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## **Prelude to The Fine Art of Murder**

The preview is a short performance designed to introduce prospective customers to the characters in the play, as well as a little bit about the plot. It gets performed on a separate date, well in advance of the main play. The preview could be held anywhere, but the concept is that the action happens in the lobby of the Asticou Inn. The year is 1932.

### **Vignette #1**

*The first scene starts with Jack Rafferty and Beverly Button, in the lobby of the Asticou Inn. Halfway through the scene, they will be joined by Gloria Whittingham.*

#### **Jack Rafferty**

This is quite a joint, ain't it Beverly? A lot nicer than the flophouse after the last bank job in Indiana.

#### **Beverly Button**

I suppose it's fine, but what's the deal with all these trees? I mean, are we supposed to be a coupla squirrels or somethin'? I still don't understand why we couldn't hide out in New York. Then I could at least see some of my girlfriends.

#### **Jack Rafferty**

You still don't get it, do you doll? It's not hiding out, if everybody knows where you are. Remember, Hoover and his G-men are looking for yours truly.

#### **Beverly Button**

You keep worryin' about Edgar J. Hoover. Every time we go back to our room, you're checkin' the closet like he's hiding behind my mink coat.

#### **Jack Rafferty**

How many times I gotta tell ya? It's J. Edgar Hoover.

#### **Beverly Button**

That's what I said, Edgar J. Hoover!

**Jack Rafferty**

*Slapping his own forehead in frustration.*

Never mind. I sure wish I could find a place where we could have a couple of drinks.  
Maybe listen to some music.

**Beverly Button**

And dancing. Did I ever tell you that I won a Charleston contest when I dropped out of high school?

**Jack Rafferty**

Only about a million times.

*Rafferty notices a woman standing in the foyer. Pointing at her, he says,*

Hey, I think I know that dame! That's Gloria Whittingham. When I was in Chicago one time, she was running a floating poker game. I'll bet she knows where we could find some action.

**Beverly Button**

Just a minute ago, you was saying it's not hiding out, if everybody knows where you are. Now you're going to pick up with some broad that knows you from Chicago?

**Jack Rafferty**

Don't blow your wig. Only a real chucklehead would put the finger on public enemy number one.

**Beverly Button**

Since when are you number one? I thought that was Dillinger.

**Jack Rafferty**

A guy can dream, can't he?

**Beverly Button**

One of these days, you're going to dream yourself into the electric chair.

**Jack Rafferty**

I think she's recognized me. Here she comes. Don't say nothing about the ankbay objay.

**Beverly Button**

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

**Jack Rafferty**

That's perfect, doll. Exactly what I meant.

**Beverly Button**

No, I really don't know what you're talking about. What's this ankbay objay all about?

**Gloria Whittingham**

I believe it's pig latin, for bank job. Isn't that correct, Rafferty?

**Jack Rafferty**

*Slapping his head again, in frustration, he says*

Hey, Gloria. Long time, no see. What's buzzin, cousin?

**Gloria Whittingham**

Everything is fine with me. I couldn't help but notice you were mentioned in the papers, just the other day. Something about a big withdrawal in Indiana.

**Jack Rafferty**

I wasn't anywhere near that bank.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Whatever you say, Jack. Who's the looker on your arm?

**Jack Rafferty**

This is Beverly. Beverly Button.

**Beverly Button**

Pleased to meet you.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Likewise, Beverly. Have you got any sisters?

**Beverly Button**

Yes, two younger ones. Why do you ask?

**Gloria Whittingham**

I was wondering if the other Buttons were all as cute as you.

**Beverly Button**

I get it! Thanks. Daddy says all three of us are showstoppers, but I think he's partial. I'm trying to break into the modeling business. Jack keeps telling me to be patient, and eventually I'll get what's coming to me.

**Gloria Whittingham**

I'm sure you will, Beverly. Especially if you continue to associate with Jack Rafferty. So, what are you two lovebirds doing in town? And please tell me you're not going anywhere near Bar Harbor Bank and Trust. That's where I keep my dough.

**Jack Rafferty**

No worries, Gloria. We're just looking for a quiet place to relax. Although we might be interested in a little action, if you catch my drift. I don't suppose you could help us out?

**Gloria Whittingham**

I think you're in luck. I'm running a speakeasy out of a new building in Seal Cove. It's on the other side of the island. There's a sign out front that says future home of Seal Cove Auto Museum. If you ask at the desk here at the Asticou, they can direct you. I'm opening the doors at 8 sharp.

