

Home Sweet Homicide

An Audience-Participation Murder Mystery-Comedy
By Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose
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www.tonylouproductions.com

Dear Murder Mystery Fan:

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

- FAQ's about our audience-participation murder mysteries
- One complete murder mystery script that may be printed and photocopied for cast members
- Suggested script for master of ceremonies
- Sherlock Holmes trivia questions to ask audience
- Production Notes (properties, costumes, music, helpful hints)
- Any graphics and sound effects we have available for this show
- Sample news release and synopsis for program

Whether you're a seasoned actor/director or a rookie, this package 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.

Note: Conga lines, etc., don't work in this show, so we added "Sherlock Holmes Trivia" for audience participation. The MC can ask these trivia questions before the show begins. There are two ways to do this: He can either stand in front of the audience and ask the questions and have the audience call out the answers, or he can mingle with the cast members before the show and ask the questions as he walks through the audience. The MC should use a hand-held mic if he asks the questions during mingling. (*See the Production Notes section for 20 trivia questions.*)

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. If your director doesn't have a part in the show, he or she is a good choice for MC.

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 MCs, 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, sing a-longs, and the like. 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 in a nightclub with a tropical theme, 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!

Home Sweet Homicide

By Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose

Cast of Characters:

Hemlock Holmes: Famous detective who doesn’t have a clue

Whatsun: Holmes’s female assistant; the brains of the partnership

Elmira: Refugee from a sanatorium, who has a mysterious disease

Dr. Charles Ovary: Freudian psychiatrist who treats Elmira

Frau Franksenbeans: Dr. Ovary’s nurse

Mr. Drudgery: Holmes’s butler

Mrs. Drudgery: Holmes’s housekeeper and Drudgery’s wife

Setting:

Time: The late 1800s

Place: The entire play takes place in Holmes's parlor. (See *Production Notes* for details on properties and set décor.)

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 may also enter and exit downstage right and left.

Master of Ceremonies: Welcome to the (*Insert your company's name*) production of *Home Sweet Homicide*. Tonight, you're part of the action. So keep your eyes and ears open for clues, because 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 to you in more detail after the show.

And now—on with the show!

Home Sweet Homicide

Holmes is in his living room when Whatsun enters. She's surprised to see him.

Whatsun: Holmes! Good to have you back! When did you return from New York?

Holmes: Ah, Whatsun! I returned just a few hours ago. The trip to upstate New York was both tiring and stressful.

Whatsun: Why? The Rolling Rocket is the latest, fastest, most modern steam locomotive in the East. And, I got you deluxe accommodations at half price.

Holmes: Yes, Whatsun, your frugality is admirable. However, half price requires you to put in a certain amount of hours shoveling coal, only to then find your "deluxe accommodations" are the upper birth with no ladder. Brilliant, my dear Whatsun.

Whatsun: Sorry, Holmes, but you could use the exercise, and we needed to save money. We haven't solved a case in months. (*regretfully*) People just aren't murdering each other like they used to . . .

Holmes: Yes, quite. I suppose that's a good thing. Still . . . Oh well, It's good be home again. And good to see you again, old friend.

Whatsun: (*trance-like, adoringly*) The feeling is mutual. (*snaps out of it*) You were rather secretive about this trip to upstate New York, Holmes. You've never kept anything from me before. I hope nothing is amiss.

Holmes: (*startled, caught off guard*) A Miss? Who said anything about a Miss?

Whatsun: Holmes, what are you talking about? It was a figure of speech.

Holmes: A figure? Who said anything about her figure?

Whatsun: Whose figure? What figure are you talking about?

Holmes: (*backpedaling*) Figure? No figure. It was just a figure of speech. Hmmmm . . . Go figure.

Whatsun: (*confused*) Go -- what? Never mind. You are certainly entitled to your privacy. I just want to be assured that everything is okay.

Holmes: It is now, Whatsun, it is now. I knew you would be curious as to why I went, without telling you the reason. You've been a good and trusted colleague for so long, I guess I do owe you an explanation.

Whatsun: (*turning away, feigning indifference*) Not at all Holmes, your business is your own. (*spins around, grabs him by lapels*) Spill your guts! What's going on! (*catches herself, straightens his lapels, and backs off.*)

Holmes: Ha! Okay Whatsun, here's the whole story, in a nutshell. The reason I've been in upstate New York for the past several weeks.

Whatsun: I'm all ears, go on, go on. (*waving her hand, egging him on.*)

Holmes: (*pacing, while puffing on pipe*) Ah, yes, well, it all began approximately two months ago, when I began receiving anonymous letters, slipped under the door.

Whatsun: Not that Publisher's Clearing House junk again. You can't afford any more magazine subscriptions.

