

Cast:

Reginald “Plank” Plank - Male 20’s - 30’s Thelonius’s brother.

Thelonius “Topsy” Plank - Male 20’s - 30’s Reginald’s brother.

Lady Aberline Plank - Female 60 -80. Topsy and Plank’s Adoptive mother.

Snyvling - Male 20’s. Lady Aberline’s Chauffeur.

Chef Loude - Male 30’s Lady Aberline’s Chef.

Betsy - Female 20’s. Lady Aberline’s Maid.

Doctor VanHauten - Male 30’s. A doctor, in love with Madame X.

Madame X - Female 20’s. Mysterious passenger married to Roger Hammersmith.

Gertrude - Female 20’s. A showgirl from California.

Chef Loude, and Doctor VanHauten can be played by the same person.

Betsy, Madame X, and Gertrude can be played by the same person.

Setting:

Time: Late 1940’s.

Locations:

Act I Scene 1 and 2:

England, just outside of London

The sitting room of Lady Aberline’s home the Plank Manor.

Act I Scene 3:

The middle of the Atlantic ocean.

Aboard “The Lady of Ruby” a passenger ship headed towards Brazil.

Act II

England, just outside of London

The sitting room of Lady Aberline’s home the Plank Manor.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 2

Scene: Lady Aberline’s home, the Plank Estate. An English manor sitting room with a fireplace. There is a dead body seated at a table and slumped over a table. There is a large knife sticking out of her back. There’s also a foot hanging down from inside the chimney.

SNYVLING enters with LADY ABERLINE. He is leading her in, her eyes are covered.

SNYVLING

Open your eyes. Happy Birthday!

LADY ABERLINE

Oh, Snyvling you shouldn’t have.

SNYVLING

It was nothing.

LADY ABERLINE

You treat me better than my own family.

SNYVLING

Speaking of which, your sons are due here any moment.

LADY ABERLINE

Both of them?

SNYVLING

Yes.

LADY ABERLINE

They drove here together?

SNYVLING

I believe so.... yes.

PLANK enters, yelling off stage at TIPSY who enters shortly after PLANK.

PLANK

That is NOT how it happened! YOU owe ME five pounds!

TIPSY

Well, we’ll never know for certain, so let’s just call it a draw, you can pay me the five later.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 3

PLANK

I won't pay you five pounds now, or later, or ever. Because you are wrong wrong wrong..

TIPSY

I'm sure mother will loan you five if you're short.

LADY ABERLINE puts up her finger in one quick and disciplinary move that silences PLANK immediately.

LADY ABERLINE

Ah! A murder scene is no place for bickering siblings.

TIPSY

Yes Plank, really.

LADY ABERLINE

It's my birthday.

PLANK

Son-of-a--

TIPSY

You forgot. Ha! Happy Birthday mother.

TIPSY gives LADY ABERLINE the flower from his lapel.

LADY ABERLINE

Snyvling remembered. And he was kind enough to set up this present for me. You're both off the hook thanks to Snyvling.

TIPSY

Thank you Snyvling.

PLANK

Yes, *thank you*.

LADY ABERLINE

Begin now!

TIPSY

I'll bet you five pounds I solve it before you.

PLANK

(to SNYVLING) Any witnesses.

SNYVLING

Yes.

PLANK

May we speak to them?

SNYVLING

Certainly. (He turns around and puts a mustache on) Bon jour.

PLANK

And, who are you?

SNYVLING

I am Chef Loude. I work here.

TIPSY

A French chef?

SNYVLING

I am Belgian.

TIPSY

Of course you are. Just our luck, a Belgiminian.

PLANK

Did you witness anything?

SNYVLING

I saw a priest limp past the window.

PLANK

The priest did it.

TIPSY

Oh! That’s what I was going to say.

PLANK

Did you see what he looked like?

SNYVLING

Like a man with a limp.

PLANK

Left foot, or right foot?

TIPSY

You’re wasting your time.

LADY ABERLINE

The details. That’s where the devil is. Left foot? Right foot? A limp. Very important.

TIPSY

How many limping priests do you think are hobbling around here?

PLANK

At least one, and you had better hope it isn’t more than one.

TIPSY

Ah Ha! I’ve got it! (to SNYVLING) You did it!

SNYVLING

That’s true.

TIPSY

Solved.

PLANK

How is that solved?

TIPSY

I accused him, and he confessed. Mystery solved.

PLANK

But, how did he do it? Why did he do it? That’s the mystery.

TIPSY

I don’t want to split hairs, but really the main thing you want to know in a murder mystery is WHO did it. He admitted it. Him. Chef Loude. Murderer.

PLANK

So, at other murder investigations, other real investigations, you’re just going to ask everyone if they did it, until someone admits it.

TIPSY

Yes.

PLANK

What if no one admits to the crime.

TIPSY

I’ll burn that bridge while I’m crossing it.

PLANK

Mother! This is not fair.

LADY ABERLINE

Plank’s right, Topsy. An accusation and confession don’t fully solve the murder.

TIPSY

Very well. (to SNYVLING) Did you see anything suspicious? Besides a left or right footed limping priest.

SNYVLING

Nothing.

TIPSY

Can we talk to someone else who did?

SNYVLING

I’m the only witness.

TIPSY

Great. I just love these birthday parties mother.

PLANK

Do you know the deceased?

SNYVLING

The Lady Rockford. I work for her.

PLANK

And you.... disliked her?

SNYVLING

I loved her.