**Jack Rafferty**

Sounds great. Just remember, I'm hot right now, so let's not say anything about Jack Rafferty being in town.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Of course, Jack. You can count on my discretion. Just make sure you bring lots of lettuce with you, tonight.

**Jack Rafferty**

What's that supposed to mean? You're not trying to shake me down, are you? Because that would be a mistake.

**Gloria Whittingham**

I was referring to the gaming tables at the speakeasy. I'm sure you have lots of cash burning a hole in your pocket. I'd love to take some of it away from you.

**Jack Rafferty**

I'm sure you would, Gloria.

## Vignette #2

*The second scene starts with Jimmy Olson and Adelaide Dougherty, in the lobby of the Asticou Inn.*

**Jimmy Olson**

Adelaide, you're just the person I was looking for.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

I've been wondering when I was going to see you again, Jimmy. It's been over a month since our last date. I thought we had a swell time.

**Jimmy Olson**

We did. But I'm all out of dough. That's why I'm here.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Uh oh. You didn't come here to put the bite on me, did you? Because if you did, Jimmy Olson—

**Jimmy Olson**

Don't snap your cap, Adelaide. I need your help. I came here because I'm looking for a story, for the paper.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

And you're writing one about waitresses? The Bar Harbor Record is really getting desperate for news, aren't they?

**Jimmy Olson**

Don't sell yourself short. You'd make a great, human interest story, but I heard there's a big shot, automobile manufacturer in town and that he's staying right here—at the Asticou Inn. I tried to get an interview over the phone, but he turned me down.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Don't tell me. You decided to stake out the lobby, didn't you? But now you need my help because you probably have no idea what the guy looks like.

**Jimmy Olson**

Something like that. I just need you point him out. I'll do the rest. His name is Winston Peabody. He's supposed to be here with his wife, Elizabeth.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

I know who you're talking about. I served him and his entourage breakfast, yesterday.

**Jimmy Olson**

Entourage?

**Adelaide Dougherty**

There were four of them. Mr. Peabody and his wife, of course, but then there were two more people. A man and a woman who both sounded like they were pitching ideas to Peabody, for an advertising campaign.

**Jimmy Olson**

This is great! There's a rumor Peabody is launching a new model, but everything has been hush hush. If I could break the story, I'd be sure to get a promotion.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

If I agree to help you, what's in it for me?

**Jimmy Olson**

Adelaide, I'm shocked. You're my trusty side kick. I thought we were just like Robin Hood and Little John.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

I was sort of hoping for Maid Marion, but I guess it's better than Friar Tuck. I'll agree to help, on one condition.

**Jimmy Olson**

Just name it.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

You're taking me out for a meal. And I want dessert, this time.

**Jimmy Olson**

I'm sure Robin Hood never asked Little John out for dinner.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

It was in Howard Pyle's first draft. His editor thought it slowed down the action. Not enough swordplay in the restaurant.

**Jimmy Olson**

Who was Howard Pyle?

**Adelaide Dougherty**

How is it you're the one who went to college, but I'm the one who knows Pyle was the author for Robin Hood? Besides, if taking me out for dinner is such a hardship—

**Jimmy Olson**

Adelaide! You're the only girl for me.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Then why so long between dates?

**Jimmy Olson**

You know Mother doesn't approve. She says you're loose.

*Adelaide puts her hands on her hips.*

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Well, I certainly hope you put her straight.

**Jimmy Olson**

I did. I told her we'd had plenty of dates and I hadn't gotten to first base.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

And what did she say?

**Jimmy Olson**

She reminded me that you dated the entire football team when we were in high school.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Did not! It was only Bobby Thompson, the kicker. And he didn't get to first base, either.

**Jimmy Olson**

Wrong sport. He would have been going for a field goal.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Well, you can tell your mother he didn't get between my goal posts.

*Jimmy laughs.*

**Jimmy Olson**

Somehow, I can't imagine saying that to Mother.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Do we have a deal?

**Jimmy Olson**

You can even name the restaurant.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Swell. I've got an angle on how you can score points with Mr. Peabody.

**Jimmy Olson**

I'm all ears.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Yesterday, Peabody asked if I knew a place where they could get a few drinks, listen to some music. I pretended I didn't know. The management frowns on that kind of thing.

**Jimmy Olson**

But you know a place?