Holmes: No, no, no. They were anonymous letters, telling me that I had a long-lost cousin.

Whatsun: A cousin? Fascinating! But I thought you had no family.

Holmes: So did I. It caught me quite by surprise.

Whatsun: (*flattering him*) So, there are *two* Holmeses with incredible powers of deduction?

Holmes: Yes, seduction. Incredible powers of seduction . . .

Whatsun: Holmes! You mean **de**-duction!

Holmes: Ahhhhhhh . . . yes! Deduction! A slip of the tongue.

Whatsun: So . . .?

Holmes: Well, where was I? Ah yes. Unfortunately, this cousin is mentally unstable, and was incarcerated in a deplorable sanatorium in upstate New York. The letters went on to say that if I didn't get her out of there soon, she would die from the horrendous conditions there.

Whatsun: Her? This cousin is a woman?

Holmes: Quite right, Whatsun. My interest was piqued. I knew of no cousin, especially a mentally disturbed cousin in New York State. I thought I was the last surviving Holmes. I dismissed it as a hoax.

Whatsun: But you *did* go to New York.

Holmes: Yes, because I only dismissed the *first* letter. When they kept coming, I had second thoughts.

Whatsun: Why?

Holmes: The letters were telling me personal things about myself and my family roots. Though still skeptical, I had to consider the possibility.

Whatsun: So, you received these letters, became curious, and traveled by train to upstate New York in search of a long lost cousin. And did you find this cousin?

Holmes: Yes, I found her at the Cozy Crypt Sanatorium. Though after perusing the hospital records, I deduced she was not my cousin after all.

Whatsun: (*a bit stunned*) She's not? Then who the hell is she?

Holmes: Some poor, sick stranger.

Whatsun: Poor soul . . . So you made that trip for nothing.

Holmes: Not at all, my dear Whatsun! Although she's not family I felt a strange attraction to her.

I enjoyed her company. Though she's ill, I found her amusing and charming.

Whatsun: You sound as if you plan to travel and see her again!

Holmes: Not at all.

Whatsun: That's a relief.

Holmes: I've brought her back here with me!

Whatsun: What?!?

Holmes: That's right! Here! A captivating creature. You're going to love her! *(calls out)* Elmira! That's her name, Whatsun. Elmira, from New York! Elmira!! Come here my dear. There's someone I'd like you to meet.

Elmira enters in low-cut gown, showing her leg through a side slit, or wearing some other outfit that exposes lots of skin. She poses to the audience. Whatsun nearly faints, and Holmes runs to get a cape to cover Elmira up. Elmira just smiles at the audience.

Holmes: Elmira my dear, this is my good friend, Whatsun.

Whatsun: *(trying to be polite, but it's obviously a forced friendliness)* How do you do Elmira.

Elmira: Yeah, the pleasure's all yours. *(looking Whatsun and Holmes up and down)* Say, do you two have the same tailor?

Whatsun: Holmes! The woman is practically naked! How on earth could you bring home a . . . a . . . a . . . harlot like that!

Holmes: Now, now, relax, Whatsun. She's no harlot. This is a symptom of her mental illness. This is why she was in the sanatorium. Elmira suffers from a very rare, and, unfortunately, hereditary mental disorder known as Disrobe-a-phobia, the desire to remove your clothes in public.

Whatsun: Disrobe-a-phobia? My God Holmes, that's dreadful. I pity the poor creature, but was it wise to bring her back here?

Holmes: What would you have me do, my dear Whatsun? Should I have left this poor helpless woman incarcerated at the Cozy Crypt Sanatorium?

Whatsun: Well . . .

Holmes: No! Of course not! It's our Christian duty to help those less fortunate!

Whatsun: Since when? Holmes, you're an atheist!

Elmira: (*filing her nails the whole time*) No! He told me he's a Sagittarius! That's why we're so compatible, because I'm a Stradivarius, too!

Whatsun: (*momentarily speechless*) What?! (*eying the nail file, cautiously extends hand to get the sharp object away from Elmira*) Ahhhhh . . . I'll take that, if you don't mind . . . (*plucks nail file out of Elmira's hand, then holds it like a knife, spins, and moves in close to Holmes, threatening-like*) Are you crazy, letting her have a sharp object like this?!

Holmes: (*feeling threatened, leans back and plucks the nail file out of Whatsun's hand*) I'll take that if you don't mind . . . Really, Whatsun. What's gotten into you?

Whatsun: Sorry, Holmes. It's just this whole thing has caught me by surprise. You should have warned me. I'm worried about your reputation, personal and professional. Think about this very carefully. Tongues will be wagging throughout the village when they hear about your "house guest." And it will get out! Nothing stays a secret in a small town like this.

Holmes: I'll keep Elmira in seclusion until I can get her the professional help she needs.

