a thief around here. Doctor Fluke was missing a vial out of her pocket, too. But who would steal your panties?

**Bambi:** I don't know.

**Candi:** I don't want to know. Let's just get out of here. This place gives me the creeps.

**Bambi:** Yeah, something fishy is going on. Besides, I can't perform without my lucky panties!

**Nick:** You can't leave, we have to sing.

**Candi:** Let someone else sing! Let's just get out of here!

**Nick:** Look, we'll be out of here soon enough. But not until we get what we really came for. In a few minutes, the Countess is going to present Sally with the Hopeless Diamond, the most valuable jewel in the world! She's auctioning it off to fund the Whale Foundation. But not if we get our hands on it first! We can sell it on the black market and make enough to disappear in the Caribbean forever.

**Bambi:** Yeah, yeah, I know that's the plan, but we're having second thoughts. What if we get caught?

**Nick:** Don't worry, ladies. I have it all figured out. Before long, we'll be beach bums. No more cold weather, no more shoveling snow, no more winter coats! Sun and fun! Palm trees, sailing, drinks with little umbrellas in them! Great music! Mambos, sambas, and conga lines! No more cold, cold, cold, ladies! It'll be hot, hot, hot! Everybody conga!

**Sound cue:** *"Hot, Hot, Hot."* **CANDI and BAMBI get audience up to conga. NICK exits BACKSTAGE.**

**After conga is done, CANDI and BAMBI exit BACKSTAGE and PETER and CAPTAIN RUDDER walk onstage.**

**Peter:** (*angry*) You better sober up, Captain Ahab, before you say anything else that you shouldn't.

**Captain Rudder:** I'm sober. Sort of. And I ain't givin' away no trade secrets.

**Peter:** Not yet, but I don't trust you. Stay away from Doctor Fluke before she works her womanly charms on you and you spill the beans.

**Captain Rudder:** She tried to slap me. I think she likes me.

**Peter:** If anyone finds out the truth, we're dead in the water.

**Captain Rudder:** Yer right about that. Imagine if people knew the truth -- that we're not going out to sea to feed the whales, that we don't even have a fishing fleet! Hell, the one boat we do own, the one I live on, ain't even got an engine and ain't left the port in 10 years!

**Peter:** Shut up!

**Captain Rudder:** Yup, imagine if they knew that we take them submarine sandwiches to the beach, lure the whales to shore, and then harpoon them!

**Peter:** I told you to shut up!

**Captain Rudder:** And that we take the blubber and put it in the fish sticks!

**Peter:** I'm warning you . . .

**Captain Rudder:** *There's* your secret ingredient! But like I said, I don't know nothin'.

**Peter:** It won't be a secret much longer if you don't shut your trap!

**Captain Rudder:** No wonder there's a cholesterol epidemic in this country! I'll bet we're the only two people in the US of A that don't eat frozen whale blubber! Pirate Pete's Frozen Fish Sticks? Yuk!

**Peter:** If you get drunk and blab about the blubber, we'll be sharing a jail cell with a guy named Bubba!

**Captain Rudder:** I've kept quiet for 10 years, ain't I? Why would I blab about the blubber now?

**Peter:** Something's come over you and it scares me. I've seen you drooling over Doctor Fluke. Give me that bottle right now, before you say something we'll both regret! (*tries to grab booze bottle*)

**Captain Rudder:** But Pete, it's just a little somethin to keep me on an even keel.

**Peter:** Give it to me!

**Captain Rudder:** Here. (*hands over bottle*)

**Peter:** We'll talk more later. Right now, I have to find Sally and convince her to keep Myrna off the boat.

**Captain Rudder:** Right. Good idea. You're the man. (*gives him thumbs up sign.*)

*PETER exits. CAPTAIN RUDDER chuckles and pulls another bottle of booze out of his pocket.*

*MYRNA enters, and walks CENTER STAGE, distracted. She's reading her book through her diving mask as if it's a pair of eyeglasses. COUNTESS walks to CENTER STAGE at same time, rummaging through her purse. They almost collide.*

**Myrna:** Oops! Why Countess, hello! I don't think we've been formally introduced. I'm Doctor Myrna Fluke, the new head of research for the Foundation. *(they shake hands)*

**Countess:** Yes, dear, I've heard of you. I do so enjoy your specials on the Discovery Channel. In fact, that diving mask looks familiar.