*Adelaide nods her head.*

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Little John has been hanging out with Friar Tuck. We know a place where you can get some sacramental wine, and just about any other kind of booze you want. I'm working for a woman named Gloria Whittingham. She's running a speakeasy over in Seal Cove. I could get you and your new friends into the place.

**Jimmy Olson**

So, I could offer to set Peabody up, along with the rest of his entourage. And then I'd be able to ask him about his plans. This is brilliant!

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Not bad for a sidekick, eh?

**Jimmy Olson**

I knew I could count on you. Mother had this idea she was going to help me.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Oh, Jimmy. Don't tell me Mrs. Olson is here. It's one thing to be a good son, but there's a point where a grown man cuts those apron strings.

**Jimmy Olson**

Don't you think I've tried? I even moved out of the house. That's why I'm broke.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Why didn't I know about this?

**Jimmy Olson**

Because it just happened. Nothing fancy, just a small apartment in Ellsworth. A buddy decided to move at the last minute. He gave me the inside track and the landlord was happy to avoid losing any rent.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

That's great!

**Jimmy Olson**

That's not all. If I get that promotion, I'll have enough to buy a few etchings. Then I could invite you over to see them.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Don't forget slugger, you're still working on first base. Let's not try to steal home plate. At least not yet.

**Dorothy Olson**

There you are, James. I've been looking all over, trying to find you. It sounds as though you've been talking about baseball. Adelaide, I would have thought football was more your sport.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

It's nice to see you again, Mrs. Olson, but I'm afraid I have to get back to work.

**Dorothy Olson**

I understand dear, don't let us keep you.

*Adelaide starts to walk away, but then turns around and comes back.*

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Don't look, but that's Mrs. Peabody, over there. She's with one of the advertising people I mentioned.

**Jimmy Olson**

Great! Thanks, Adelaide. I'll take it from here.

*Adelaide looks at Dorothy with fire in her eyes.*

**Adelaide Dougherty**

And it was only Bobby Thompson!

*Adelaide storms away, leaving Jimmy and his mother alone.*

**Dorothy Olson**

What was that all about?

**Jimmy Olson**

The next time you see her, I wouldn't say anything about football. And whatever you do, don't ask her about field goals.

**Dorothy Olson**

I'm not sure I understand, but I suppose the important thing is that Mrs. Peabody is right over there. This is our big chance.

**Jimmy Olson**

You mean, *my* big chance, don't you?

**Dorothy Olson**

Of course, dear. This is all about you. After all, I'm only your mother.

**Jimmy Olson**

Don't start. And I'm not ready to go over and say hello—not until her husband joins them. We'll have a seat on the sofa over there and wait until we see Mr. Peabody.

*Jimmy Olson and his mother take a seat.*

### **Vignette #3**

*The action shifts and the audience centers on Elizabeth Peabody and Richard Anderson.*

**Richard Anderson**

Where's your husband, Elizabeth?

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Winston is right behind me. I told him I'd wait in the lobby.

**Richard Anderson**

Then we only have a few minutes alone. I wish it were more.

*Elizabeth looks to make sure nobody is close enough to overhear their conversation.*

**Elizabeth Peabody**

I've warned you about bringing up this topic in public, Richard.

**Richard Anderson**

No one is close enough to hear.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Just the same, I don't want to take chances. I'll never find another husband that takes longer to get ready than I do. Besides, you'd never be able to support me in the style to which I've become accustomed—and you'll be out of work if he ever finds out.

**Richard Anderson**

If I don't get that contract, I'll be out of work anyway. Why did Winston decide to set up this competition between me and Neysa McMein? I've always done the advertising for his company. I don't understand why, all of a sudden, I have to compete for his business.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Relax, Richard. When Winston is ready, he'll let you know. What's the point of working yourself into a lather before then?

**Richard Anderson**

You've got to help me, Elizabeth. I know he listens to you. If you put in a good word, I know I'll get the business.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

You know I'll do what I can.

**Richard Anderson**

What about that subject we discussed the other day? About my gambling debts. I'm in a tight spot, Elizabeth.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

I don't have that kind of cash, Richard. I've already told you that.

**Richard Anderson**

I know, but we also talked about the possibility you might be able to give me a piece of jewelry I could use as collateral—for a loan. As soon as I'm able to repay the money, you'll get your trinket back. You have my word.