Whatsun: Ha! You think you can keep her under wraps? Pun intended! If she wanders outside like that, we'll all be run out of town!

Holmes: Relax my dear Whatsun. I have a plan.

Whatsun: A plan? *You* have a plan? Holmes, we've accomplished a lot you and I, but we're no doctors! We can't help her!

Holmes: You're absolutely correct, Whatsun. We can't. But my old friend, Dr. Charles Ovary can!

Whatsun: Ovary's been away in Europe for years. You know that.

Holmes: Yes, and I also know that he's been back for several weeks now. I dined with him just before I went to New York. And I found out that he's been studying with Freud for the past few years.

Whatsun: Sigmund Freud?

Holmes: No! Lloyd, his second cousin, twice removed.

Whatsun: Lloyd? *Lloyd* Freud? I've never heard of him.

Holmes: He's quite the up and comer, and the world's foremost expert on wardrobe malfunction.

Whatsun: There are specialists for wardrobe malfunction?

Holmes: There are now. No longer are these conditions hidden. They're out of the closet now, and about time.

Whatsun: But Holmes, do you really think Dr. Ovary can help her?

Holmes: Yes, he says . . . *(realizes Elmira is still in the room, and doesn't want to talk in front of her)* Elmira, my dear, why don't you go rest in your room? We have a busy evening ahead.

Elmira: Sure, Holmsey, I have lots of undress . . . I mean, *unpacking* to do.

Holmes takes her by the elbow and escorts her out the door.

Holmes: *(returns to room)* Now, Whatsun, I have complete confidence in Dr. Ovary. He's returned not only with a vast knowledge of Freudian theories, but he now has his own, which he calls *Ovarian Theories*.

Whatsun: Ovarian theories? Such as?

Holmes: His Ovarian Theories are all about how to treat --you won't believe the coincidence -- how to treat Disrobe-a-phobia! He sent me a post from Europe, explaining that he and Lloyd Freud were working on a cure. It was of little interest to me at the time, which is why I didn't discuss it with you. Boring really. I think I may have mentioned it to Mrs. Drudgery, my housekeeper, but no one else. In any case, it didn't seem important until I met Elmira. Whatsun, I believe Dr. Ovary might be able to cure her!

Whatsun: And then what?

Holmes: Ahhhhhh, who knows?

Mr. Drudgery, the butler, enters.

Mr. Drudgery: Excuse me sir.

Holmes: Ah, yes, what is it, Drudgery?

Mr. Drudgery: Dr. Charles Ovary has arrived with his nurse. My wife is showing them in. *(exits)*

Holmes: Splendid! *(goes to door and calls for Elmira)* Elmira, would come in here, please? I have someone I want you to meet. And please make sure your clothes are on.

Elmira enters, still wearing cape.

Elmira: Keep your shirt on, Holmesy. If I have to, you have to! (*laughs maniacally*)

Holmes: This is no time for frivolity. Our guest has arrived.

Elmira: Someone special?

Holmes: Yes, my dear. Consider yourself on the road to recovery. (*goes over to her*)

Whatsun: (*sarcastically*) Should you go near her Holmes? Perhaps it's contagious.

Holmes: Don't be absurd! If it were contagious, we would all be running around buck naked by now!

Elmira: Now we're talking! (*starts taking off cape*)

Holmes: (*stopping her*) Not now, my dear.

Whatsun: Not ever!

Holmes: Really, Whatsun! What's gotten in to you? Show her some compassion.

Whatsun: (*under her breath*) I'd like to show her the door.

Holmes: (*to Elmira*) Dr. Ovary will soon have you leading a normal life, my dear. And then perhaps you might consider the possibility of settling down.

Elmira: (*frantic*) I'm settled down! I'm settled down! Please, please, no more shock treatments! I'll stay settled down! Look! Look! I'm settled!

Whatsun: Careful Holmes! She's getting violent. I'll call the police. We'll have her removed from here at once!

Holmes: No! You're overreacting!

Elmira: (*begging Holmes*) Please, no more treatments.

Holmes: (*trying to soothe her*) No, no, no. That's not what I meant by settling down. I have a piece of land on a lake, a few miles out of town. I call it Hemlock's Hideaway. I hope to someday build a summer residence there. (*grabs her hand and kisses it*) Perhaps we could enjoy that hideaway together.

Whatsun: (*fuming!*) Live together? You and her? But I always thought that you and I might someday . . . together . . . maybe we could . . .

Holmes doesn't seem to notice Whatsun. All his attention is on Elmira.

Elmira: *(lovingly and with great interest)* A summer residence?

Holmes: Yes.

Elmira: You and me?

Holmes: Yes.

Elmira: Together?

Holmes: Yes.

