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Family Plays

Agatha Christie Made Me Do It

Murder mystery/Comedy
by
Eddie Cope

Agatha Christie Made Me Do It

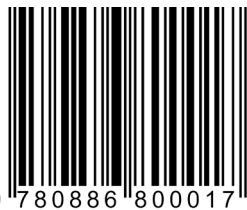
Murder mystery/Comedy. By Eddie Cope. Cast: 6m., 5w. This funny three-act spoof of the mystery play set box-office records in its nine-performance premiere as the annual melodrama at the Theatre Suburbia in Houston, Texas, followed by numerous performances on the dinner theatre circuit. Police Officer Hootspah decided that writing about crime is better than his real-life job of dealing with it on the street. He takes Agatha Christie's murder mysteries as his model and starts out. In spite of Hootspah's constant bumbling and ineptness, the characters he creates take over, and the story that emerges is funny. For example, the main character is a playboy type who wakes up from two days of "sleeping it off" to discover that he has two brides and a fiancée. It's funny and suspenseful—we are not only kept guessing who committed the murder but also kept wondering why the corpse keeps disappearing ... and where! A lively addition to any season—for all groups. *One int. set (city apartment). Costumes: modern clothes. Approximate running time: 100 minutes. Code: AG5.*

Family Plays

311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098-3308
Phone: (800) 448-7469 / (815) 338-7170
Fax: (800) 334-5302 / (815) 338-8981

www.FamilyPlays.com

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Agatha Christie Made Me Do It



3-Act Spoof
of the "Mystery" Play

By
Eddie Cope

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NOTES ON THE PLAY

Police Officer Hootspah, tired of being a cop, decides the quickest way to riches and a life of ease is to write a murder mystery. Never having written anything before, he seeks help from a hypothetical book which analyzes Agatha Christie's methods as a mystery writer.

In spite of his bumbling manner, his obvious ineptness for the task, and the fact that his people frequently get out of hand, Hootspah manages to put together a play with a barrel full of laughs, enough suspense to trigger the interest of any audience, and a cast of high-calibre characters. He blithely ignores some facts of life and law in developing his plot, but this doesn't deter him; he'd put it down to "poetic license" if he knew the term.

And so it is that author Eddie Cope has presented us with a scintillating spoof of that favorite of American theatre audiences — the mystery comedy.

Cope is a prominent part of the Houston community theatre scene, having written a number of scripts which drew praise from the critics, including these comments about *Agatha Christie Made Me Do It*:

"Animated and lively" — *Houston Chronicle*. "Hilarious examination of what makes a murder play click . . . Don't miss it if you like to laugh." — *Houston Banner*. "It's a cross between 'Laugh-In' and 'Perry Mason.'" — *Houston Business Journal*. "The script is full of red herrings, clues and suspects. And true to the genre, there are several switcheroos before the caper is finally unravelled." — *Houston Post*

In its two-month run at Theatre Suburbia, this play set a new box-office record. An earlier version was successfully staged at the Southwest Theatre Guild.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The setting is the lavish living room of a high-rise apartment. A door Up Right leads to Monte's bedroom. A door Up Left leads to the dining room and kitchen. A door (invisible to the audience) at the end of a foyer at Stage Left is the main entry into the apartment. Furnishings include a sofa, coffee table, matching chair with hassock, telephone table. At Up Right Center is a whatnot cabinet with a Turkish hookah and other exotic items. At Up Left Center are a small desk and chair. Against the Left wall, downstage of the entrance foyer, are ten or twelve attache cases of varying styles. One case is distinctly different from all the others (in the script it is referred to as the red case). Far Down Right, in a niche, a substage, or some other area obviously not a part of the main set, are a small desk and chair. On the desk is a portable electric typewriter, a stack of typing paper, several books, and a clipboard. This is the area which Police Officer Hootspah occupies during the play.

Costumes are modern. Ruperta wears an assortment of outlandish wigs (including a bald-head wig in the final scene).