*Elizabeth pulls a diamond bracelet out of her purse and hands it to Richard, first making sure that no one is watching.*

**Elizabeth Peabody**

This is the last time. And I'm holding you to your word. If I don't get that bracelet back, your gambling debts will be the least of your worries.

**Richard Anderson**

I understand. And I would never do anything to jeopardize our relationship.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

You just did. Remember what I said. I enjoy your company, Richard—but only to a point.

**Richard Anderson**

Winston won't notice this is missing, will he?

*Elizabeth shakes her head.*

**Elizabeth Peabody**

I wouldn't have loaned it to you, if I thought that were a possibility. I haven't worn that piece in years. I doubt Winston remembers he even gave it to me.

*Neysa McMein sees Elizabeth and Richard standing in the lobby. She comes over and says hello.*

**Neysa McMein**

Good morning! I see we have another beautiful day in paradise. Elizabeth, it must have been wonderful to grow up so close to a place like Mount Desert Island. What was the name of the town?

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Camden, Miss McMein. It's not far from here. My family used to come to Bar Harbor for vacations, in the summer.

**Neysa McMein**

What about you, Richard. Ever been in Maine before?

*Richard shakes his head.*

**Richard Anderson**

First time.

**Neysa McMein**

What do you think?

**Richard Anderson**

About what?

**Neysa McMein**

Did someone get up on the wrong side of the bed? It's called having a conversation, Richard. People do it all the time. You should give it a try.

**Richard Anderson**

No thanks.

**Neysa McMein**

Come on, Richard. It'll be fun. I'll ask you a question and then you respond. How did you sleep?

**Richard Anderson**

Why don't you dry up?

**Neysa McMein**

I don't think you've quite gotten the spirit of the whole thing. You're going to need a lot more practice.

**Richard Anderson**

If you wanted to leave, I would be more than happy to make your apologies when our host arrives. I could tell him that you've come down with something contagious.

**Neysa McMein**

Are you trying to say I'm making you sick? Is that it?

**Richard Anderson**

I'm not even sure why you're here. I'm the one who has always handled the advertising work for Peabody Motors. You're wasting your time.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Richard, I think you're behaving like a child. Miss McMein is here at my husband's invitation. You could at least be civil.

**Neysa McMein**

It's okay, Elizabeth. He's just jealous because I won a medal from the Art Director's Club, in New York, last year.

**Richard Anderson**

That's rich. It's not like you invented the Fadeaway Girl.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

I don't understand. What's a Fadeaway Girl?

**Neysa McMein**

There was an artist named Coles Phillips who created an image in which the clothes of a beautiful woman matched and disappeared into the picture's background. You've probably seen them, in magazines.

**Richard Anderson**

There's an idea. Why don't you just fade away?

*Winston Peabody comes into the lobby and spies his wife, along with Anderson and Neysa. He comes over to join them.*

**Winston Peabody**

I hope I haven't kept everyone waiting too long. Did I hear someone talking about the Fadeaway Girl? Brilliant bit of advertising. Of course, that was a long time ago. That's what we need.

**Neysa McMein**

What's that?

**Winston Peabody**

Something brilliant. Something that will capture the public's imagination. Like that slogan I came up with, almost a year ago.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Which slogan was that, dear?

**Winston Peabody**

It's for the new model aimed at women drivers. Ask the woman who drives one.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

We've talked about this, Winston. You stole that from Packard. It's the same slogan they used in 1901.

**Winston Peabody**

Why can't you understand, Elizabeth? It's not the same thing. With Packard, it was *Ask the man who owns one*. Completely different. As a woman, I would think you'd be able to see the distinction.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Sometimes, Winston, I think you believe all women belong to some kind of secret society that meets every Tuesday afternoon, while the men are at work. In those meetings, we compare notes and plot devious activities designed to thwart the plans of our male counterparts.

**Winston Peabody**

I'll admit, the thought has crossed my mind. Let's ask Neysa and Richard. What do you think?

**Richard Anderson**

You don't honestly believe all the women in the world have a meeting every Tuesday afternoon, do you?

**Neysa McMein**

I think, Richard, he was referring to the slogan. Surely, you're familiar with it. After all, you were in charge of advertising for Peabody Motors when Winston came up with it.

**Richard Anderson**

Of course, I'm familiar with it. And I thought it was brilliant. I still think we should plan to use it when we launch the new car. I only wish it had been me that came up with the idea.

**Winston Peabody**

Thank you, Richard. What do you think, Neysa?