Elmira: *(sarcastic and bored with the idea)* Yeah, right. I'll think about it. I've gotta go to my room and get Spot his food. *(exits and leaves cape)*

Whatsun: Get Spot his food? She brought a dog with her?

Holmes: No, not quite. Actually, Spot is a -- bird.

Whatsun: She brought a canary with her?

Holmes: Noooooooo. Actually, Spot is a -- turkey buzzard.

Whatsun: What?! Really, Holmes. send her back before you become the laughing stock of the community!

Holmes: You know, Whatsun, if I didn't know better, I'd swear I detected a hint of jealousy in your voice.

Whatsun: *(sarcastically)* Then your powers of deduction are slipping.

Holmes: Look, Whatsun, her pet is not important right now. What is important is Dr -- wait, just where in hell is Ovary?

Whatsun: *(pointing to her abdomen)* Well, I believe it's somewhere in this vicinity.

Holmes: Really, Whatsun, what do you know about the female anatomy?

Whatsun: *(stunned)* Why, I'm a . . . I mean, surely you've noticed . . .

Dr. Ovary walks in with Mr. Drudgery tagging behind. Ovary is putting on his coat.

Ovary: Please take my coat, Drudgery. *(immediately takes it off again and hands it to Mr. Drudgery, but leaves his hat and gloves on)*

Mr. Drudgery: *(looking confused)* Certainly, Sir. *(exits with coat)*

Frau Franksenbeans, Ovary's nurse, enters carrying a doctor's bag.

Holmes: Charles, so good to see you again. And thank you for coming so quickly. I know you're busy. And this lovely creature must be your nurse, Frau Franksenbeans. Charles told me so much about you during our last meeting.

Frau Franksenbeans: The pleasure is all mine. It's quite an honor to meet the legendary Hemlock Holmes. *(turning to Whatsun and giving her the once over, then snickering)* And you -- you must be his little helper, Whatsun.

Whatsun: *(barely containing herself)* Holmes's little helper, huh? Yes, well, I see you've heard of me. And *your* name again?

Frau Franksenbeans: Frau Franksenbeans.

Whatsun: Hmmmmmm . . . Frau Franksenbeans. Phhhh! Never heard of you.

They glare at each other, and Dr. Ovary steps between them before they get into a catfight.

Holmes: Ahhhhh, Whatsun, why don't you find Mrs. Drudgery and ask her to prepare some tea for everyone. In fact, maybe you can give her hand. Otherwise, we may never get it.

Whatsun: So, I'm working for Mrs. Drudgery now? *(exits, in a huff)*

Ovary: Ah yes, and Frau Franksenbeans, why don't you take my bag in the other room and prepare everything for the examination. By the way Holmes, where is the patient?

Frau Franksenbeans starts to leave but almost bumps into Elmira as she re-enters. She's carrying Spot in a large birdcage. She puts the cage on a table.

Holmes: *(points to Elmira and says lustfully)* There she is!

Ovary is instantly captivated by Elmira's beauty and her revealing clothing.

Elmira: Ooooooh, so you must be the one who's here to play doctor with me. *(flirts openly with Ovary)*

Ovary: *(obviously smitten)* The pleasure is all my mine, my dear.

Frau Franksenbeans: *(becoming jealous)* Uh, doctor, perhaps we should prepare the patient together.

Ovary: What? Together? Oh, are you still here? Go prepare the room for the examination. We'll join you in a minute.

Frau Franksenbeans: But Doctor . . .

Ovary: Do it!

Frau Franksenbeans: (*sarling*) Doctor, it would be better if the patient came with me!

Ovary: I said . . .

Elmira: It's okay, Doc, I'll go with her. I have to get Spot his food, anyway.

Frau Franksenbeans: Spot? No one said anything about a dog.

Elmira: (*misunderstanding, looking her up and down*) A dog? Don't sell yourself short. You're not that bad.

Elmira exits. Frau Franksenbeans looks stunned, then glares at Dr. Ovary and exits in a huff.

Ovary: Holmes! She's beautiful! I can't wait to get my hands on . . . uh . . . I mean, examine her!

Holmes: Yes, an exquisite creature. Had it not been for those letters being slipped under my door, I would have never found her.

Ovary: And you say you have no idea who the letters were from? That is most odd Holmes. Somebody wanted you to find Elmira. But who? And why?

Holmes: That's a bit of detective work that still needs to be done. But leave that up to Whatsun and myself. You concern yourself with Elmira's mental well-being. Do you really think you can cure her Disrobe-a-phobia?

Ovary: I can certainly try. No promises mind you. But try I shall. While studying with Lloyd Freud, a similar case was brought to my attention. In the late stages I'm afraid. Freud and I, along with Frau Franksenbeans, began working on a serum.