PLANK

Strange way to show your affection.

TIPSY

Gah! Is this your knife?

SNYVLING

Yes.

TIPSY

Then it's you! You did it! You admitted it! What more needs to be discussed? You loved her, she didn't return your affections, and you killed her!

SNYVLING

This is not the only murder.

LADY ABERLINE

Oh splendid!

PLANK

Tipsy, it's time to investigate.

They look around the room. PLANK looks up the chimney and pulls out a shoe.

PLANK

There's a body stuffed up the chimney.

TIPSY

That's no way to start a fire.

PLANK

Can you be serious for just one moment, do you think?

TIPSY

I don't think so. I wouldn't bet money on it.

PLANK

Shhh. Now, let’s see, we’ve got... two murders here.

TIPSY opens the kitchen door. CHEF LOUDE is hanging from a noose.

TIPSY

Oh my God! There’s a dead cook in here!

PLANK

We'll never get lunch now.

TIPSY

Now who’s not being serious?

PLANK

Three murders. The cook--

SNYVLING

Chef Loude.

TIPSY

I thought you were Chef Loude.

SNYVLING

I lied. Murderers do that, you know.

TIPSY

I know *now*. So. That’s the cook in there, and you’re somebody else out here, eh?

PLANK

Yeeeeeees. And the maid--

SNYVLING

Betsy.

TIPSY

They all have names Plank.

PLANK

Yeeeeeees. And...



“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 9  
SNYVLING

Lady Rockford.

PLANK

Right. Lady Rockford. I’ve got it! The murderer is... HER! Betsy! She killed them both, and then killed herself. A classic case of murder suicide... murder, murder, suicide, of the worst kind.

TIPSY

She killed herself?

PLANK

Yes.

TIPSY

By stuffing herself up the chimney?

PLANK turns and looks. He pokes at BETSY's exposed feet with his pipe while he reconsiders. Then...

PLANK

Yeeeeeeees!

TIPSY

I don't believe you could be more wrong if you tried.

PLANK

Are you sure? Looks to me to be a clear-cut case of self-chimney stuffing of the worst kind.

TIPSY

I think--

PLANK

No! Wait! I get this one! I’m first!

TIPSY

Okay.

PLANK

I've got it figured out. It was all an accident.

TIPSY

An accidental stabbing and hanging? Not to mention chimney stuffing.

PLANK

The morning begins. The household is doing their daily chores. Betsy is on the roof, clearing the gutters and removing a swallow's nest from the chimney. Chef Loude is at the kitchen preparing a noose to hang Lady Rockford's mink stole. A noose, as you know, is the traditional Belgian way of hanging mink stoles, and Chef Loude was, as we know, Belgian as the day is long. Lady Rockford is standing here, in front of the fireplace, sharpening her knife to cut thorough her early morning marmalade. The stage is set for disaster.

Suddenly Betsy slips. Perhaps a wayward crow had pecked at her feet. She falls, feet first into the chimney, and expires upon landing. Her foot kicks Lady Rockford's hand and she plunges the knife into her own back. Chef Loude, having heard Betsy fall, has climbed up onto the butcher's block to get a better listen to the goings on on the roof. Meanwhile Lady Rockford stumbles across the room opening the kitchen door to gain the help of Chef Loude, before she can get his attention she expires thusly, her arm landing here, launching a fork across the room to the temple of Chef Loude, who, in his shock and surprise, falls into the noose and hangs himself. Moments before he expires, he closes the kitchen door, out of Belgian politeness. Ha!

TIPSY

What's this? A note. In the fire place. (reads to himself) A confession. "I stabbed her. I had to end the torment. Now I will hang myself and end the torment altogether." Looks like the letter's been altered -- like someone tried to rewrite it, then gave up, and tried to start it on fire. Excuse me, is this chimney hard to use?

SNYVLING

Yes. The pull chain for the flew is quite a ways up there. I'm told.

TIPSY

I just solved the murder. Chef Loude killed Lady Rockford to "end the torment", then he killed himself. Betsy the maid finds the two deceased, and the letter, attempts to rewrite the letter, gives up, attempts to burn the letter but gets caught in the chimney in the process of opening the flew. Murder, suicide, attempted cover-up-- accidental death. We just run the gambit here, don't we?

PLANK

You didn't solve anything. You *found* a letter.

TIPSY

I had to put it together.

PLANK

Oh! Read it! How hard is that?!

TIPSY

More than you did!

PLANK

I was postulating! I would have found the letter sooner or later!

TIPSY

But you DIDN'T!

LADY ABERLINE

Snyvling, this is a wonderful birthday present.

SNYVLING

I'm glad you enjoy it ma'am.

PLANK

Besides! You're wrong! He's the murderer. He said so.

TIPSY

He also said he lies all the time, so we're supposed to believe him?

PLANK

He said he's a murderer, and murderers lie all the time..... wait. I'll figure it out. Sir. Who are you?

SNYVLING

The gardener.

PLANK

Ah Ha!

TIPSY

Yes?

PLANK

Nothing. I just got excited. Sir. Are you lying about being the gardener?

SNYVLING

No.

TIPSY

You're going to trust him now?

PLANK

What choice do we have? The murder was obviously premeditated. PRE-meditated--

TIPSY

The mystery I'd like solved is when lunch is going to be served.

PLANK

You thought all this out, but yet you're still here as a witness. And, liar or not, we cannot remove that fact that you are STILL here.

TIPSY

Habitual liar?