AGATHA CHRISTIE MADE ME DO IT

Cast of Characters

Police Officer Hootspah
Waldo, *a very proper butler*
Annie, *a slap-'em-on-the-back chambermaid*
Monte Brainard, *a wealthy young man*
Carl Lloyd, *Monte's business associate*
Jo-Jo LaMotte, *a stripper*
Jenny Winters, *a dipper*
Sam Sears, *an attorney*
Cindy Haines, *Monte's fiancée*
Ruperta Holland, *Monte's greedy cousin*
"Dutch" Winters, *Jenny's brudder*

★

First presented by Theatre Suburbia, Houston, Texas, February and March, 1975, with the following cast under the direction of Bonnie McFerren:

Hootspah	Joe McHale
Waldo	Robert Cole
Annie	Toni Anderson
Monte Brainard	Ric Harvey
Carl Lloyd	Ray New
Jo-Jo LaMotte	Barbara Mabry
Jenny Winters	Jackie Mullis
Sam Sears	Laurence Shallenberger
Cindy Haines	Risa Engebretson
Ruperta Holland	Golda Deadrick
"Dutch" Winters	Richard Ondrusek

★

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action takes place in Monte Brainard's apartment.

ACT I: Tuesday morning

ACT II: Tuesday afternoon

ACT III: Tuesday night

Time: The present

★

PROP LIST

Hootspah —

- Book entitled "How to Write a Murder Play: an Analysis of Agatha Christie's Technique"
- Clipboard with sheets of paper
- Pencil
- Police whistle

Waldo —

- Breakfast tray with toast, butter, jam, coffee pot, cup, saucer, glass of ice water
- Box of aspirin
- Two or three newspapers
- Shopping bag
- Large apron

Monte —

- Turkish scimitar or other exotic sword or dagger
- Checkbook, pen
- Handgun

Carl —

- Envelope containing letter

Cindy —

- Rolled newspapers

Sam Sears —

- Two or three newspapers
- Seafood dinner (place setting for 2)

Ruperta —

- Two or three newspapers
- Crisp \$1 bill in handbag.

Annie —

- Big key ring with many keys
- Flashlight
- Stack of small towels
- Handcuffs
- Man's wristwatch
- Wig the color of Monte's hair

Dutch —

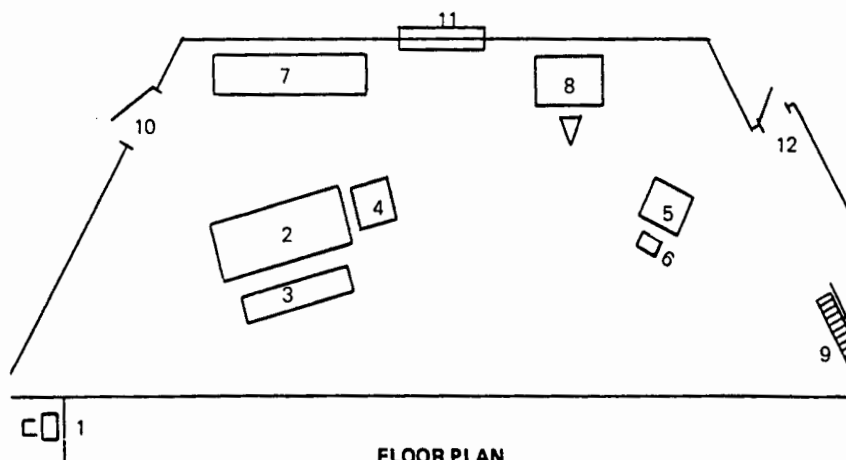
- Gun (Saturday Night Special)
- Drumstick

Jo-Jo —

- Marriage license
- Handbag
- Toothpick

Jenny —

- Marriage license
- Handbag



FLOOR PLAN

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Hootspah's area, with desk & chair | 8. desk and chair |
| 2. sofa | 9. neat row of attache cases |
| 3. coffee table | 10. door to Monte's bedroom |
| 4. small table with telephone | 11. window |
| 5. chair | 12. door to dining room and kitchen |
| 6. hassock | 13. main entrance to apartment |
| 7. Display cabinet with Turkish hookah and other collectibles | |

PRODUCTION NOTES FOR LONDON SETTING

To change the setting of the play to London, as was done at the Dean Goss Dinner Theatre (see page 3), the following revisions may be made:

Hootspah's area in the floor plan (No. 1 on facing page) may be omitted. Cyril Sidney Cheshire opened the play by appearing mysteriously from behind a bookcase or sliding wall panel. Each subsequent appearance was equally "scary," using such devices as a window-seat which he entered from offstage; a wall picture which rotated, revealing a hole in the wall; and so on. He made one appearance through the audience.

All the performers may use British dialect. Monte, Cindy, Waldo, Sam Sears, Ruperta, Lloyd, and Cheshire used a standard London accent. Annie, Jo-Jo, Jenny, and Dutch used Cockney or other sub-standard British speech.