Holmes: A serum? What kind of serum?

Ovary: It seems to impede the desire to disrobe, but it does have minor side-effects that I'm reluctant to disclose at the moment. Nothing serious. Quite harmless really. Easy to live with. I'll discuss that with you at another time.

Holmes: Do your best Charles, as I'm sure you will. If you can cure Elmira, I'll be forever grateful. By the way, you still have your hat and gloves on. How rude of Mr. Drudgery not to

take them from you. Here, let me help you off with your . . .

Ovary: (*frantic*) No! Don't touch me! Leave my clothes alone!

Frau Franksenbeans enters.

Frau Franksenbeans: Dr. Ovary! It's time for your medication. (*to Holmes*) He has a respiratory illness and is on medication. He also has to be careful of drafts. That's why he's so afraid to remove any of his clothing.

Ovary: Ah, yes. My medication. Sorry for the outburst Holmes. It's the drugs. They make me irritable. That's why I'm trying to taper off. I'll go and prepare to examine the patient now.

Holmes: Quite understandable. And I'll go check on the tea.

Frau Franksenbeans: But, Doctor, you *need* your medication!

They all exit. Mr. and Mrs. Drudgery enter.

Mr. Drudgery: Our plan is coming together perfectly dear. Soon, very soon, after all these years, we'll be a family again.

Mrs. Drudgery: I've dreamed of this for so long. It's not been easy living with all these secrets.

Mr. Drudgery: I wanted to tell you about my "condition" before we were married, but I was afraid I'd lose you.

Mrs. Drudgery: It doesn't matter. It was a long time ago. We've managed to keep your condition a secret this long, and now with Dr. Ovary here, there's hope. For you *and* for her.

Mr. Drudgery: Yes, well, at the time, who knew it was hereditary? And shortly after she was born, the diapers started flying from the crib! We couldn't have cared for her. Keeping my condition a secret was a big challenge, but two of us?

Mrs. Drudgery: I know, I know. Still, it's heart wrenching to give up your only child. But now Dr. Ovary can cure you and our daughter Elmira of this dreaded Disrobe-a-phobia, and we can live as one happy family. United again. With all our clothes on.

Mr. Drudgery begins to unbutton his shirt.

Mrs. Drudgery: I hope. (*slaps his hand*)

Mr. Drudgery: Ouch! I was just fixing my collar! All right, all right. I'll try to control myself.

Mrs. Drudgery: You better! Now would not be a good time for someone to come in here and

find you naked. We'd be thrown out of here, no questions asked, and it would ruin everything. We've come too close to getting our daughter back to have you ruin it by prancing around in your birthday suit.

Mr. Drudgery: I do hope Dr. Ovary can cure us. He must! How do you think Elmira will take the news, discovering that we're her parents? Will she resent us? Hate us for giving her up? My God, you don't think she'll become violent, do you? I'm beginning to wonder if there's more wrong with her than just the Disrobe-a-phobia. She's a bit on the strange side. She must have gotten that from your side of the family. And what's with the bird? That not your everyday canary in that cage. (*points to Spot*)

Mrs. Drudgery: Oh, keep your shirt on dear. *Please*, keep your shirt on! I mean it! One thing at a time. Dr. Ovary will be able to help Elmira with all her problems, and yours too. I'm sure of it. And then we'll be a family again, at last. (*looks at him, shaking her head*) It certainly can't get any worse!

Holmes enters.

Holmes: Mrs. Drudgery, there you are! I've been looking all over for you. How's the tea coming along?

Mrs. Drudgery: My knee? Oh it's coming along just fine Mr. Holmes. Some days worse than others. Thanks for asking.

Holmes: No, no, no! The tea, the tea! Where is our tea? Really Mrs. Drudgery, your efficiency is becoming very questionable these days!

Mr. Drudgery: I'll help her, Mr. Holmes. Tea, coming right up! Come dear, we have to prepare their *tea*. (*stage whisper*) Really? Your knee? And I'm the one with the problems? I wonder if you're with it sometimes . . .

They exit. Ovary enters wearing a white lab coat, with a stethoscope around his neck and a head light on his head.

Dr. Ovary: Well Holmes, I'm told the patient is just about ready to be examined. It gives us a minute to chit chat. So! You know what I've been up to. How about you? What famous case is the legendary Hemlock Holmes working on these days?

Holmes: Yes, well, Whatsun and I are on several cases. I'm afraid confidentiality precludes me from discussing them. I assure you, though, Whatsun is hard at work every day.

Dr. Ovary: Whatsun. You know, it seems it's always Whatsun hard at work on a case. Just what is it *you* do Holmes?