SNYVLING

No.

TIPSY

See! He's lying about that. What better twist then to give us a totally unreliable witness.

PLANK

Mother, is this true?

LADY ABERLINE

I have no idea, Snyvling set it up. Snyvling?

SNYVLING

(removing mustache) It's true.

TIPSY

So I was right? Murder, suicide, attempted cover-up, accidental death!

PLANK

So who were you supposed to be?

SNYVLING

Well.... (starts to walk with a limp.)

PLANK and TIPSY

The priest!

TIPSY

A lying priest, perfect.

PLANK

With a limp.

TIPSY

Right foot. That’s one more for me. Snyvling, what’s the score!?

SNYVLING

28 to 3.

TIPSY

That makes 15 in a row for me.

PLANK attempts to strangle TIPSY.

TIPSY (cont.)

You can get up now Betsy. Game over.

TIPSY gooses BETSY and she gets up with a yelp.

TIPSY (cont.)

I’m famished. How about that cake?

CHEF LOUDE enters from the kitchen with a cake on a tray, and a noose around his neck.

CHEF

Congratulations, Mr Topsy!

CHEF LOUDE hugs TIPSY and exits.

TIPSY

Plank?

PLANK

None for me. I seem to have lost my appetite.

PLANK exits to the kitchen.

LADY ABERLINE

I get the first bite.

BETSY

He is upset with you, you know.

TIPSY

I do know. Mother, shall we sing “Happy Birthday”? Seems we’re one short of a quartet.

LADY ABERLINE

No need, I know that--

TIPSY

Great! Let’s get eating.

BETSY goes to cut the cake, and serves LADY ABERLINE a slice. She eats it quickly, then grabs her throat.

SNYVLING

Are you choking?

LADY ABERLINE

Poison.

SNYVLING

Really?

She nods her head vigorously.

SNYVLING (cont.)

Are you sure?

TIPSY

She looks pretty sure, otherwise she’s making a damned fool of herself.

SNYVLING goes to help her, TIPSY holds him back.

TIPSY (cont.)

Leave her alone. If she’s going to die, she’s going to die. We can’t alter predestination, it’s PRE-destined.

BETSY

This is your own mother! You are not concerned for your own mother’s well being?

TIPSY

(cold and serious for a moment.) Adoptive mother. She adopted me and my brother from the orphanage at a tender and uninformed age. Since that time she has taught us daily on the cold realities of life, death, and murder. Yes, she is dying and I wish I could have done something about that. (picks up a piece of cake and sniffs it.) But this cake has been poisoned with the sap of the Qualkenny bush. A rare and deadly bush from the Dark Continent. There is no antidote. She is going to die, if she isn't dead already. It may seem cold, it is simply practical.

SNYVLING

I was going to eat that cake.

TIPSY

But you didn't

SNYVLING

I'm supposed to be the one dying.

TIPSY

But you're not. Better luck next time.

SNYVLING

What should we do?

LADY ABERLINE is still dying. Quite slowly and overly dramatic.

TIPSY

Well, she's been poisoned and she's dying. Best leave her to it. More importantly, we need to find out who the murderer is.

BETSY

Murderer?!

TIPSY

Cakes don't poison themselves. Delicious they may be, but premeditated killers they are not.

BETSY

Perhaps it was an accident.

TIPSY

What kind of accident does that.

TIPSY gestures casually to LADY ABERLINE who is still dying dramatically.

TIPSY (cont.)

Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got some detective deducing to do.

PLANK enters.

PLANK

Not so fast! Just what do you think you're doing?

TIPSY

Nothing yet. Why?

PLANK

You're not going to solve this one. It's my turn.

TIPSY pours himself a drink.

TIPSY

What do you know about it, you weren't even here.

PLANK

I heard every thing! I was hiding in the secret passage.

TIPSY

The kitchen?

PLANK turns to see that he, in fact, did enter through the kitchen door.

PLANK

Yeeeeeeees! The secret kitchen!

TIPSY

The only secret about that kitchen is what time lunch is being served.

PLANK notices LADY ABERLINE for the first time.

PLANK

Good lord! What's wrong with her?

TIPSY

I thought you were listening.



“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkahn pg. 17  
SNYVLING

Poison.

TIPSY

By a killer, or a cake... or both.

PLANK

Shouldn't we ---?

TIPSY

Do something?

PLANK

Yes.

TIPSY

Nothing to do. Poisoned with the sap of the Qualkenny bush. The rare and deadly bush from the Dark Continent.

PLANK

Brazil?

TIPSY

The very same.

PLANK

We should at least get her comfortable.

TIPSY

You want me to dig a hole?

PLANK leads LADY ABERLINE to a chair and props her up. She looks dead.

BETSY

Is she dead?

PLANK

I don't know.

They stare at her.

TIPSY

Well, if she is, she's not going to tell you.

PLANK leans in towards her.

PLANK

Mother, could you tell us if you're dead yet?

She punches him in the jaw but remains motionless in the chair.

TIPSY

There's still life left in the ol' girl yet.

PLANK

Quite.

BETSY

Lady Aberline, could you let us know when you do die?

TIPSY and PLANK stare incredulously at BETSY.

BETSY (cont.)

What?

SNYVLING

Shouldn't we be officially declaring this place a crime scene.

BETSY

A crime scene?

TIPSY

Poison? Last time I checked, poison is a crime.

PLANK

Poisoning.

TIPSY

What?

PLANK

Poisoning is a crime. Poison is a noun. Poisoning is a verb.