Terms which differ in England and America must be changed. Among these are the following: All references to "district attorney" should be changed to "Scotland Yard" or "Scotland Yard inspector." Agatha Christie should be referred to as "Dame Agatha" — never "Mrs. Christie." Sam Sears should be referred to as Monte's "solicitor." All references to money must be changed to British currency.

Specific changes:

Page 15: In Monte's speech, change "Medal of Honor" to "Victoria Cross"

Page 22: Waldo's speech — change "House Beautiful" and "TV Guide" to "Punch" and "the London Economist"

Page 24: Sam's speech — change "BBC from London" to "NBC from New York" and "British papers" to "American papers"

Page 28: Hootspah's (Cheshire's) speech — delete reference to "American family"

Page 35: Jo-Jo's speech — change "200 bucks a week" to "a few measly shekels"

Page 41: Ruperta's speech — delete the word "state" from "state penitentiary"

Page 41: Annie's speech and others — change "flashlight" to "torch"

Page 57: Annie's speech — change "Florida" to "Brighton"

Other changes may be made, depending upon how "British" the production is intended to be; e.g.: "elevator" to "lift"; "TV" to "telly," etc.

Hootspah's "Brooklyn cop" speeches must be changed to conform to Cheshire's Sherlock Holmes characterization; for example, the opening scene, page 5:

CHESHIRE. *[There is the creaking sound of a door opening or wall panel sliding back. He emerges and looks around mysteriously. A whistle hangs on a cord around his neck. He spies the audience.]* Good evening, dear friends! My name is Cyril Sidney Cheshire. I'm the author of the masterpiece that is about to unfold. Writing a mystery play isn't as easy as one might think. Indeed, I ran into deadend after deadend. One dark evening recently, while walking through London's West End, I happened upon a small theatre. The marquee read, "Agatha Christie's 'The Mousetrap' Now Playing." And suddenly all those deadends vanished! I simply asked myself, "How would Agatha Christie do it?" I'm plowing right ahead with my play now. And I'll be dropping in on the proceedings from time to time, to fix a thing or two. Meantime, the setting of my play is the posh bachelor flat of the hero, Monte Brainard. Tuesday morning. Now keep that in mind, dear friends, it's *Tuesday morning*. *[He crosses back to the point at which he entered; blows whistle; exits. The action of his play begins.]*

The first professional production of AGATHA CHRISTIE MADE ME DO IT was given by the Dean Goss Dinner Theatre in Houston May 10-July 3, 1977 (48 performances). Executive producer was John Gentempo; producer/director, Glenn Holtzman; and host, Dean Goss. The cast was as follows:

*Cyril Sidney Cheshire	Tommy Rogers
Monte Brainard	Ron Jackson
Waldo	Grant Kilpatrick
Cindy Haines	Charlene Bigham
Ruperta Holland	Marge Carroll
Sam Sears	Don Rausch
Annie	Carolyn Montgomery
Jo-Jo LaMotte	Taubey Shedden
Jenny Winters	Linda Bartlett
"Dutch" Winters	Peter Bryson
Carl Lloyd	Ken Dyess

*This dinner theatre production set the play in London. Police Officer Hootspah became Cyril Sidney Cheshire, an inept, would-be mystery writer who had delusions of being Sherlock Holmes. In fact, he dressed like Holmes (see photographs on next page).

The publishers feel that the two settings — a New York apartment or a London flat — are equally delightful. Necessary changes for transferring the story to a London setting are given on page 61. Producers may make these changes without additional permission.

CRITICAL COMMENTS

"'Agatha' was a smashing success, audience-wise and boxoffice-wise." — *John Gentempo, executive producer, Dean Goss Dinner Theatre*

"First class all the way." — *Clyde Butter, KLEF*

"Entertaining . . . every few lines there is a gag, clue or red herring." — *William Albright, Houston Post*

"Delightful, amusing . . . a real winner." — *Clara Clay, Pasadena Citizen*

"The script is clever with a 'playwright' instructing the audience on how to develop an Agatha Christie plot." — *Ray Holland, Houston Scene*

"A far out and funny whodunit." — *Sue Dauphin, KUHF*

AGATHA CHRISTIE MADE ME DO IT

ACT I

[In the darkness there is the sound of a typewriter. The typing is slow and laborious, obviously the work of a two-finger operator. Gradually light comes up on stage. Seated at desk far Down Right is POLICE OFFICER HOOTSPA, wearing full uniform except cap. He's a very pleasant middle-aged "dese-dose-and-dem" man. He mutters, half to himself: "Electric typewriters ain't for me. From now on I'm gonna write by hand." He gets up, walks Down Center, and addresses audience.]

