Offed at the Bake-Off

An Audience Participation
Murder Mystery/Comedy

By Matt Steele and Mike Steele

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DEDICATION

For our grandparents –
Each influential in our theatrical lives in his or her own way:

Fred DiGiuseppe, Lucy DiGiuseppe, Ray Steele, Liz Steele

SYNOPSIS

Flashback to 1955, the stormy evening before the 33rd annual Knotting Bake-Off, brought to you by J & J Toothpaste. The contestants have gathered at the Knotting Inn down at the Jersey Shore, each hoping that their perfectly crafted baked good will win the coveted blue ribbon. It seems someone's dessert is more deadly than tasty, though, when they discover an entire gaggle of bratty students have been poisoned during a press conference. It is clear that someone at the inn has a sweet tooth for murder. But who could the culprit be? The egotistical bake-off champion? The hard-of-hearing elderly man? The practical jokester nun? The silent fitness model? The clumsy reporter? The amnesiac woman? Or one of the other kooky bake-off contestants roaming around the inn? When a detective (whose name also happens to be Detective) arrives on the scene, he asks the audience to help him figure out whodunit. Flying accusations and flying pies are just a few of the fun ingredients that make this murder mystery a recipe for a hilarious night at the theatre. Full evening.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 10 w, 2 flexible)

DETECTIVE (m): A humorous detective who serves as narrator of the play, 30s.
HELEN HAGERTY (f): A crabby middle school home economics teacher from Eerie Preparatory Academy, 40s.
SCOTTIE / SALLY SCARSDALE (m/f): The enthusiastic CEO of J & J Toothpaste and host of the Knotting Bake-Off, 30s.
CAROLYN CHESTERFIELD (f): The bubbly owner of the Knotting Inn, 50s.
WALLY WALLFORD (m): The Knotting Inn's high school aged lascivious bellhop, 15 to 18.
MARJORIE MARGARINE (f): An egotistical cookbook author, 60s.
BRUTUS BADOUR (m): A quiet fitness model from Europe, 20s.
CLYDE CHESTERFIELD (m): An enthusiastic baker and owner of the Knotting Inn, 50s.
GILBERT / GABBY GOOBER (m/f): A bumbling reporter for the Little Knotting Newsletter, 20s.
THELMA PITTLEFISH (f): A stern judge of the Knotting Bake-Off, 50s.
VELMA PITTLEFISH (f): A stern judge of the Knotting Bake-Off, 50s.
BLANCHE PITTLEFISH (f): A stern judge of the Knotting Bake-Off, 50s.
PAULINE PINGLETON (f): A frustrated new mother, 30s.
PAUL PINGLETON (m): A chauvinistic new father, 30s.
ETHEL EDINBERG (f): A cheerful elderly woman, 90s.
ERNEST EDINBERG (m): A hard of hearing elderly man, 90s.
SISTER MARY MARTHA (f): A jokester nun, 40s.
MYSTERIOUS WOMAN (f): A mysterious woman, 30s.

AUDIENCE INTERACTION

Detective speaks directly to the audience during brief moments throughout the show. Characters onstage appear not to hear what he is saying and continue with appropriate action.

In the middle of Act II, Scene 1, the audience may submit questions to the Detective, who then asks the suspects. The actors onstage then improvise their humorous answers. This improvisation can be a lot of fun, but the director should make sure that the cast is well prepared. The number of questions that Detective gathers is up to the director. This improvisation segment may be removed from the play at the director's discretion. Detective's line "It does seem pretty full." can be followed seamlessly by Thelma's line "So, Detective Detective, you have been examining this case all evening. Have you any idea who murdered the students?"

SETTING

PLACE: The main room of the Knotting Inn at the Knotting Shore in New Jersey

TIME: 1955

Act I
Scene 1: An evening before the annual Knotting Bake-Off
Scene 2: Later the same evening

Act II
Scene 1: Even later the same evening
Scene 2: Much later the same evening

See props list, set design, and additional production notes at end.

ACT I
Scene 1

(SFX: Thunder. LIGHTS up on DETECTIVE. He speaks to audience in a 1950s sitcom narrator style.)

DETECTIVE: *(To AUDIENCE.)* Hello, folks. It's time to turn off your cell phones as we transport you back in time. A time before anyone had cell phones to even turn off. The year is 1955. It's a simpler time. A more wholesome time.

(LIGHTS up on entire stage reveal the main room of the Knotting Inn.)

DETECTIVE: *(Cont'd.)* I present to you, the Knotting Inn. What used to be one of the most sought after destinations in the tiny beach town of Knotting Shore, New Jersey. Yes, we're down at the good old Jersey Shore. Before MTV got their hands on it. It's the evening before the local Boardwalk Fair, which always draws quite a crowd because of its annual Knotting Bake-Off, where bakers from around the country gather to win the big prize: a bright blue ribbon.

(HELEN enters and spies a half-ruined whipped cream pie on CL desk.)

DETECTIVE: *(Cont'd. To AUDIENCE.)* Speaking of contestants, here is one now. Meet the middle school home economics teacher from Eerie Preparatory Academy. She's traveled all the way from Indiana for the bake-off. It looks like some of the students have already nibbled on one of the entries.

HELEN: *(Irritated.)* A big-time reporter from the Little Knotting Newsletter is coming to take our picture during a press conference, and these little brats are already breaking the rules! If the judges catch their grubby little fingers in that pie, our team will be disqualified.

HELEN: *(Cont'd.)* And if our team is disqualified, Eerie Preparatory Academy is going to cut the home economics program from its curriculum. And if Eerie Preparatory Academy cuts the home economics program from its curriculum, no one will be there to teach the brats how to run a proper home. And if the brats don't learn how to run a proper home, they'll resign themselves to lifetimes of serving poorly cooked casseroles and siring bratty children who chew with their mouths open. *(Begins rearranging its contents with her hands to make it appear un-eaten, getting whipped cream on her hands.)*

(SCOTTIE enters UL unnoticed by HELEN.)

SCOTTIE: *(To HELEN.)* Admiring one of the other contestant's entries, I see.

HELEN: *(Startled.)* Oh! You spooked me.

SCOTTIE: I sure hope I haven't caught you in the act of sabotage.

HELEN: Of course not. I teach my students to obey orders and compete fairly and squarely. I believe our bumbleberry pie will win the blue ribbon tomorrow based on merit and merit alone.

SCOTTIE: Terrific. Tampering with the confections tarnishes the name of the thirty-third annual Knotting Bake-Off, brought to you by J & J Toothpaste. Tarnishing the name of the thirty-third annual Knotting Bake-Off, brought to you by J & J Toothpaste, tarnishes the name of J & J Toothpaste. And tarnishing the name of J & J Toothpaste tarnishes the name of my dearly departed grandpappy, the founder of J & J Toothpaste.

HELEN: Are you really the grandson of the founder of J & J Toothpaste?

SCOTTIE: I am. The name's Scottie Scarsdale. I recently took over my grandpappy's corporation. That's why I'm hosting the thirty-third annual Knotting Bake-Off, brought to you by J & J Toothpaste.

HELEN: It's a pleasure to meet such a high-profiled businessman.

End of Freeview

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