**Neysa McMein**

I'm afraid I have to agree with your wife, Winston. It's too much like the old Packard slogan. I think it will give the impression your new car is out of date—a throwback.

**Winston Peabody**

Now, there's something I hadn't considered. You might have a point. The last thing I want is to create the impression we're not innovating at Peabody Motors. I can see you're not afraid to disagree with the boss, Neysa. I like that.

**Neysa McMein**

The way I see it, Winston, I'm not successful unless my client is successful. So, it's important I give my honest opinion.

**Winston Peabody**

That's integrity. Don't you think so, Richard? That's what I need. Somebody with integrity. Would you say that *you're* a man of integrity?

**Richard Anderson**

Certainly, Winston. I'm shocked you would even ask such a question.

**Winston Peabody**

Ever since I learned one of my competitors stole my idea for a low cost car with a V8 engine, I've been concerned about integrity. You remember, don't you Richard, when I shared my ideas for such a car?

**Richard Anderson**

Of course, but I think you've got it wrong. I'm sure Ford came up with a similar concept on their own. After all, I don't have to tell you how competitive the automobile industry can be.

**Winston Peabody**

That's possible. But it's also possible somebody leaked that information. If I ever found such a person, I'm not sure what I might do to him.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Winston, could you at least wait until after we've had breakfast before you start trying to frighten everyone?

**Winston Peabody**

I'm sorry dear, you're absolutely right. I seem to have forgotten my manners. Perhaps it's time we got a table.

*Jimmy Olson and his mother intercept the group as they start toward the hotel restaurant.*

**Jimmy Olson**

Excuse me, I hate to interrupt, but aren't you Winston Peabody—from Peabody Motors?

**Winston Peabody**

Why yes, as a matter of fact, I am. And who might you be? You're not looking for an autograph, are you?

**Dorothy Olson**

This is my son, James Olson. He's works for the Bar Harbor Record.

**Jimmy Olson**

Please, mother. I can speak for myself.

**Winston Peabody**

Then you're the reporter who called, asking for an interview. I thought I told you over the phone, I'm not interested.

**Dorothy Olson**

How can you say that? When you haven't even heard what he has to say? Is that the way you run your company?

**Winston Peabody**

What, madam, does any of this have to do with you? Or do you also work for the Bar Harbor Record?

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Winston, there's no excuse for being rude.

**Winston Peabody**

*Raising his voice,*

I'm not the one being rude! This woman keeps interrupting.

**Dorothy Olson**

You know, Mr. Peabody, you might consider the fact I am a potential customer. Is this the way you speak to all your customers?

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Excuse me, can I assume we have the pleasure of speaking with Mrs. Olson?

**Dorothy Olson**

Yes, that's correct. I'm sorry. Perhaps I should have introduced myself.

**Elizabeth Peabody**

That's quite all right. My name is Elizabeth. I think we've already established this is my husband, Mr. Peabody. And I'd also like to introduce Mr. Richard Anderson and Miss Neysa McMein. They're both illustrators of considerable talent and seeking to do business with my husband.

*Everyone shakes hands.*

**Elizabeth Peabody**

I think you've made an excellent point, Mrs. Olson. About being a potential customer.

**Winston Peabody**

Whose side are you on, Elizabeth?

**Elizabeth Peabody**

I didn't realize we were choosing sides, Winston. But if I must, then you realize I have next Tuesday's meeting to consider. What would I say when all the other women asked why I didn't stand up for Mrs. Olson, today?

**Dorothy Olson**

Did you say something about a meeting next Tuesday? I'm confused.

**Winston Peabody**

Never mind, Mrs. Olson. It's a long story. I know when I'm licked. I'll listen to what your son has to say. Assuming of course, you give him the chance to say anything at all.

**Dorothy Olson**

Well, I must say...

**Jimmy Olson**

Please, Mother. Can you let me handle this?

**Dorothy Olson**

All right then. I suppose I'll just go and find us a table for breakfast.

**Jimmy Olson**

Thank you. That would be swell.

**Dorothy Olson**

No problem at all. I'll just wait patiently, by myself, in the dining room.

**Jimmy Olson**

I'll be right there, as soon as Mr. Peabody and I are finished.

**Dorothy Olson**

Of course. After all, I'm only your mother.

**Jimmy Olson**

Please.

**Dorothy Olson**

Fine. I'm leaving.

**Richard Anderson**

I'll believe it when I see it.