**Myrna:** It's my trademark. I have them custom made in every color. I'm flattered, Countess, that you like my TV shows. I'm also delighted that you're making such a generous contribution to the Foundation's cause. Why, the Hopeless Diamond is the most famous and valuable gem in the world! Auctioned off, it should fund my research for years!

**Countess:** *(reminiscing)* Yes, it truly *was* a remarkable gem, as were all the jewels my family once had.

**Myrna:** Was? Had?

**Countess:** *(back to reality)* I mean, it is! And has! Pardon me, but my English is not so good.

*NICK has been lurking in background. He's fascinated when they take out the jewel.*

**Myrna:** Would it be possible to see the gem up close?

**Countess:** Of course, my dear. I'll show it to you. *(takes diamond box out of purse and hands it to MYRNA)*

**Myrna:** *(studies diamond through her mask)* You know, Countess, I majored in Whaleology, but I minored in gemology. I know a bit about precious gems. *(MYRNA looks perplexed, then suspicious as she studies the diamond.)* And this is . . . *(she decides not to let on that she knows it's a fake)* . . . an incredible jewel! We can't thank you enough, Countess.

**Countess:** Yes, now if I may have it back please. Exposing it could attract a thief.

*NICK gets spooked on that line and exits quickly.*

**Myrna:** Of course. Here you are, Countess. *(hands back the diamond box, which COUNTESS stuffs back in her purse)*

**Countess:** Thank you, dear. Now if you'll excuse me, I must go straighten my tiara.

*COUNTESS exits. MYRNA stands deep in thought when WAITRESS enters.*

**Waitress:** Telegram for Countess Marina. Telegram for Marina.

**Myrna:** What? Myrna? Right here.

*WAITRESS hands telegram to MYRNA and then leaves quickly.*

**Myrna:** *(looks at telegram; says next lines to herself)* Oh, wait, this isn't for me. I thought she said Myrna, but she obviously said *Marina*. This is for the Countess. Hmmmm *(studies envelope)* It's from her brother, Count de Marina. And it's marked *Urgent*.

*(MYRNA looks around to make sure no one's watching, then she opens envelope and reads aloud.)*

**Myrna:** My dear sister: It is time to stop this deception. You have traveled the world and have given the entire Marina fortune away to useless charities. Now we are penniless. Whatever you have in your possession is all we have left. I found your journal and read it. I know of your plan to give that worthless glass ball to the Whales Foundation. They'll find out sooner or later, so it is time to stop this foolish masquerade. Your title of Countess is meaningless. Maybe you should practice asking the question, "Is that Happy Meal for a girl or a boy?" I'll get you a job on my shift. They give you free uniforms, but you'll have to ditch the crown for a cap. Your loving brother, Count de Marina.

*MYRNA replaces paper in the envelope and "talks to herself" more.*

**Myrna:** Ah ha! I knew the minute I studied that diamond it was fake. But I didn't want to let on until I found out more details. The Countess obviously wasted the family fortune, but she can't give up the lifestyle. She's passing off phony jewels to get invited to social events like this. I'll have to think hard about how to handle this.