HOOTSPA. Good evening, folks. I wanna innerduce myself. I'm Police Officer Eugene O. Hootspah. Now don't get excited; I ain't here to bust nobody. I just want to tell you about Agatha Christie and I. She's the woman that wrote "The Mousetrap," "Moider on the Shank-high Express" . . . uh . . . "Witness for the Prostitution" . . . and . . . lots of other stuff. Well, all my life I always wanted to write a mystery play and make a lotta money so I could quit the force . . . and live a life of ease. *[Crosses to his desk]* So, I bought this here book *[holds up book]* called "How to Write a Moider Play," showing how Agatha Christie wrote 'em. *[Chuckling]* I bet you ain't never seen anyone write a play before your very eyes. *[Serious again]* Okay. My play will start with the first act. It's gonna be a classy apartment for the hero, Monte Brainard. On a *Tuesday* morning. Now keep that in mind, folks, it's *Tuesday* morning. Very important to the story. *[HOOTSPA sits at his desk, glares at typewriter, then starts writing on clipboard.]*

[WALDO, an elderly, dour-faced valet, enters from door Up Left with breakfast tray. He crosses to coffee table in front of sofa, begins setting table. A glass of ice water is the last item on the tray. After looking stealthily from side to side, he picks up the glass and touches it to his head tenderly. Offstage, a tea kettle whistles. WALDO hurriedly puts down the glass and goes out door Up Left. A moment later, ANNIE, the chambermaid, enters through door Down Left,

carrying an enormous ring of keys. She wears an apron with huge pockets. She is very observant. She gives the room a thorough scrutiny with her eyes. WALDO enters through door Up Left, bumping into Annie. WALDO gasps.

WALDO. I would have let you in, Annie.

ANNIE. Rather use my own keys. Any chambermaid worth her salt should be independent, know what I mean?

WALDO. Yes, I know what you mean.

ANNIE. How's your headache?

WALDO. Headache? *[Amazed]* How did you know I have a headache?

ANNIE. Yer eyes are squonched up in pain . . . and yer forehead is damp from holding a glass of ice water against it. *[Pause]* Besides which, yer carrying a box of aspirin.

WALDO. *[Deflated as he looks at the aspirin box in his hand]* Oh, Annie, I was about to compliment you on your Sherlock Holmesian powers of deduction.

ANNIE. Sherlock who?

WALDO. Never mind.

ANNIE. Oh. *[She's idly drifting around the room, casually eyeing everything.]*

WALDO. Is there anything I can do for you?

ANNIE. Not really. I'm just warning all the tenants that the building engineer is working on the lights, know what I mean?

WALDO. *[With a note of annoyance]* I know what you mean.

ANNIE. What's the matter, Waldo? Yer usually so friendly-like to me. Is something wrong?

WALDO. I don't approve of serving Mr. Brainard's meals in here.

ANNIE. At least it's closter to the kitchen. *[Vaguely indicates kitchen door Up Left]*

WALDO. Furthermore, there's a knife missing from his prized collection.

ANNIE. A dagger?

WALDO. *[Dumfounded]* Yes. How did you know?

ANNIE. *[Quickly]* Figgered they'd be the ones to get stole first. They got all them jools on the handle.

WALDO. I don't understand how it could have disappeared. We keep the collection under lock and key.

ANNIE. Don't sweat it, Waldo. I'll keep a eye open for the knife . . . while I'm cleanin'. G'bye. *[Starts to exit; stops suddenly near the attache cases]* Why so many little suitcases? Is Mr. Brainard going on a lotta little trips?

WALDO. Oh, no, Annie. His holding company just bought a factory that manufactures attache cases. These are samples.

ANNIE. I woulda swore they was suitcases. *[Shaking her head in disbelief]* See ya later. *[As she exits Down Left, mumbling to herself]* Sherlock who?