Holmes: Me? Why I . . . well, after the clues are gathered I . . . then it's up to me to deduce . . .

that is, I determine my deductions, and then, depending on which deductions are positive or negative, I deduce which deductions to eliminate!

Dr. Ovary: My God, man, I wasn't asking about your taxes!

Frau Franksenbeans enters with Elmira. She's not wearing the cape. Holmes looks relieved that they were interrupted.

Frau Franksenbeans: Doctor, the patient is ready.

Elmira: (*seductively*) Yes Doctor, I'm ready.

Dr. Ovary: (*gazing lustfully at her*) Mmmmmm – so am I!

Holmes: Charles, this *is* strictly business, isn't it?

Frau Franksenbeans: (*jealous*) Yes Doctor, strictly business, isn't it?

Dr. Ovary: What? Why yes, of course! What else would it be? Ahhh, I think it would be better if I examine Elmira alone in her room. We'll be much – that is, *she'll* be much more comfortable if the examination is conducted in private.

Elmira: (*seductively*) Follow me Doctor, and bring your thermometer.

Frau Franksenbeans: Wait! Stop! Doctor, you did take your medication, didn't you?

Dr. Ovary: Not now, Nurse!

Dr. Ovary follows Elmira out. He appears to be in a trance-like state. Holmes watches them go off. He's also in a trance-like state.

Frau Franksenbeans: He's a brilliant man, Mr. Holmes. Yet, he doesn't seem to think clearly when he's around her. She seems to have a hypnotic effect on him. (*sees Holmes is in the same condition*) She seems to have a hypnotic effect on all men!

Holmes: What? (*snaps out of it*) Yes, a brilliant man. So, Frau Franksenbeans, what persuaded you to leave your homeland to come to the United States?

Frau Franksenbeans: Charles . . . I mean, Dr. Ovary . . . has promised me marriage. When I stumbled on the . . . I mean, when *we* stumbled on . . . when *he* discovered the cure for Disrobe-a-phobia, he asked me to marry him. He said in America, the land of opportunity, we could start our own pharmaceutical company. He said (*gazing anxiously at the door where Ovary and Elmira exited*) *we* would be wealthy and live happily ever after.

During the last few lines, Whatsun enters the room unnoticed.

Whatsun: Ah, Frau Franksenbeans, who did you say discovered that serum?

Frau Franksenbeans: How long were you standing there?

Whatsun: Long enough.

Frau Franksenbeans: Dr. Ovary discovered the serum. I'm just his assistant. Charles is a genius.

Frau F. storms off. Or so they think. She's actually eavesdropping.

Whatsun: Holmes, what have you been up to?

Holmes: Nothing.

Whatsun: I know! Really Holmes, I realize we have an arrangement, but it would be nice if you helped out once in a while.

Holmes: Whatsun, what do I know about solving crimes? If it weren't a man's world we were living in, you wouldn't need me as a front for your success. You know I can't even solve a crossword puzzle!

Frau Franksenbeans looks shocked at this information.

Whatsun: All right, all right, not so loud. We wouldn't want anyone to overhear. Especially Ovary. I don't trust him. And I think he's just using Frau Franksenbeans. Were you sleeping on your feet? Didn't you hear her slip of the tongue? I think *she* invented the serum for Disrobe-a-phobia!

Holmes: Really? And what caused you to deduce this deduction?

Whatsun: Will you knock it off with the deducing and deducting! Try and focus here! She's obviously in love with Dr. Ovary, but she's no fool. She won't give him the formula until he marries her. He's probably stalling, hoping to get the formula from her without having to go through with the wedding.

Holmes: Brilliant, Whatsun! I, uh, was just thinking the same thing!

Whatsun: *(rolling her eyes)* I'm sure you were.

Frau Franksenbeans: *(stage whisper)* I must tell Charles. He'll want to know about this. The living legend, Hemlock Holmes, a fraud! And Whatsun knows too much for her own good!

Frau Franksenbeans exits.

Holmes: What is keeping Mrs. Drudgery with that tea?

Mr. and Mrs. Drudgery enter with the tea on a tray. They put the tray on a table.

Mrs. Drudgery: Here it is, Mr. Holmes.

During the next conversation, Holmes keeps his back to the Drudgeries, perhaps looking at some random object with his magnifying glass. Whatsun takes notes on a pad or thumbs through a book. Neither Holmes or Whatsun see what's going on with the Drudgeries.

Holmes: Fine. Set it down on the table.

Mrs. Drudgery: Mr. Holmes do you think Dr. Ovary will be able to cure Elmira? *(She spots her husband starting to take off his shirt and quickly stops him.)*

Holmes: He's a brilliant man. If anyone can, he can.

Mrs. Drudgery: I hope so, poor girl. *(Her husband starts to loosen his belt. She stops him again.)*

Holmes: I hope so too, Mrs. Drudgery.