*Mrs. Olson glares at Richard before turning on her heel and marching out of the lobby.*

**Jimmy Olson**

Mr. Peabody, I was hoping to ask you about future plans for Peabody Motors. What sort of new models you plan to launch? You have a reputation for innovation. My readers would be interested in what sort of new horizons your company hopes to explore. That sort of thing.

**Neysa McMein**

You know, Winston, a little free publicity never hurt anyone.

**Winston Peabody**

It's interesting what you just said, young man, about innovation and Peabody Motors. It sounds as though you might be willing to emphasize that aspect, in whatever article you plan to write.

**Jimmy Olson**

Absolutely, Mr. Peabody.

**Winston Peabody**

Did you know, for example, that I was the first person to conceive of the idea for a low cost automobile with a V8 engine?

**Jimmy Olson**

You mean like the Model 18 just introduced by FORD?

**Winston Peabody**

You can't print this, of course, but I suspect they stole the idea from me.

**Jimmy Olson**

Really!

**Winston Peabody**

I can't prove it, but that's what I think. We're about to have breakfast and I have some things I need to discuss with my colleagues. Perhaps we can agree on another time when we can talk further?

**Jimmy Olson**

That would be great. I have an idea, if I might be so bold as to make a suggestion?

**Winston Peabody**

Please, go ahead.

**Jimmy Olson**

I know a place not far from here. If you were interested in music, perhaps even a cocktail?

**Elizabeth Peabody**

Now Winston, aren't you glad you decided to give this young man a chance?

**Winston Peabody**

That sounds like an excellent suggestion, James.

**Jimmy Olson**

Please, everyone calls me Jimmy—everyone except my mother. There's a speakeasy operating out of Seal Cove, right here on the island. The door's open at 8 PM. I can get all of us into the joint. What do you say I meet you here, in the lobby, at 7:30 sharp?

**Winston Peabody**

Agreed. We'll see you then, Jimmy. Pleasure to have met you.

*Jimmy shakes hands with Winston and the group moves toward the restaurant, leaving Jimmy by himself. A moment later, Adelaide comes over.*

**Adelaide Dougherty**

That looked promising. How did it go?

**Jimmy Olson**

Make sure you pick a great place for dinner. You earned it. They've agreed to come to the speakeasy with me, tonight. Mr. Peabody is willing to give me an exclusive interview.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Fantastic!

**Jimmy Olson**

I could kiss you, right here in the lobby.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

You could get me fired. Besides, I never let men kiss me unless I get a big, fat tip *and* they clear it with their wives, first.

**Jimmy Olson**

Exactly how often does that happen?

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Wouldn't you like to know?

*Gloria Whittingham sees Adelaide talking with Jimmy and comes over.*

**Gloria Whittingham**

Adelaide, if you've got a minute, I wanted to ask you about tonight.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

That's perfect, because I've just got some news that should make you happy.

**Gloria Whittingham**

What's that?

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Jimmy will be bringing some guests tonight.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Interesting. How many?

**Jimmy Olson**

Four, and one of them owns his own automobile company.

**Gloria Whittingham**

That *is* good news. It looks like we might have a full house. I've found two more, this morning, who say they'll come. I just wanted to make sure you're still available. It looks like I'll need all the help I can get.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

I'll be there.

*Jack Rafferty and Beverly Button enter the lobby, having just finished breakfast. They see Gloria and come over to join the conversation.*

**Jack Rafferty**

Hello again, Gloria. Bev and I are looking forward to tonight. We can hardly wait.

*Gloria makes the introductions all around, being careful to introduce Rafferty as Jack, with no last names.*

**Gloria Whittingham**

Jack, this is Jimmy Olson, and Adelaide Dougherty. Adelaide works for me part time. Jimmy will be joining us tonight, and he'll be bringing some guests.

**Jack Rafferty**

Just call me Jack, and this is Beverly. What kind of guests are you bringing?

**Jimmy Olson**

An automobile manufacturer from Detroit, his wife, and two illustrators who are competing for his advertising business.

**Beverly Button**

Did you hear that, Jack? I'll bet they're always interested in a new model.

**Jack Rafferty**

That goes without saying. After all, that's what they do. Every year, when somebody introduces a new model car, these are the people who make the advertisements.

**Beverly Button**

I'm not talking about the cars, you chucklehead, I'm talking about me.

**Jack Rafferty**

Who are you calling a chucklehead?