HOOTSPA. *[Takes a few steps on stage, book in hand]* Now, let's see if I handled that scene like Mrs. Christie says. *[Reads]* "Never open a play with two servants talking to one another about the master of the house" *[This soaks in . . . embarrassed:]* Yeah, well . . . it also says here that audiences like to watch actors eat, so I'll have Monte eat breakfast. *[Returns to his desk]*

[As WALDO putters around table, MONTE BRAINARD enters from bedroom wearing karate suit and brandishing long Turkish scimitar . . . lunges, parries, thrusts . . . all badly. Monte is in his late 20's, instantly likeable, but a fumbler.]

MONTE. Good morning, Waldo . . . great day, isn't it?

WALDO. *[Wincing]* Is it sir? I don't believe I've noticed.

MONTE. Open a window. Take a deep breath of sulphur monoxide.

WALDO. Yes, sir. *[Holding head]*

MONTE. Head bothering you?

WALDO. *[Indignantly]* Of course it does.

MONTE. I'm sorry to hear it, Waldo.

WALDO. Thank you.

MONTE. *[Sitting cross-legged on floor]* Food! Bring me a double order of granola and two eggs cooked in peanut oil.

WALDO. Begging your pardon, sir, I didn't think you'd want much breakfast . . . after last night . . .

MONTE. *[Laughing]* Say, who has this hangover . . . you or me? *[WALDO gives him a look.]* I'm sorry, Waldo; I know how you feel. Do you have the morning papers?

WALDO. *[Getting papers from Up Left Center desk]* Are you sure you want to read about it?

MONTE. About what?

WALDO. Last night.

MONTE. Last night? What are you trying to tell me?

WALDO. It's all right here, sir. [*Hands him papers*]

MONTE. [*Casually reads headlines of each paper*] "Jet Setter Runs Amuck" . . . "Heir to Fortune Wrecks Nightclub" . . . Anyone we know?

WALDO. I suggest you read the full account.

MONTE. [*Reading*] "The playboy, whose late father was known as King of the Conglomerates, went wild when . . ." [*mumbles, reading; then aloud:*] . . . Monte Brainard! — Well, they'll have to run a retraction, of course.

WALDO. That does seem unlikely, sir.

MONTE. [*Reading*] "Toby's, a small, dimly lit club on 57th street, was the scene of a melee in the early . . ." Toby's? Never heard of it.

WALDO. Excuse me, sir, but Mr. Toby said otherwise.

MONTE. When? Where?

WALDO. Late last night . . . here in this room.

MONTE. Why didn't you awaken me?

WALDO. You were not in your bed, sir.

MONTE. Where was I?

WALDO. I wouldn't exactly know.

MONTE. Talk sense. I came home about 10 o'clock. You were here.

WALDO. Excuse me, sir, but it was closer to three o'clock. When it happened.

MONTE. What are you talking about? When *what* happened?

WALDO. [*Deeply hurt, but glad to have a chance to talk about it*] When you . . . er . . . struck me. Last night.

MONTE. Come on, Waldo. You know I was in a particularly good mood last night because Cindy and I announced our engagement.

WALDO. That was Sunday night.

MONTE. Yes.

WALDO. My injury [*touching head*] was last night.

MONTE. Of course — Sunday.

WALDO. No — Monday.

MONTE. [*Totally confused*] Huh?

WALDO. Look at the date on the papers, sir.

MONTE. [*Reads*] Tuesday, July 14 . . . [*checks other paper*] Tues . . . day . . . Ju . . . ly . . . What happened to Monday?

WALDO. If you'll forgive my saying so . . . perhaps you have had a lapse of memory.

MONTE. Lapse of memory? [*A worried pause; then a chuckle*] Wait a minute, I know! Everyone is putting me on . . . Carl, Sam, Ruperta . . . and you're in on the gag, too.

WALDO. Oh, no, sir! Not I.

MONTE. Printed up fake newspapers . . . gave you a prepared speech . . . probably even tipped the switchboard operator. Watch this. [*Picks up phone*] Hello. This is Mr. Brainard. What day is this? Of course, I'm serious . . . Thank you. [*Hangs up*] I told you she was in on it. She said it was Tuesday.

WALDO. Yes, sir.

MONTE. I'll bet those idiots got Cindy into this, too. She likes a good laugh . . . [*Picks up phone*] 747-3816, please. [*To Waldo, who is glum*] Waldo, you're not playing your part. And when I see Carl . . . [*into phone*] hello, darling, I . . . hello. Hello. Cindy! Operator, I was cut off . . . oh . . . [*hangs up*]

WALDO. I was afraid of that, sir.