Whatsun: I bet you do.

Mr. Drudgery starts to take his shirt off again. Mrs. Drudgery stops him again.

Mrs. Drudgery: He better. I can't take much more of this. Will that be all, sir?

Holmes: Yes, I'll call you if I need you.

They Drudgeries exit. Frau Franksenbeans enters. At the same time, Dr. Ovary and Elmira enter from another door. The doctor's hat is on crooked, his hair is messed up, and his glasses are hanging off one ear. He appears to be in a daze. Elmira has a smug, satisfied look.

Holmes: Charles, are you all right?

Dr. Ovary: I am now.

Elmira: You're more than all right Doc. You're wonderful!

Frau Franksenbeans: Just who was examining who?

Holmes: Yes, I'd like to ask that same question!

Dr. Ovary: Our “session” was strictly professional!

Elmira: Oh, you’re a pro all right!

Whatsun: Holmes, I told you bringing her here was a mistake.

Holmes: But the girl needed help.

Whatsun: *(stage whisper to Holmes)* Get rid of her. I don’t care what you do with her or where you send her, but get rid of her. She’s jeopardizing both our careers. Well, *my* career. You’re just along for the free ride. And don’t forget that! Now get rid of her. *(She hides her anger and tries to be seductive.)* Besides, what’s she got that I haven’t got?

Holmes looks at Elmira then at Whatsun.

Holmes: Well, for *two* things . . . *(makes a gesture indicating large breasts)*

Whatsun storms off.

Elmira: Holmesy, thanks for noticing! Oh Charles, want to take my temperature again?

Holmes: Elmira! That’s enough. *(takes a napkin from tray with tea service and tries in vain to cover her up; finally gives up)* I’m taking you back to your room. And when I return, Charles, I want a word or two with you!

Elmira: Oh relax, Holmesy, keep your shorts on. You can take yours off again, Charles.

Holmes rushes Elmira out. Whatsun enters, looking angry. She stands in the doorway, looks around the room for Holmes, realizes he’s gone, and then decides to spy on Ovary and Franksenbeans.

Frau Franksenbeans: Did you enjoy your little examination?

Dr. Ovary: *(still dazed)* Ooooooh yeeeeees . . .

Frau Franksenbeans: *(grabs Ovary and shakes him back to reality)* You listen to me, Dr. Happy Hands. It’s clothes on and hands off when it comes to that woman! Ha ha ha! Oh, that’s right. You couldn’t take your clothes off if you wanted to!

Dr. Ovary: *(angrily)* Shut up! Besides, I didn’t take my medication today. So there!

Frau Franksenbeans: Oh my God! You mean . . . you and that woman . . . in the examination room, alone, together?

Dr. Ovary: Yup, naked as jaybirds! I should skip my meds more often!

Frau Franksenbeans: Oh my God, you've had a relapse! When you developed Disrobe-a-phobia two years ago, it quickly went into the advanced stages. It was *I* who developed a serum to control it for you. Who knew the side effects would be completely opposite of the disease?

Dr. Ovary: I sure didn't. If I'd known, I never would've taken the drug. Without it, I feel alive again. (*glances at his crotch*) In fact, I'm starting to feel alive again right now!

Frau Franksenbeans: You fool. Think about what you're saying. Where would Doctor Ovary be right now without my serum? Okay, while on my serum, you *can't* take your clothes off. Not even your hat and gloves until it starts to wear off. But it's a small price to pay to save your career and your dignity!

Dr. Ovary: (*half-crazed*) The hell with my dignity!

Frau Franksenbeans: Right now you're thinking from the waist down rather than from the neck up. Use your head! You need the serum. And you need me. You don't have the formula, but I do. Up here. (*points to her head*) And you'll never get it until you say "I do" in front of the local minister. Then you'll set up the pharmaceutical company in my name. All with your money. And if you don't, I'll cut you off from the serum and you'll end up institutionalized, buck naked, like your girlfriend in there was. Any questions?

Dr. Ovary: No. (*under his breath*) Frau Bitch . . .

Frau Franksenbeans: Good. Because we have other things to take care of.

Dr. Ovary: Such as?

Frau Franksenbeans: Holmes and Whatsun!

Dr. Ovary: What about them?

Frau Franksenbeans: I overheard them arguing. He's as big a fraud as you are. He's never solved one crime! She's the brains, just like I am. He's just a front man, because people would never take a woman detective -- or a woman scientist -- seriously.

Dr. Ovary: (*sarcastically*) But darling, I've always taken you seriously.

Frau Franksenbeans: Shut up.

Dr. Ovary: (*again, sarcastically*) Yes, dear. If I may ask, why is this important to us?