TIPSY

(to SNYVLING) See that? He’s got more class than you and I put together.

PLANK

You and I minus me, perhaps.

TIPSY

Quite.

BETSY

Lady Aberline has been poisoned, and you two are arguing like schoolboys! I can’t take it!

PLANK

There there.

PLANK awkwardly tries to comfort BETSY with an arm around her.

TIPSY

Oh. Snylvling my boy. We must exit momentarily. My brother is about to enter into an awkward love scene.

PLANK

What?

TIPSY

You’re smitten. I can see it.

PLANK

Please.

TIPSY

Smitten! Snylvling!

SNYVLING and TIPSY exit. BETSY and PLANK are uncomfortable.

PLANK

Would you like some cake?

BETSY

No. Are you kidding?

PLANK

Right, of course sorry.

PLANK sniffs at the cake.

PLANK

Wait a moment. What did my brother say this was poisoned with?

BETSY

The Qualkenny bush?

PLANK

From Brazil. I wonder how he knew that?

PLANK takes out a small “cake testing kit” and starts a quick test.

PLANK (cont.)

Tipsy! Get in here!

TIPSY and SNYVLING enter. TIPSY is finishing a joke.

TIPSY

And the rabbi says, “Sorry, not on my calander!”

PLANK

How did you know this was Qualkenny sap poisoning?

TIPSY

I thought you were busy with loving.

PLANK

Loving can wait.

TIPSY

Oh, tiger.

PLANK

What made you guess Qualkenny?

TIPSY

The smell.

PLANK

This is northern Qualkenny.

TIPSY

And?

PLANK

And, the northern Qualkenny bush isn't fatal.

SNYVLING

It isn't?

PLANK

Southern, yes. Northern no. The local children remember it with an aboriginal poem - touk albemy - touk----

TIPSY

That's great. So she's not dead?

PLANK

No. Whoever wanted to kill mother wouldn't have just poisoned the cake. It's most likely that all the food in the house is poisoned. Even the tea!

SNYVLING has poured himself a glass of tea and is drinking at this very moment.

TIPSY

Well, we'll find out soon, I guess.

SNYVLING finishes. They all stare at him. He doesn't die. He gets up, they follow him, all of them no more than a foot away from him. He walks forward, and breathes in deeply. They all breathe in with him expectantly. He grabs his stomach and begins to swoon. They are all very excited. He recovers.

SNYVLING

Whoa. I think I stood up too fast.

ALL

(disappointed.) Aww.

BETSY

How long should it take?

PLANK

A couple of seconds, maybe a couple of minutes at most.

They stare at SNYVLING longer. PLANK pokes at SNYVLING's stomach with his pipe.

PLANK (cont.)

Maybe you should lay down.

SNYVLING

Okay.

PLANK

Wouldn't want you to hurt yourself if you fall down dead.

SNYVLING lays down on the table and waits to die. The others confer on the other side of the room.

PLANK

Now what do we do?

TIPSY

What to you mean? He's the one who drank the poison tea.

PLANK

Maybe. We don't know if it's poison. Or if it's even a deadly poison.

TIPSY

(mockingly) We don't know if it's poison, or if it's even a deadly poison.

BETSY

Are you dead yet kid?

SNYVLING

Not yet. Thanks.

BETSY

I'm thinking of joining you soon.

PLANK

Gah! I'm an idiot.

TIPSY

No argument here.

PLANK

I'll just test it. (begins testing the tea.) I think it would be best if we were to assume that all the food in the house is poisoned. (to BETSY) I leave it to you to remove all edibles from the premises.

BETSY stares at him uncomprehending.

TIPSY

He has a way with the ladies. Just get rid of the food Betsy. Thank you.

BETSY nods and exits.

SNYVLING

Am I going to die?

PLANK

No. And neither is the Lady Aberline. In fact, due to the mild hallucinogenic qualities of the Northern Qualkenny bush, she should be having tranquil, yet fantastical dreams right now. Regardless.

TIPSY

Irregardless.

PLANK

No. Regardless.

TIPSY

Yes.

PLANK

Cakes don't poison themselves. Delicious they may be, but pre-meditated killers they are not.

TIPSY

Well put.

PLANK

And, the poison did not just come here by itself. If we can track how it came to be here, then we'll have our man.

SNYVLING

Does it really matter where it came from?

PLANK

It's not the sort of substance one would pick up at the corner store. This is the sort of poison that one would want to handle personally. The purchase and travel. No. The person who poisoned Lady Aberline is most assuredly the person who acquired the poison from the source.

SNYVLING

There's only one way to get to Brazil from here.

TIPSY

Boat. The Lady of Ruby, I believe. Now with our mother not dead, I suppose I can bring up this topic.

PLANK

What?

TIPSY

I got us a job. We're going to be detectives on a boat.

PLANK

The Lady of Ruby?

TIPSY

Coincidentally, yes.

PLANK

But, I hate the ocean.

TIPSY

I know. I thought you might get used to it.

SNYVLING

Like immersion therapy.

PLANK

The last thing I need is to be immersed in the ocean. Detectives on a boat.

TIPSY

There's something about being on the open sea that causes people to commit crimes. The open salty air, the distance from land. Something turns the mind to... murder!



PLANK

Yeeesss.

TIPSY

And when murder is committed there will be Detectives on a Boat. The high seas. High drama! Coming soon. Oh, did I mention that it would be a regular paycheck too. Even if no crimes are committed.

