

WADSWORTH. And am I correct that each of your letters advised you to be present this evening, because a certain—Mr. Boddy—has offered to bring an end to a long-standing, confidential and painful financial liability?

ALL GUESTS. “Yes!” “Oh, yes!” “That’s what my letter says!” “Mine too.” (Etc.)

WADSWORTH. (Evermore the butler:) Can I interest any of you in fruit or dessert?

ALL GUESTS. No!

(Thunder/lightning.)

WADSWORTH. In that case, may I suggest we adjourn to the Study for coffee and brandy, at which point I believe your letters will be explained and . . . the game will be afoot.

(Thunder/lightning!)

[MUSIC CUE #19]

(The GUESTS move downstage and, again, line up across the edge of the stage. Still mumbling about . . .)

ALL GUESTS. “The game?” “What game?” “What’s he talking about?” “I love games!” (Etc.)

(Behind them, YVETTE and COOK split the dining room table and push each side offstage.)

(The GUESTS hold their letters in the air. WADSWORTH crosses in front of them, taking their letters with an air of officiousness. The scrim behind them rises as he leads them upstage and into the Study.)

SCENE 3

(The Study.)

(The GUESTS find themselves in a fully realized Study. Stage right, there is a small desk and chair. A large fireplace is center, and, stage left, there is a sofa facing parallel to the edge of the stage.)

(YVETTE stands by her bar cart passing out brandies to MUSTARD, PLUM, and SCARLET.)

WADSWORTH. Thank you, Yvette. That will be all.

(YVETTE exits.)

GREEN. Well, where is our host?

PEACOCK. He’s not here! Nobody’s here! What is happening?!

WADSWORTH. Please, Mrs. Peacock. Have a drink.

PEACOCK. My lips belong to the Lord!

SCARLET. (She downs a drink:) Well, mine don’t! Mind if I smoke?

(PLUM lights SCARLET’s cigarette while MUSTARD finds a string and button closure envelope [à la the envelope placed in the center of the Clue board game] on the desk. The envelope reads “CONFIDENTIAL” in large red letters.)

MUSTARD. (Reading:) “For Wadsworth. Open After Dinner.”

(Handing it to WADSWORTH.)

It’s for you.

(WADSWORTH opens and reads it while the GUESTS crowd around him. GREEN sneezes.)

ALL. Gesundheit.

GREEN. Sorry. There really must be a cat somewhere.

WADSWORTH. (Having finished the letter:) Right then. Are you comfortable?

MUSTARD. I make a good living.

PLUM. Oh, out with it, Wadsworth!

WADSWORTH. Ladies and gentlemen, my instructions are clear. It seems the six of you have one thing in common. You are all being blackmailed. For some considerable time all of you have been paying what you can afford—and, in some cases, more than you can afford—to someone who threatens to expose you.

PEACOCK. Oh, please! I’ve never heard anything so ridiculous. I mean, nobody could blackmail me. I go to church every Sunday!

SCARLET. Yeah lady, don’t we all.

WADSWORTH. Anybody else wish to deny it?

(The GUESTS anxiously exchange glances in silence.)

WADSWORTH. Until tonight, none of you knew *who* was blackmailing you. I hope I’m correct that the more deductive among you have reasoned in the last several moments that it was, of course, Mr. Boddy himself—and that the less discerning members of our cadre are experiencing that particular revelation right about . . .

MUSTARD. It was Mr. Boddy!

WADSWORTH. . . . NOW.

(The GUESTS speak simultaneously.)

PEACOCK.

I have half a mind to call the
Congressman right now and—

SCARLET.

Who is this Boddy fella, you
shivering little—

PLUM.

What are you? His henchman?
You pompous, British—

MUSTARD.

What is going on here?!
I demand to know!!

GREEN.

All this stress is not good for
my blood pressure! What do
we do now?!

WHITE.

I've buried five husbands,
you think I can't handle a little
blackmail?!

WADSWORTH. ENOUGH!

(Then:)

My task this evening is to expose your secrets to each other, rendering you all culpable in each others' indiscretions.

WHITE. Don't you think that you might spare us this humiliation?

WADSWORTH. I'm sorry but I have my orders. We'll start with you, Professor Plum.

SCARLET. Lucky you.

PLUM. (With a smarmy wink) Luck's got nothing to do with it.

(SCARLET, disgustedly rolls her eyes — "Ugh.")

WADSWORTH. You were once a professor of psychiatry, specializing in helping lunatics suffering from delusions of grandeur.

PLUM. Yes, but now I work for the U.S. Government.

WADSWORTH. So your work has not changed. (Then:) But you can't practice medicine anymore, can you? Your license has been lifted, correct?

SCARLET. Why? What did he do?

WADSWORTH. You know what male doctors aren't supposed to do with their lady patients?

SCARLET. Yeah?

WADSWORTH. Well, he did.

PLUM. She couldn't help falling in love with me! It's not my fault I was born this attractive.