Frau Franksenbeans: Do you have any idea the amount of publicity we would receive if we exposed them? The Great Hemlock Holmes, a phony.

Dr. Ovary: I still don't see the advantage.

Frau Franksenbeans: Are you kidding? Everyone will want to interview us. We'll be famous! And that will draw attention to our scientific research, the drug company, your practice, the books you'll write -- and I'll ghost write -- and most important, the breakthrough cure for Disrobe-a-phobia! I'm going to be rich, Charles! I'll own it all, including you. As long as you need my serum, you'll never leave me. I'll have you right where I want you!

Frau F. exits, laughing maniacally. Whatsun is still spying, as Mr. and Mrs. Drudgery come in to talk to Dr. Ovary.

Mr. Drudgery: Dr. Ovary, I think it's time we had a talk.

Mrs. Drudgery: Yes, I think it's time we filled you in on the missing pieces to the puzzle.

Dr. Ovary: What puzzle? What are you talking about?

Mrs. Drudgery: There's much more to Elmira's story than even Mr. Holmes knows.

Dr. Ovary: And how would you know more than Holmes? You're just the housekeeper.

Mrs. Drudgery: I'm more than just the housekeeper.

Mr. Drudgery: We know that *you* know Disrobe-A-Phobia is hereditary, correct?

Dr. Ovary: That is correct. Why do you ask?

Mr. Drudgery: That means Elmira inherited the disease from someone. Who?

Dr. Ovary: Her parents, of course.

Mrs. Drudgery: And just who *are* her parents?

Dr. Ovary: I don't know the answer to that, yet. But I hope to find out. I would like to study them as well.

Mrs. Drudgery: Well, you won't have to search far for them.

Dr. Ovary: You mean you know who her parents are? You know where they are?

Mr. Drudgery: Ooooooh . . . they're a lot closer than you think.

Dr. Ovary: Enough! Out with it, man. Who are they? Where are they?

Mr. Drudgery begins to take his clothes off.

Mrs. Drudgery: Good question, Doc. (*pointing to Mr. Drudgery*) Care to take a stab at it?

Dr. Ovary: Good God! You mean . . . you two are . . . ?

Mrs. Drudgery: Yes, it's true! Elmira is our daughter!

Dr. Ovary: And you're both afflicted?

Mrs. Drudgery: No, just him. (*goes to Mr. Drudgery and starts redressing him*) I don't have time to take my clothes off. I'm too busy putting his back on!

Dr. Ovary: So, Mr. Drudgery, you have the disease. And you inherited it from one of your parents. Which one?

Mr. Drudgery: I don't know. I grew up in a nudist colony. I didn't even know I had the disease until I met the Missus.

Dr. Ovary: And how did that come about?

Mrs. Drudgery: Well, you see, Doc, I was hired by the nudist colony but there really wasn't much to do. I had a lot of time on my hands.

Dr. Ovary: What was your job there?

Mrs. Drudgery: Doing laundry.

Dr. Ovary: I see . . .

Mrs. Ovary: Aside from the occasional sheets and towels, there wasn't much to wash. So, I spent a lot of time . . . gazing at the sights. And the husband there, he caught my eye.

Mr. Drudgery: I'm not sure what her "eye" caught. Anyway, one thing led to another. The problem came when she wanted to go on a real date. We were going to go to the movies, but I never could bring myself to get dressed to leave the colony. She bought me a suit to wear, but the minute I put it on, I started taking it off again!

Dr. Ovary: Yes! A classic case! Go on . . .

Mrs. Drudgery: That's when I realized something was seriously wrong. I went to the library and did some research and learned of Disrobe-A-Phobia and its symptoms. I knew then he had it. And I also knew there was no cure.

Dr. Ovary: But you married him anyway.

Mrs. Drudgery: Yes, love is blind. We were married at the nudist colony. Pity. I could never show anyone the wedding pictures . . . I've been taking care of him ever since. It's been exhausting keeping his clothes on and keeping his disease a secret.

Dr. Ovary: Fascinating! And where does Elmira fit into the picture?

Mr. Drudgery: You're the doctor. Do we have to explain that to you? The whole "birds and the bees" thing?

Dr. Ovary: Of course not. I know where the birds and bees come from. What I meant was . . .

Mrs. Drudgery: What does that matter? We had a child, Elmira. And our worst fears were realized. She had the same disease her father had. We thought about going back to the nudist colony, but it was closed. We realized we couldn't keep her. I could barely keep up with the husband. Taking care of two of them would have been impossible.

Dr. Ovary: So, you sent her away.

Mr. Drudgery: Yes, to the Cozy Crypt Sanatorium. And we've never forgiven ourselves.

Mrs. Drudgery: One day, Mr. Holmes was telling me about you and your recent discovery of a