PLANK

So we're security guards.

TIPSY

Detectives on a Boat!

PLANK

When do we start?

TIPSY

Two weeks!

PLANK

I don't want to go on a boat.

TIPSY

I know you don't "want" to, but we have to anyway. You want to solve the mystery.

PLANK

We can do that from the docks.

TIPSY

(to SNYVLING) The docks don't have a bar. We have a job that we've been hired to do.

PLANK

Security guards.

TIPSY

Yeah, that's the one. And, you want to track this poison, the suspect may be on the boat, and they won't come off if they see us. But, if we corner them on the boat then they'll have no where to run.

PLANK

Son-of-a--

TIPSY

Let's pack!

PLANK

This discussion is not over.

TIPSY exits with PLANK following quickly. SNYVLING stares at LADY ABERLINE for a moment. BETSY enters.

SNYVLING

She almost died.

BETSY

Yes, I know.

SNYVLING

She didn't even have any say in the matter. That's one of the most important things to happen in your life, and you don't get to decide a single thing about it. How you're going to die.

BETSY

I'd rather not talk about it.

SNYVLING

Neither would I. But there it is. Looming over your head like a...like a vulture. I'm not going to stand for this. I will not be a simple victim of fate.

BETSY

Mr. Snylvling? Are you planning on doing something.... killing yourself?

SNYVLING

Life is too short not to have control over when it's over. I'm not going to kill myself. But I think it makes sense to be the one in control over my own demise.

LADY ABERLINE stirs.

LADY ABERLINE

Harold---

SNYVLING

She's waking up. Quick, go get Plank.

BETSY exits.

SNYVLING (cont.)

Lady Aberline, how are you feeling?

LADY ABERLINE

Dizzy.

SNYVLING

Here, sit up.

LADY ABERLINE

What a dear young man. You remind me of Harold.

SNYVLING

Your husband?

LADY ABERLINE

No. My lover. A boxer.

He looks down at his wimpy body.

SNYVLING

I remind you of a boxer?

LADY ABERLINE

Harold never won much. But he was sweet. Which I believe was his problem in the ring. Too gentle with the gloves. Truth be told, I think he just liked being around other men... not the boxing so much. Tea? It's from India. Spiced.

SNYVLING

No thank you, it might be poisoned.... on second thought perhaps I will.

LADY ABERLINE

Who are you?

SNYVLING

My name is--

LADY ABERLINE

Please don't tell me! I'm very good with names. I find that a person of a particular name carries himself in a particular way. A Jack looks like a Jack. A Charles acts like a Charles. Just by looking at your manerisms... the way you hold yourself-- the brow. The arm gestures. I'd say you are a... Randolph!

TIPSY and PLANK enter.

SNYVLING

My name is Snyvling.

LADY ABERLINE

Schnivling? I was way off.

TIPSY

Can I still call you Randolph? I rather like that name.

LADY ABERLINE

Schnivling? What is that? Turkish?

PLANK

Mother. You're feeling better?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, my dear....

PLANK

Plank.

LADY ABERLINE

Plank? That's an unusual name.

PLANK

It's my last name, and nickname.... and your last name, for that matter.

LADY ABERLINE

Plank? I don't think so.

PLANK

That's what you've told us anyway. Although I'm just now considering it might not be true.

LADY ABERLINE

"Us"?

PLANK

Yes. Me and your other son. Topsy.

TIPSY

Adoptive sons.

LADY ABERLINE

Oh, dear. It’s all very fuzzy.

PLANK

You’ll be fine in a moment or two. You just need to let the poison wear off.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, of course. Poison. Did he poison me?

PLANK

I don’t think so. Mother, this is Snyvling, your chauffeur.

LADY ABERLINE

Sit. Snyvling? What kind of name is that?

SNYVLING

I think it’s Turkish.

LADY ABERLINE

Wrong. Let’s see.

She begins to feel the bumps on his head, while consulting a ceramic phrenology guide.

LADY ABERLINE (cont.)

Mmm. I see. Yes. Yes. Hmm.

SNYVLING

Uh. What’s happening?

PLANK

She’s reading your fortune. By the bumps on your head, if you can believe that. Pseudo-science, mumbo and/or jumbo.

LADY ABERLINE

Nothing wrong with exploring the world Plank.

SNYVLING

What can you tell?

LADY ABERLINE

All sorts of things. Where you’re from, where you are going to, wealth, love--

SNYVLING

Death?

LADY ABERLINE

If you wish. Hmm. This isn’t right.

SNYVLING

What? What isn’t right?

LADY ABERLINE

(referring to phrenology guide) Why isn’t this thing working?

SNEILVING

It was fine before.

LADY ABERLINE

Nonsense. It’s cheaply made, and won’t last the year.

SNYVLING

Really? You can tell all that by the bumps on my head?

LADY ABERLINE

I think so. Who poisoned me?

PLANK

We don’t know yet mother. We’ll find out.

TIPSY

Yes, in two weeks time, we’ll be on a boat that should have all the answers.

LADY ABERLINE

Well, that makes sense.

Lights out.

Scene 2: The same location two weeks later. PLANK and SNYVLING are there.

SNYVLING

But, I’m a chauffeur.

PLANK

I understand that. We’ve all got to do things we don’t like to do from time to time.

SNYVLING

But, I like being a chauffeur.

PLANK

No, not that. Helping me.

SNYVLING

Helping you?

PLANK

Working for me. I need someone to be my muscle.