**Beverly Button**

Who am I looking at?

**Jack Rafferty**

Do you realize who you're talking to?

**Beverly Button**

Sure. It's the big bad wolf and he's huffing and puffing like he's trying to blow down my house. Only I ain't got one, cause we keep moving around the country like a couple of gypsies. And now I'm stuck out here, with all these damn trees.

**Jack Rafferty**

You know Bev, you really fracture me.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Are you two finished, or was that just the end of round one?

**Beverly Button**

I'm not sure. Are we finished Jack, or do you want to ruin any chance at all that I might be willing to show you a good time, this afternoon?

**Jack Rafferty**

I got nothing to say.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Just remember those words when you meet J. Edgar Hoover.

**Jimmy Olson**

Do you work for the FBI, Jack?

**Jack Rafferty**

In a manner of speaking. My job is to make sure they keep busy.

**Jimmy Olson**

Sounds interesting.

**Jack Rafferty**

It is, and I'm really good at what I do. As a matter of fact, I'm probably number one.

**Beverly Button**

Try number two.

**Jack Rafferty**

Stop saying that.

**Gloria Whittingham**

All I need is a bell to announce the next round and a microphone. I could sell tickets.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

My money is on Beverly.

**Beverly Button**

Good choice, honey. He comes on strong, but he's got no stamina. When Gloria introduced you, she said you worked in her joint.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

I'm a cocktail waitress.

**Beverly Button**

Do they have dancing at this place? I won a Charleston contest when I was in high school.

**Jack Rafferty**

Why does that sound familiar?

**Beverly Button**

Don't be a dip. Can't you see I'm trying to have a conversation here?

**Adelaide Dougherty**

There is a band. And one of the cats is aces with a licorice stick.

**Beverly Button**

Sounds like a gas.

**Gloria Whittingham**

Don't worry, Beverly. You'll have a swell time.

*Dorothy Olson comes back from the dining room to find her son.*

**Dorothy Olson**

James, I've been sitting at the table, all by myself. When are you going to join me?

**Jimmy Olson**

I'm coming, Mother.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

Let me know if you ever want to borrow my scissors, Jimmy.

**Dorothy Olson**

What are you talking about, Adelaide? And I thought you said you had to go back to work.

**Adelaide Dougherty**

You're right, Mrs. Olson. I certainly do. See you tonight, Jimmy.

*Adelaide walks away.*

**Dorothy Olson**

What's going on tonight?

**Jimmy Olson**

I'll tell you over breakfast. Why don't you go back to the table and I'll be right there?

*Dorothy looks closely at Rafferty.*

**Dorothy Olson**

Excuse me, sir, but don't I know you from somewhere. Your face is familiar to me.

**Jack Rafferty**

I get that all the time. No, I'm sure we've never met.

**Dorothy Olson**

I'll bet if I could just remember where it was...

**Jack Rafferty**

Wherever it was, I wasn't there. Take my word for it.

**Dorothy Olson**

Oh well, I suppose it doesn't matter. Don't keep me waiting, James.

*Dorothy walks away.*

**Jimmy Olson**

When we get to your place, Gloria, I need to be able to spend some time with Mr. Peabody. Somewhere quiet and not too close to the band, so we can talk. Do you think you could arrange that?

**Gloria Whittingham**

Sure kid, no problem. The woman who was just here, was that your mother?

**Jimmy Olson**

Yes, why?

**Gloria Whittingham**

Is her name, Dottie?

**Jimmy Olson**

No, it's Dorothy. I've never heard anyone call her Dottie. Thanks for helping me out with Mr. Peabody. I sure appreciate it.

*Jimmy Olson goes looking for his mother's table, leaving Gloria alone with Jack and Beverly.*

**Jack Rafferty**

What is it, Gloria? You've got a look on your face—like you're trying to remember something and it's not working.

**Gloria Whittingham**

It's that woman. Jimmy's mother. I'm sure I've seen her someplace before, but it was a long time ago.

**Beverly Button**

Is it important?

**Gloria Whittingham**

Profitable is the word I would have chosen, Beverly. If I'm right, it could be very profitable.

**THE END – of the prelude.**

**This was designed as a teaser to introduce the characters and setting for the murder mystery, which is quite a bit longer. If you would like to see a copy of the actual play, you can contact the authors: [RobLawton@rlawtonsquared.com](mailto:RobLawton@rlawtonsquared.com)**