MONTE. Why did she hang up?

WALDO. Maybe she reads the same fake newspapers you do.

[*Buzzer*]

MONTE. [*Running around with the papers*] If that's Sam Sears, bar the door! [*Hiding papers under sofa cushion*]

WALDO. Oh, I couldn't do that, sir. Mr. Sears and I were both in your late father's employ for such a long time. As the elderly Mr. Brainard used to say, "Sam takes care of my lawsuits and Waldo takes care of my business suits." [*Laughs stiffly*] Oh, your late father was witty! [*Exits to front door*]

MONTE. I don't have my father's sense of humor.

WALDO. [*Returns to announce visitor*] Mr. Carl Lloyd.

MONTE. You don't have to do the announcing bit.

WALDO. Force of habit. [*Exits to kitchen*]

[*CARL LLOYD enters. He is a good-looking young man about Monte's age, wearing dark glasses. He is not as pleasant as he would like you to believe he is.*]

CARL. Morning!

MONTE. Come in, Carl. I intended to see you before you left. How about some breakfast?

CARL. No, thanks. I'm on a liquid diet . . . still trying to get used to these artificial choppers.

MONTE. That's right, you'll have to practice holding a long-stemmed rose in your short-stemmed teeth. Don't let me embarrass you, old buddy, but how are you fixed for South American mad money? Need any help?

CARL. Not this time, thanks. I think my financial problems are finally over. *[Notices cases]* What are these, samples?

MONTE. Yeah, new company. Can you use one? Help yourself.

CARL. Great! The ideal going-away present. *[Glances around room]* Say, where's the little woman?

MONTE. Little woman?

CARL. Your unblushing bride.

MONTE. What are you talking about?

CARL. You know what I'm talking about. *[Hums "Here Comes the Bride"]*

MONTE. Cindy? We haven't set the date yet.

CARL. I wasn't referring to Cindy.

MONTE. Who then?

CARL. Jo-Jo. *[Pause]* The stripper.

MONTE. Never heard of her.

CARL. Wow! I read what you did to Toby's club.

MONTE. *[Nervously; displeased with Carl's jibes]* Never heard of Toby's either.

CARL. *[With an unpleasant undertone]* What's the matter with you, Monte?

MONTE. You tell me.

CARL. *[With a hint of impatience]* No, you tell me.

MONTE. Don't get your hackles up. I went to bed Sunday night and woke up Tuesday morning, that's all.

CARL. *[Showing minor annoyance as he goes over to attache cases; offhandedly]* Nobody sleeps 36 hours.

MONTE. *[Gloomily]* Nah . . . nobody sleeps 36 hours . . .

CARL. On the other hand, I've heard of cases of amnesia and its abrupt cessation, a form of dementia that has . . .

MONTE. Dementia! Me?

CARL. You're the one who lost Monday.

MONTE. But, but . . . Carl . . . you've known me a long time . . . college and all; have I ever acted like I was . . . you know . . .

CARL. Your cousin Ruperta once told me she accidentally hit you with a horseshoe. *[CARL pantomimes a ringer hitting back of Monte's neck.]* Could have caused permanent damage.

MONTE. Well, yes . . . but that was a long time ago.

CARL. *[Tapping Monte on the chest]* And didn't you get a little . . . disoriented when you were overseas?

MONTE. Disoriented?

CARL. Like the time you tried to boil a lobster in a Japanese bathhouse?

MONTE. Purely for demonstration purposes. I told the attendant the bath was hot enough to boil a lobster. She laughed at me, so I ran out and bought one.

CARL. *[Slapping Monte's backside, somewhat harder than necessary]* Just wearing a towel?

MONTE. *[Self-righteously]* I was in a hurry.

CARL. *[He really doesn't like Monte, and it shows in spite of his efforts to hide his feelings.]* Friend to friend, Monte, you're a kook.

MONTE. Maybe . . . maybe I don't have all my buttons. *[Picks up phone]* Operator . . . This is Monte Brainard. What day is this? Yes, I know you told me before, but I want to be sure . . . thanks. Please get me 847-8809.

CARL. Who're you calling?

MONTE. Sam. Let him earn his retainer. *[Into phone]* Mr. Sears, please . . . Monte Brainard . . . Oh, I see. Thanks, goodbye. *[Hangs up]* His secretary said he's on his way over.

[Buzzer]

MONTE. Oh, Waldo!

