

# THE TALK SHOW MURDERS

By Dave Brandl  
Based on the novel by Steve Allen

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**DEDICATION**

*Dedicated to my sisters, Mary and Carol, who helped develop my love for whodunits. My sincere thanks to Steve Allen for his support, and for his many years of amusing, inspiring, and enlightening us all.*

*Dave Brandl*

**STORY OF THE PLAY**

The rock star was dead - murdered on national TV, right in front of millions of his devoted fans. Little does anyone know, this is merely the beginning of a series of bizarre murders on the talk show circuit that sends shockwaves through Hollywood. Who is crazy enough to kill people in full view of millions of loyal watchers? From celebrities down to regulars in the TV audiences, what do these victims have in common? Enter Roger Dale, an extraordinary detective a little bit down on his luck. With the help of his assistant, Jinny, and girlfriend, Meg, he battles the local and federal cops in uncovering the psychopath responsible. Multiple simple sets.

*The Talk Show Murders* premiered April 17, 1998, presented by The Players Guild of the Festival Playhouse, in Arvada, Colorado. The director was Charles J. Ault. The cast was:

Elmo Finstetter.....	Nathan Skillern
Danny Moss.....	Bob Watts
Debbie Weintraub.....	Judy Anderl
Sheldon Walters.....	Charles Joseph Ault
Patty Pleasance.....	Deborah Lenocho
Jinny Cantu.....	Kate Nelligan
Roger Dale.....	Dave Brandl
Meg Arlington.....	Terry Brandl
Sonny Pearson.....	Sonny Nelson
Jackie Midnite.....	Stephanie Potter
J. Duffy Griswold.....	Jim Hoover
Sgt. Donna Willoughby.....	Gerrie Taft
Ronnie Fordyce.....	Donna Ault
Mickey Samish.....	Jim Ault
Television Crew.....	Kit Lammers
	Jeannette Ault

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(in order of appearance.)*

ELMO FINSTETTER: Rock music star.

DANNY MOSS: Talent agent.

DEBBIE WEINTRAUB: Talent coordinator.

SHELDON WALTERS: Comedy writer.

PATTY PLEASANCE: Singing talk show hostess.

JINNY CANTU: Roger's assistant.

ROGER DALE: Private investigator.

MEG ARLINGTON: Roger's girlfriend.

SONNY PEARSON: Tennis champ turned singer.

JACKIE MIDNITE: Comedic talk show host.

J. DUFFY GRISWOLD: FBI assistant director.

SERGEANT WILLOUGHBY: Sergeant on the LAPD.

RONNIE FORDYCE: Columnist.

MICKEY SAMISH: Mobster.

EXTRAS may be used during the talk show scenes as  
announcers and stage technicians.

**TIME:** The action takes place in the 1980s, at various locations around Hollywood, California, over a two-week span.

## SETTING

The stage consists of three sections. One side of the stage is the area for the talk show sets. There is a stage-side entrance. The furniture includes a desk, chairs, and small tables which will be used in combinations. Television cameras and audio equipment may be employed to enhance the sets.

The other side of the stage is the Dale Security Agency office, with two desks and three or four chairs. The desks have telephones. There is an UPS door to the street. In front of the curtain and to one side is a multi-purpose area that consists of two chairs and a table.

## SYNOPSIS OF PLAY

ACT I	Scene 1:	<i>The Patty Pleasance Show</i>
	Scene 2:	The Dale Security Agency
	Scene 3:	A hotel
	Scene 4:	The Dale Security Agency
	Scene 5:	<i>The Midnite Show</i>
	Scene 6:	The Dale Security Agency
	Scene 7:	Ronnie Fordyce's show
	Scene 8:	The Dale Security Agency
	Scene 9:	The Dale Security Agency
	Scene 10:	The Dale Security Agency
	Scene 11:	Ronnie Fordyce's show
	Scene 12:	<i>The Doug Michael's Show</i>
ACT II	Scene 1:	A dark alley
	Scene 2:	A police station
	Scene 3:	<i>The Patty Pleasance Show</i>

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: Greenroom for the Patty Pleasance talk show. Lights come up on the multi-purpose area. The table is in the corner, behind the chairs, which are perpendicular to each other. Several magazines are on the table. ELMO FINSTETTER and DANNY MOSS enter. Elmo has long hair, tight pants, a barely buttoned shirt, and a gold necklace. He carries a small bag. Danny is dressed in a suit and carries a briefcase.)*

ELMO: What've you got me into this time, Danny?

DANNY: Exposure, baby. The kind you can't buy.

ELMO: Who needs it? Did you see all those chicks outside mobbing me? They do that all the time.

DANNY: But that's only a tiny fraction of all rock fans. They buy a small percentage of your records. You need fans of all ages. And I'm not sure I like your getting mobbed. You lost a gold chain.

ELMO: It was just one of the cheap ones I wear when I'm out. If it gets lost, no big deal. Let me worry about getting mobbed. It's one of the sacrifices, right? I mean, if I have to suffer through a wet kiss or two, or I'm forced to stare at t-shirts and tight jeans, I guess I'll do it. That's the kind of exposure I like.

DANNY: You need this kind, too, Elmo. Network television exposure. That last album of yours hasn't broken gold yet. Go through the motions, will you? Trust me, OK?

ELMO: For a lousy four hundred and fifty bucks.

DANNY: Right. Minimum scale. Of which I get a whopping forty-five. So don't complain.

ELMO: It's a waste of time, Danny. And I don't even get to do a number. Just sit there, right? It's dumb.

DANNY: It's like I told you. Patty Pleasance does her own singing. Anyway, they can hear you sing anytime. What they want is to get to know you personally when Patty talks to you. Be nice this time, OK, Elmo? Don't blow it.

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ELMO: Yeah. Yeah. But I don't want to be shown up by some flashy loser that comes on after me.

DANNY: Don't worry. Patty interviews her guests one at a time. Nobody else'll be on stage. Only the two of you.

ELMO: Lucky thing for her. Is she cute?

DANNY: Who?

ELMO: This Patty chick.

DANNY: What do I know? I'm only a talent agent.

*(DEBBIE WEINTRAUB enters. She is young, plain, and perhaps a bit heavy. She wears glasses and carries a clipboard. ELMO looks her over but decides he's not interested.)*

DEBBIE: Hi. I'm Debbie Weintraub, one of the talent coordinators.

ELMO: Great. I always wanted to have my talent coordinated.

DEBBIE: *(A slight chuckle.)* Is the greenroom comfortable enough for you? Do you want any makeup, Mr. Finstetter?

ELMO: No, thanks. *(HE shakes his hair.)* I'm gorgeous enough.

DEBBIE: *(To DANNY.)* He's kidding, of course.

DANNY: Don't ask. With Elmo, I never know.

ELMO: I want to know why there's no green in this greenroom.

DANNY: It's called a greenroom no matter what color it is.

DEBBIE: Make yourself at home here, Mr. Finstetter. Perhaps you'd like to read a magazine while you wait.

ELMO: Cool. *(Picks up magazines and looks through them.)*

Aw, these are no good. *(Tosses them back on the table.)*

There're no pictures of chicks ... except with their clothes on.

DANNY: Too bad, Elmo. We all have to make sacrifices.

DEBBIE: Uh, right. Anyway, I'll come get you when we're ready. The audience will be coming in shortly. After the warm-up we'll be ready to go.

## **End of Freeview**

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