

Doreen nods

He told Rose and Violet. And they spilled the beans. And they were killed as well. Letitia . . . spilled some more beans . . . (He looks through the torn canvas of the painted door for more help) Pardon? Er . . . white, two sugars. No! Who's next? Oh, yes. Gladys Knight was crucial to the operation because—

Pawn } (together) Gordon.
Doreen }

O'Reilly What?

Pawn } (together) We didn't have her.
Doreen }

O'Reilly (through the canvas) We didn't have her. Right. (Out front) Mr Goodbody was blackmailed into throwing us off the scent. And then there was . . . thungummy . . . just now. Only one person could have perpetrated all these crimes.

Pawn moves down C

Daphne You mean . . . ?

O'Reilly Yes—

Mrs Reece darts on from L with three hand-written pages of dialogue

Mrs Reece Going to have to cut in there, dear. Felicity! Giles is on the phone!

Pawn Well, I'll talk to him later!

Mrs Reece No, you've got to come now.

Pawn We've just got to my big bit.

Mrs Reece It's Lucy, dear.

Pawn What about her?

Mrs Reece I couldn't understand what he was saying. He was getting hysterical.

Pawn (staring to run off; muttering) The one night I have off, and something happens . . .

Pawn exits

Mrs Reece (to the audience) Do bear with us, ladies and gentlemen. At times like this a mother's place is with her child. I'm sure you'll agree.

Pawn runs in again, with a gun, and poses

Pawn You'll never take me alive . . .

Mrs Reece Give me that, Felicity. We're going to carry on without you.

Pawn But I want to shoot myself!

Mrs Reece Some other time.

Pawn It's not fair!

Mrs Reece Gordon, I've done a bit of rewriting. Could you pass these along, please? (She hands three pages of dialogue to O'Reilly)

Pawn It's the only reason I agreed to play Pawn . . .

Mrs Reece You can shoot yourself in the next play. Now let's get you to the telephone . . .

Mrs Reece bustles Pawn out of the arch

The pages of dialogue are distributed among those on stage and read stiltedly

O'Reilly Only one person could have perpetrated all these crimes.

Daphne You mean . . . ?

O'Reilly Yes. (He turns aimlessly) Come out from behind that secret panel, Régine.

Mrs Reece bounds in from L as Régine

Régine Oui, c'est moi.

Daphne (vividly unimpressed) But, Régine, you're dead.

O'Reilly No, she was pretending.

Doreen Tell us the whole story, Inspector.

O'Reilly Why don't we let Régine tell us in her own words?

Daphne (looking up from paper: under her breath) Must we?

Régine Ooh-la-la, I've been so clever. I blackmail Monsieur Goodbody not to reveal secret codicil of will, which say zat I get all ze money if everyone die. I kill everyone, disguised as Pawn ze butler, 'oo try to foil my plan by pushing me out of ze window. But I save myself by clinging to ze window sill. And zen I 'ide behind ze secret panel.

Doreen But why should my husband leave his money to a common serving girl?

Régine Because we were 'aving an affair.

Doreen (expressionlessly) No, no, I cannot believe it. Even though I have lost all my youth and beauty, Reginald loved me and would never leave me for a . . . (with incredulity) . . . beautiful young girl with bags of personality!

Régine (prompting) And the body of a Greek goddess.

Doreen (to keep the peace) And the body of a Greek goddess.

Daphne I'm afraid you'll have to face facts, Mother: Régine may be a mass murderer, but . . . she's easily the most attractive woman in this room?

The indignity of having to speak these lines is too much for her and Daphne stalks off R

O'Reilly Aren't you ashamed of yourself for killing all these people?

Régine No, I'm glad, I tell you, glad, glad, glad.

O'Reilly I'm afraid you'll have to come along with me.

Régine You'll never take me alive. (She picks up the revolver)

O'Reilly Look out, she's got a gnu.

Régine Gun!

O'Reilly A gun.

Régine I go to join my beloved Reggie in a far, far better place. Au revoir. (She points revolver at her head and closes her eyes, but the trigger is too stiff to pull. She laughs nervously) I think it could do with a drop of oil.

She holds out the revolver to O'Reilly. He takes a step towards her and the revolver goes off. Régine screams and goes into the death scene she's planned. The climax to the "1812 Overture" plays. Régine collapses into O'Reilly's