SNYVLING

You’re choosing me for “muscle”?

PLANK

I don’t know many people.

SNYVLING

Why don’t you just have Topsy be your muscle?

PLANK

Hilarious. Most of the time there’s no need for fisticuffs, but every so often a criminal will get it in his mind that he could fight back. That’s where you come in.

SNYVLING

I don’t think I could actually.... fight.

PLANK

You always have the element of surprise. All I need you to do is make sure that when I’m accusing someone that you are behind them.

TIPSY enters behind SNYVLING who doesn’t see him.

TIPSY

Make sure they’re not behind you.

SNYVLING is startled.

TIPSY (cont.)

We leave within the hour.

PLANK

I’m not certain I want to go.

TIPSY

What now is your concern?

PLANK

Sinking? Drowning?

TIPSY

Relax. Boats rarely sink nowadays.

PLANK

The Titanic? The Lusitania? The Bismarck!

TIPSY

All famous ships. Ever notice it’s only the famous ships that sink? We’re on a relatively unknown ship, so I think we’ll be safe.

SNYVLING

Mr. Plank, you can have my life jacket if it would make you feel safer.

PLANK

Thank you.

TIPSY

Perhaps if you learned to swim.

PLANK

Perhaps if you learned to not be an ass.

TIPSY

Perhaps.

They begin to strangle each other. LADY ABERLINE enters and begins swatting at PLANK and TIPSY with her cane.

LADY ABERLINE

Pfft! Pfft! This is why I got rid of the cats. Go to your rooms.



PLANK

Mother.

LADY ABERLINE

Go to your room.

TIPSY

Fine. I have to pack anyway.

LADY ABERLINE

You're out of the will Topsy.

TIPSY

Surprise surprise.

PLANK

How about me, Mother, am I out of the will too?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, of course, now off to your room.

PLANK and TIPSY exit.

LADY ABERLINE (cont.)

Now what was that all about?

SNYVLING

Boats.

LADY ABERLINE pulls out an axe.

LADY ABERLINE

I was hoping you could illuminate something else for me. Is this yours? I almost killed myself on it.

SNYVLING

Did you?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes.

SNYVLING

How close did you come?

LADY ABERLINE

What?

SNYVLING

I mean, are you just using that as an expression, or did you actually come close to killing yourself?

LADY ABERLINE

If I didn't know better, I'd say you wanted me to kill myself.

SNYVLING

Oh no. Not at all. No no no. Far from it. Just interested to know if it was a good potential.

LADY ABERLINE

It was balanced precariously on my bedroom door, so the potential was there, yes, thank you.

SNYVLING

Good. Thank you. Oh. Um.... you might want to be careful around the house from now on.

LADY ABERLINE

This is my house Snyvling. I'll be as careful as I please.

SNYVLING

It's your house. Of course. I'm sorry. In the excitement of it all, I forgot that. Well, then for the next week or so, you might want to be careful. I'll clean up all the projects.

LADY ABERLINE

All of the projects?

SNYVLING

Yes. This needs some explaining, I suppose.

LADY ABERLINE

Snyvling. What have you done to my house?

SNYVLING

I think I've made it a death trap. In fact, I know I've made it a death trap. I'm sorry. It seemed like a reasonable idea at the time.

LADY ABERLINE

Do I smell petrol?

SNYVLING

Yes. That’s me. Little trouble at the pump today.

LADY ABERLINE

You didn’t drink petrol, did you?

SNYVLING

No. Yes. A little.

LADY ABERLINE

No smoking for you today.

SNEIVLNG

Lady Aberline, when you almost died I decided to take control over my life by taking control over my death.

LADY ABERLINE

It’s fantastic to have a hobby, isn’t it?

SNYVLING

Yes.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes. (pause) I have a hobby as well. I’m going to leave a vast sum of money to just one person, but I haven’t decided who. I keep changing my mind.

SNYVLING

Does it have to be to just one person?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes! I enjoy the attention that competition inspires.

SNYVLING

So you have all of your living relatives competing for your love so they can win your money when you die?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes. And they bloody well know it too.

SNYVLING

Seems a bit stupid to me.

LADY ABERLINE

Stupid?

SNYVLING

Yes -- well, not that you're stupid, just the idea seems.... ill-advised--

LADY ABERLINE

Help me up.

Hilarious bit over the next few lines of SNYVLING helping LADY ABERLINE up.

SNYVLING

What are we doing?

LADY ABERLINE

I'm going to change my will.

SNYVLING

Now? Did someone offend-- Who could have possibly... wait. Me? I was in the will? And you're taking me out? I honestly didn't even know I was in competition. I'm not even family Lady Aberline. Please sit down. I didn't know you were giving money to the person who was nicest to you. I wouldn't have been so nice to you had I known.

LADY ABERLINE

All the more reason to take your name off.

SNYVLING

Don't get me wrong. I wouldn't mind the money.

LADY ABERLINE

Greedy too. Your name is definitely coming off.

Hilarious bit of her getting the box with the will and struggling with the box and will.  
SNYVLING wrestles the will away from her.

SNYVLING

Good lord, look at all the names on here.

LADY ABERLINE

They’ve all been worthy at some point in my life.

SNYVLING

Harold. Topsy. Plank. Topsy. Plank. Captain Ribling. Plank. Corpral Ribling. Plank. Topsy. Neville Chamberlain? Did you even know him?

LADY ABERLINE

Not *the* Neville Chamberlain. This was a horse named after him.