WALDO. Yes, sir. I'll attend to the door. *[Crossing to door]*

MONTE. That must be Sam now.

CARL. According to that story in the papers, you're gonna need a lawyer. I'm sorry I won't be here to see how this comes out.

WALDO. *[Announcing]* Mrs. Jo-Jo LaMotte Brainard.

MONTE. Brainard? *[WALDO shrugs and exits to kitchen.]*

[JO-JO enters. She is a brassy beauty with lots of curves and a low-cut dress.]

JO-JO. Well, smart boy, what happened to you? *[She slaps his face.]*

MONTE. Huh?

CARL. *[To Monte]* It's Jo-Jo. *[MONTE stands and stares stupidly. To Jo-Jo]* There's something you ought to know about Mr. Brainard. He . . .

JO-JO. Butt out of this family brawl, four-eyes. *[To Monte]* You don't exactly look like yourself in the light of day, but don't you know who I am?

CARL. Monte! *[Hums "Here comes the bride . . ."]*

MONTE. The alleged bride?

JO-JO. *[Very close to him]* You ought to know, baby.

MONTE. What can I do for you?

JO-JO. I want satisfaction and I want it now.

CARL. I'd advise you to leave him alone, Miss LaMotte . . . I mean, Mrs. Brainard. This can all be straightened out later, but for now . . . well, let's say that Mr. Brainard . . . isn't well.

JO-JO. Ha, I know he's poco loco . . . but cute.

MONTE. Will you two stop talking about me as if I weren't here?
[Pause. MONTE is peering closely at her bust.] That looks familiar.
[CARL gives him a look.] The pin, I mean.

CARL. Haven't you ever seen a fraternity pin before?

JO-JO. *[To Monte]* I'll never take it off, because you gave it to me.

MONTE. I did?

JO-JO. Then you left. *[Runs her fingers through his hair]*

MONTE. Really?

JO-JO. *[Pushes him down on sofa and follows]* No more disappearing acts for you, doll. You promised me penthouses and fur coats. Then after you started the fight at Toby's, you took me out and got me plastered and married me . . . then disappeared.

MONTE. But, Miss Jo-Jo . . .

JO-JO. I'm going to get something out of this.

CARL. You can't hold Mr. Brainard legally responsible for anything he did Monday night.

MONTE. You can't hold me legally respon . . . *[turns to Carl]* Are you sure?

CARL. Absolutely. You were temporarily demented.

MONTE. Thanks.

JO-JO. I've got some rights. I'm his wife.

CARL. Can you prove it?

JO-JO. *[Rummaging in handbag]* I got the marriage license . . . right here . . . somewhere . . . no, that's not it. *[Suddenly]* Now I remember! Left it in my other costume. *[At doorway]* I'm going to get it. *[Shakes finger at Monte]* Don't go 'way, wise guy, or I'll have you dusted by a certain night club bouncer!

[SAM SEARS enters key in hand. He is distinguished, past middle age, and he likes money, food, and women. He is carrying morning papers. He and JO-JO have to maneuver past each other in the hall:]

SAM. *[Watching Jo-Jo depart]* Who was that?

MONTE. Uh . . . she was . . . selling Girl Scout cookies.

SAM. *[Getting down to business]* Well, Monte. What's this about you going berserk? *[Indicates newspapers, then drops them on sofa cushion under which Monte hid his papers]*

MONTE. That's what I like to see in an attorney . . . a man who gets right down to the nitty-gritty.

SAM. 'Morning, Carl. I hear you're leaving us. *[Picks up piece of toast from coffee table and begins munching on it]* Actually, Monte, I'm here on another matter.

MONTE. Don't tell me . . . I laid the Statue of Liberty . . . *[long pause]* . . . on its side . . .

SAM. I'm trying to be serious.

CARL. Maybe it's *[hums: "Here Comes the Bride"]*

SAM. *[Looking from Carl to Monte]* Oh, then you do know about her.

MONTE. Jo-Jo?

SAM. In the first place, her names's Jenny. Jenny Winters.

MONTE. Show biz people . . . they're always changing their names.

SAM. Pleasant little lady. Dips chocolates by hand. Her apron is sweet enough to eat.

MONTE. My wife is a dancer . . . what am I saying? *[Scratches his left shoulder nervously]*

CARL. Sam, Monte's had some kind of mental lapse. He thinks today is Monday. Maybe some form of dementia . . .

MONTE. Will you stop with that word *dementia*!