PEACOCK. How disgusting.

WADSWORTH. Are you making moral judgements, Mrs. Peacock? How, then, do you justify taking bribes in return for delivering Senator Peacock's votes to certain lobbyists?

PEACOCK. My husband is a paid consultant. There's nothing sinful about that!

WADSWORTH. Not if it's publicly declared, perhaps. But isn't it a sin if certain lobbyists are slipping payments to a sneaky Senator's wife under the stall of the men's room at the Old Ebbitt Grill? How would you describe that transaction?

SCARLET. I'd say it stinks.

PEACOCK. When were you in that men's room?

PLUM. So it's true!

PEACOCK. No, it's a vicious lie!

WADSWORTH. But you've been paying blackmail for over a year now to keep that story out of the papers.

WHITE. (To PEACOCK:) Well, I'm willing to believe you. I too am being blackmailed for something I didn't do.

GREEN. Me too.

MUSTARD. And me.

SCARLET. Not me.

WADSWORTH. You're not being blackmailed?

SCARLET. Oh, I'm being blackmailed, all right. But I did what I'm being blackmailed for.

PLUM. What did you do?

SCARLET. I run a specialized service which provides gentlemen with . . . the company of a young lady.

PEACOCK. (Outraged.) An escort service?! In Washington?!

PLUM. How pathetic! A man who needs to pay for women to spend time with him. That's a problem I'll never have.

(SCARLET pulls a card from her cleavage and hands it to PLUM, who takes it sheepishly.)

GREEN. (Carrying on without pause:) Is that how you knew Colonel Mustard works in Washington? Is he one of your clients?

MUSTARD. (Incredulous:) Certainly not!

GREEN. I was asking Miss Scarlet.

MUSTARD. (To SCARLET:) Well, you tell him it's not true!
SCARLET. "It's not true."
PLUM. Is that true?
SCARLET. No, it's not true.
GREEN. Ha-hah! So it is true!
WADSWORTH. A double negative!
MUSTARD. Double "negative"? You mean you have— Photographs?
WADSWORTH. That sounds like a confession to me. In fact, the double negative has led to proof positive. I'm afraid you gave yourself away.
MUSTARD. Are you trying to make me look stupid in front of the other guests?
WADSWORTH. You don't need any help from me, sir.
MUSTARD. That's right!

(MUSTARD realizes *what he just said*.)

WADSWORTH. (Carrying on:) Colonel, you hold a sensitive security post in the Pentagon. Those "negatives" would most certainly compromise your position.
PLUM. (With a wink:) And what position was it exactly that you were caught in, Colonel?
MUSTARD. This is an outrage!
WADSWORTH. (Now to WHITE:) Mrs. White, you've been paying our friend the blackmailer ever since your husband died under, shall we say, mysterious circumstances.
WHITE. I didn't kill him.
MUSTARD. Then why are you paying the blackmailer?
WHITE. I don't want a scandal. We had a very humiliating public confrontation. He was deranged. He was a lunatic. He didn't actually seem to like me that much. He had threatened to kill me in public.
SCARLET. Why would he want to kill you in public?
WADSWORTH. I think she meant that he had threatened, in public, to kill her.
SCARLET. And was that his final word on the matter?
WHITE. Being killed is pretty final, wouldn't you say?

WADSWORTH. And yet he was the one who died. Not you, Mrs. White, not you.
PLUM. What did the poor chap do for a living?
WHITE. He was a scientist. Nuclear physics.
SCARLET. What was he like?
WHITE. He was a stupidly optimistic man. I'm afraid it came as a great shock to him when he died. He was found dead at home. He was unclothed. His head had been cut off. So had his . . . you know.
 (She gestures in the direction of her groin. The men, horrified, cross their legs in unison.)
WHITE. But, it wasn't me. I'd been out all evening, at the movies.
SCARLET. What was showing?
WHITE. The Naked Alibi.
SCARLET. A likely story.
PEACOCK. Do you miss him?
WHITE. It's a matter of life after death. Now that he's dead I have a life.
WADSWORTH. But he was your second husband. Your first also disappeared.
WHITE. That was his job—he was an illusionist.
WADSWORTH. But he never reappeared.
WHITE. He wasn't a very good illusionist. (Then:) But my third husband, I miss him the most. He was an electrician . . . well—until he was electrocuted.
WADSWORTH. (Moving on—now to GREEN:) And lastly, Mr. Green. Who is a homosexual.
MUSTARD. Not me.
WADSWORTH. Beg your pardon?
MUSTARD. You asked— "Who is a homosexual?" —and I said— "Not me."
PEACOCK. And I'm saying you're an idiot.
GREEN. Wadsworth here is right. I am a homosexual. I feel no personal shame or guilt about this, but I must keep it a secret or I will lose my job on security grounds (Even though that's ridiculous because homosexuality is not a choice, but a genetic predisposition.)