SNYVLING

A horse. Suddenly I don’t feel too bad about being replaced on the list. (reading) Lemon Bars? Are you sure you’re not just using this as scrap paper?

LADY ABERLINE

Don’t be stupid. Your word - Stupid. That is a legal document. I take every addition seriously.

SNYVLING

So. The lemon bars?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes?

SNYVLING

You were going to leave your money to a batch of lemon bars?

LADY ABERLINE

They were very devine.

SNYVLING

What did they do to get kicked off the list?

LADY ABERLINE

They know what they did. It is a matter between the Lemon Bars and myself.

SNYVLING

Of course.

LADY ABERLINE

My love for the Lemon Bars, like all my loves over the years, was gone too soon. They were a gift from the Major.

SNYVLING

(looking at the will) Major Ribling? Your husband?

LADY ABERLINE

My lover. I believe I loved the Major's Lemon Bars for longer then I loved the Major. (lost in memory for a moment.) You're trying to distract me! Where's my pen? You're off the list!

LADY ABERLINE exits, SNYVLING tries to exit, but he's stopped by TIPSY who's entering.

TIPSY

Snyvling, how are you on the open water?

SNYVLING

Fine, I suppose.

TIPSY

I need someone to carry my bags. I'm not going to carry them myself.

SNYVLING

But, I'm a chauffeur.

TIPSY

And I'm not a bag carrier.

SNYVLING

But, Mr. Plank already hired me.

TIPSY

I know, which is why you'll be the perfect person for the job.

SNYVLING

I might be dead before I can help you.

TIPSY

Seems a strange reason to refuse a job.

SNYVLING

I'd just thought you'd prefer to know.

TIPSY

The job that we’re doing is very dangerous. I’ll make you a deal, if you don’t die while in my service, I’ll kill you myself when we get back.

SNYVLING

Thank you sir.

Lights out.

Scene 3: Abord The Lady of Ruby. A deck rail, and deck chair. The sound of the ocean is heard. The DOCTOR is looking out at the ocean. TIPSY is sitting on a deck chair enjoying a cocktail.

TIPSY

Fine ship, isn’t it?

DOCTOR

The Lady of Ruby? Yes. Indeed. A very fine ship indeed.

TIPSY

And here we are... on the ocean.

They stare at each other for a moment. PLANK enters wary of the edge of the boat.

TIPSY (cont.)

Ah! There he is! Just the person I was looking for to break this awkward tension. (to DOCTOR) Your fault, by the way.

DOCTOR

What?

TIPSY

Plank. Allow me to introduce one of the most dull people I’ve ever met. Mr.--

DOCTOR

Doctor.

TIPSY

Oh, yes. Doctor. Of course. You’re even more dull then my snap judgment could have told me.

DOCTOR

Doctor VanHauten at your--

TIPSY

Boring! Boring and dull. A deadly combination.

DOCTOR

And just who the hell are you?

TIPSY

I’m the best thing to happen to your dull dull life Dr. VanHauten-en-en, let me make it up to you.

DOCTOR

Make what up?

TIPSY

Calling you boring.

DOCTOR

Oh, but I am boring. Really. Actually I’m quite boring. You were correct in your assessment of me.

TIPSY

Nevertheless! I shall buy you a drink and put you onto the road of excitement. First stop, Happyville! Population: You!

TIPSY exits.

DOCTOR

I can’t tell if I hate him, or like him.

PLANK

I think that’s by design on his part. That’s Topsy. He’s my brother, Well adoptive brother anyway.

DOCTOR

Topsy?

PLANK

Thelonious Plank. “Topsy’s” a nickname.

DOCTOR

He doesn’t seem drunk.



“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 41

PLANK

He never does. It's more the act of tipping the drinks back that earned him the nickname. I don't think he's ever been drunk. He's something else, isn't he? I have no idea how he does it.

DOCTOR

Sorry, who are you?

PLANK

Reginald Plank, at your service. You may call me Plank. (pause) Topsy got the good nickname.

SNYVLING enters.

PLANK (cont.)

Ah, there's my man now, with my luggage. Hope it's not too heavy for you Snyvling, my boy.

SNYVLING

Actually it's not --

PLANK

Not too heavy at all, eh. Well, I'll take it from here.

PLANK takes bag and exits.

SNYVLING

That's Topsy's bag-- sir.

TIPSY enters.

TIPSY

What's my bag?

SNYVLING

I'll--- go get it.

Exits the opposite way PLANK went.

TIPSY

I bought you a drink. You weren't there, so I had to drink it for you.

DOCTOR

What line of work are you in, Topsy, was it?

TIPSY

Yes. I’m the detective on this boat.

DOCTOR

You don’t say.

TIPSY

I do say. I did say. In fact, would you do me a return favor for buying you a drink?

DOCTOR

Certainly.

TIPSY

Have you heard of the Ancient Jewel of Dublin?

DOCTOR

No.

TIPSY

Doesn’t matter. What I would like you to do is say tell my brother that you not only have heard of this jewel, but it was yours and it’s gone missing, possibly stolen.

DOCTOR

Why would I do that?

TIPSY

Because it will be fun. And it will make my brother feel as though our jobs here are serving a purpose.

PLANK enters.

TIPSY (cont)

There he is. Plank, the good Doctor has just delivered some distressing news.

DOCTOR

Yes, uh.. my jewel was lost... possibly stolen.

PLANK

Jewel?