*NICK has been eavesdropping. MYRNA exits and NICK walks to CENTER STAGE, where CANDI and BAMBI join him.*

**Bambi:** Nick, we have big problems.

*MYRNA starts to return as if forgetting something but eavesdrops instead.*

**Nick:** Bigger than you know. Our plans have just gone down the drain. The diamond is a fake!

**Candi:** You mean we're here for nothing?

**Nick:** *(eyeing up the goldfish bowl)* I'm not leaving here empty handed. If the Hopeless Diamond is a fake, then at the end of the night, we'll grab the goldfish bowl and Sally's purse with all her credit cards and make a run for it. I'm heading south one way or another!



**Bambi:** We're not sure if want to go anywhere with you.

**Nick:** Why not?

**Candi:** My teddy is missing.

**Nick:** You brought a stuffed animal with you?

**Candi:** No, you idiot! A teddy is a piece of underwear! My favorite teddy is gone. We confronted the staff to see if they've been stealing all our underwear.

**Bambi:** And the maid told us she caught YOU in our room several times rummaging through our bags!

**Nick:** She's lying!

**Candi:** Yeah? Well how about we go search *your* room!

**Nick:** No! I mean, I didn't make my bed this morning . . . I, oh, hell, why try to hide it anymore. It's true! I stole your underwear! You've discovered my secret lifestyle!

*Music cue: "Walking Round in Women's Underwear"*

*NICK sings song and BANBI and CANDI look on, amazed. During the song, NICK removes his shirt -- he's wearing a red teddy underneath. BAMBI and CANDI react in horror, then run offstage. This is all done as if the audience isn't there. At the end of the song, NICK panics when he realizes everyone in audience has seen him in the teddy. He turns to run but is confronted by MYRNA.*

**Myrna:** Not so fast, Nautical Nick! Or should I call you Nautical Nicolette? I heard and saw everything. You're planning on stealing the Foundation's money!

**Nick:** You shouldn't be sticking your nose in other people's business, Doctor.

**Myrna:** But it *is* my business. The Foundation needs that money to fund my research. Without that money, I'm out of a job!

**Nick:** Well now, Doctor, can you sing and dance? Because we could use a third Mermaid. We're thinking of taking up Reggae. In the Caribbean. There's enough money there for four. What do you say? Sun, fun, and plenty of fish to study.

**Myrna:** I say . . . I need to talk to Sally about this!

**Nick:** (*threateningly*) I'd keep quiet if I were you, Doctor. Nautical Nick knows when you've been naughty or nice. And talking about this to Sally or anyone else would be very, very naughty. Do you understand, little girl?

**Myrna:** (*a bit shaken*) Loud and clear. (*she runs off*)

**SALLY joins NICK onstage.**

**Sally:** That's quite the party outfit, Nautical Nick.

**Nick:** (*embarrassed*) Oh, uh . . . just a little joke. (*grabs his shirt and puts it back on*) You know, Miss Crouthers, I was just thinking that you'd better move that fishbowl before someone steals it. I'd be glad to help you put it somewhere safe. (*offhandedly*) I mean, there must be, what, 50 thousand dollars in there?

**Sally:** (*without thinking*) Probably 10 times that . . . I mean, uh, I have no idea how much. But you're right, I should put it somewhere safe.

**Nick:** (*does the math, using his finger in the air to add things up. His eyes get like saucers*) Ten times 50, that's . . . half a million dollars! Wow! That's *more* than enough!.

**Sally:** More than enough for what?

**Nick:** Oh, uh . . . to run your Foundation. Look, I have to go talk to the Mermaids.

**NICK exits. The COUNTESS walks from BACKSTAGE and joins SALLY.**

**Sally:** Countess, I was wondering where you'd gone. When may we have the Hopeless Diamond? I'd like to show it to everyone before we put it in safekeeping for the auction.

**Countess:** Very soon, my dear, very soon. I'm building up the suspense. This is a lovely party. Do you do this every year?

**Sally:** Yes, it's our biggest fundraiser. But back to the diamond -- it's getting late, so may we please have it?

**Countess:** Yes, yes. All right.

**MYRNA enters.**

*There is approximately 8 more pages to this script.....*