SAM. Settle down, you two.

CARL. He also regards himself as the number one swinger in America.

MONTE. Me? You're the one who's always trying to prove something with the women.

SAM. *[Sternly]* That's enough!

CARL. There you go with that superior attitude . . . thinking you're better than everybody else because you're richer.

MONTE. I don't feel that way, Carl. Honest.

CARL. Well, I feel that way about you.

MONTE. We've always considered you a member of the family.

CARL. That's right. Keep reminding me your father laid a college scholarship on me.

MONTE. Come on, Carl.

CARL. That doesn't mean the Brainards own me.

SAM. *[Angrily]* I said cut it out!

MONTE. Let him talk. Now, I know how he really feels about the Brainards.

CARL. I could tell you plenty.

MONTE. Funny you never mention these things when you want to borrow money.

CARL. *[To cut the argument short, CARL suddenly shakes hands with Sam.]* Goodbye, Mr. Sears. *[Starts out of room; pauses at entry hall and snarls at Monte]* And if I were you, big shot, I'd keep out of dark alleys. You might get what you deserve. *[Exits. SAM and MONTE look at each other in consternation. CARL returns, picks up red attache case and exits. SAM and MONTE freeze as HOOTSPAHL blows whistle.]*

HOOTSPAHL. Now, according to Agatha Christie, the audience should realize that somebody's gonna get bumped off. It's what's called *[reads from book]* "an ominous air of impending doom should pre-vade . . . uh . . . per-vade the atmosphere." Hmmm. *[He silently studies the printed page for a moment, then returns to his desk. Blows whistle.]*

MONTE. Sam . . . do I give the impression I think I'm better than everyone just because Dad left me a little money?

SAM. It's not "a little money," but let's solve your immediate problem.

MONTE. Like allegedly marrying that girl? *[Pours himself a Coke; holds it without drinking immediately]*

SAM. She was sitting in my office with a marriage license in her hot little stained hand.

MONTE. LaMotte was?

SAM. Who's LaMotte?

MONTE. You know . . . the one with the Girl Scout cookies. Jo-Jo LaMotte, the stripper. She went to get the marriage license . . .

SAM. You claim you also married a girl who . . . takes it all off?

MONTE. Everything but my fraternity pin. *[Takes a sip of Coke]*

SAM. *[After a moment of deep thought]* Monte . . . did you ever hear of bigamy?

MONTE. You mean when one man marries two women . . . *[Takes another sip and does a spit-take as he realizes situation]* Bigamy!

SAM. Bigamy.

MONTE. I've heard of it. [*Sinking into chair*]

SAM. [*More deep thought*] What are you going to do?

MONTE. You're my lawyer . . . you tell me. I can't remember a thing.

SAM. Concentrate.

MONTE. [*Concentrates*] I can't remember. [*Pause*] The horse-shoe! [*He pantomimes a horseshoe making a ringer on his neck.*]

[*Buzzer. WALDO passes in hallway to answer it.*]

MONTE. Maybe that's Cindy coming over to tell me off in person!

WALDO. [*Announcing*] Mrs. Jenny Winters Brainard. [*He exits in perplexity.*]

[*JENNY enters. She's pretty, but certainly not classic. Wears a uniform with chocolate-stained apron. She sees Sam and goes straight to him.*]

JENNY. Say, whatsa idea giving me the slip in your office?

SAM. Uh . . .

JENNY. [*Seeing Monte, shouts*] Who are you?

MONTE. Me?

SAM. Him? — I thought you claimed him as a husband.

JENNY. [*Takes out glasses and holds one lens to one eye to look Monte over. Loud and cheery*] Oh, I dint reconize you at first. [*She crosses to Monte and slaps him on the cheek.*]

SAM. Please, Miss Winters. Mr. Brainard is a bit upset.

JENNY. How you suppose I feel? Married a rich guy and all I gotta show for it is a marriage license.

MONTE. What'd you expect? The Congressional Medal of Honor?

JENNY. You won't be so fresh when I tell my brudder.

SAM. Quiet! Both of you. Now sit down. [*They do.*] I want the full story.

JENNY. Why dint you ast me when I was in your office?

SAM. Because I wanted to talk to you both together. You're first. What's your name?

JENNY. Jenny Winters. Brain . . . yard.

SAM. When did you meet Mr. Brainard?

JENNY. Who?

SAM. This gentleman.

JENNY. Oh. Monday noon . . . yesterday.