DOCTOR

Yes, the Ancient Jewel of .... Dublin?

PLANK

The Ancient Jewel of Dublin?!

TIPSY

You’ve heard of it?

PLANK

Everyone’s heard of it Topsy, it’s a very famous jewel.

TIPSY

Well, what do you know. A famous jewel stolen.

PLANK

Why did you have it with you on this boat?

DOCTOR

Why?

PLANK

Yes. Why wasn’t it in the museum in Dublin?

DOCTOR

Of course. Why?

TIPSY

He was transporting it. Or so he told me. He could be a liar.

DOCTOR

What?

TIPSY

What does this Scottish Jewel look like?

PLANK

Irish.

TIPSY

That’s a strange way for a Scottish Jewel to look... Irish, huh.

PLANK

It’s called the Ancient Jewel of Dublin.

TIPSY

And the mystery continues. What’s it look like man?

PLANK

Like.... like a big jewel. A diamond.

TIPSY

Wait a minute, you mean, like this? (take a large jewel out of his pocket.)

PLANK

Yeeessss. Yes! How did you--!??

TIPSY

It was on the pull chain in the men’s bathroom.

PLANK

Hidden in plain sight.

TIPSY

Plain sight for those who flush. The bathroom is that way. Doubt you’ll find another jewel.

PLANK

Give me the Jewel.

TIPSY

Easy come easy go.

PLANK

Tipsy. Do you realize what this means?

TIPSY

We can’t keep the jewel?

PLANK

That, and we’ve solved a crime.

TIPSY

What is to stop us from just taking the jewel and selling it ourselves?

PLANK

Morality. Responsibility.

TIPSY

That always gets in the way, doesn't it.

PLANK

Snylving.. Bring this to the captain, and make sure he locks it up for safe keeping the rest of this voyage. Dr. VanHauten, I hope you won't mind, but it's the only way to keep it safe.

DOCTOR

Of course.

TIPSY

You're a good man, doctor.

PLANK

You found that in the bathroom?

TIPSY

Yes.

PLANK

Amazing.

PLANK looks off and doesn't hear TIPSY.

TIPSY

I'm pretty sure it was just a door knob, but he doesn't know that. Know what I mean.

SNYLVING exits. MADAME X enters and looks out to the sea. She drops a single rose into the water.

TIPSY (cont.)

Hello. Enter the woman.

PLANK

Who's that?

DOCTOR

That is the mysterious Madame X.

PLANK

Madame X, huh? What's so mysterious about her?

TIPSY

Well, for starters she’s named “The Mysterious Madame X”.

DOCTOR

Some say she’s a gypsy. Some say she’s a witch. All anyone really knows about her is that every year on this day she sails aboard the Lady of Ruby and drops a single rose into the ocean. She never talks to anyone, and only signs her name as “X”.

TIPSY

So why doesn’t she talk to anyone?

DOCTOR

I don’t know. She just doesn’t.

TIPSY

Has anyone tried talking to her?

DOCTOR

No.

TIPSY

Right, then.

TIPSY starts towards her. PLANK stands in his way. “In the way” bit.

PLANK

What do you think you’re doing?

TIPSY

Talking to the mysterious Madame X.

PLANK

You can’t talk to her. Didn’t you hear? She doesn’t talk to anyone. That includes you. She’s obviously in mourning. A rose over the side of the boat the same day every year? I mean, really now, how much more obvious can it be?

TIPSY

Maybe she’s a florist.

PLANK

And maybe you’re a good detective, but I wouldn’t bet on it.

TIPSY

I'll bet you five pounds.

PLANK

Fine.

TIPSY pushes past him and goes to her.

TIPSY

Good evening.

She turns slowly to look at him.

TIPSY (cont.)

My name is Thelonious Plank, but please, call me Topsy.

He holds out his hand. She doesn't move. Pause.

TIPSY (cont.)

And the hand extended in a sign of amicable greeting is not taken up. (pause) Instead, the hand remains there motionless... waiting for the lady to respond.... in some way.... Any response at all... would be fine. I.... hmmm. I see that you've thrown a rose overboard.

PLANK wants to stop this and starts towards them, but the DOCTOR holds him back.

TIPSY (cont.)

Someone lost at sea, perhaps?

She turns and looks out to the sea.

TIPSY (cont.)

I'll take that as a "yes".

She turns back to him and speaks in a heavy middle-European accent.

MADAME X

I am sorry. I am a florist. I do not speak the English too well?

TIPSY

You're a florist?

MADAME X

Yes.

TIPSY

And you don't speak English well?

MADAME X

That is a true.

TIPSY

Well. That must make you somewhat embarrassed. Maybe make you not want to talk much.  
HA! Plank, you owe me five pounds!

PLANK storms off to his cabin. TIPSY turns and misses PLANK's exit, while turned the other way DOCTOR and MADAME X exchange a weird and suspicious moment and duck off quickly. TIPSY turns around just in time to not see them. SNYVLING enters behind TIPSY holding a large hand-crank drill. TIPSY turns and is startled.

TIPSY (cont.)

Oh! Snyvling. (looking around) Boy, you really know how to kill a party.

SNYVLING

Thank you sir.

TIPSY

What's that?

SNYVLING

This? Oh. Nothing.

SNYVLING hides the drill behind his back.

TIPSY

Are you planning on sinking this ship?

SNYVLING

Yes.

TIPSY

Give me the drill Snyvling.



SNYVLING

Yes sir.

SNYVLING hands over the drill.

TIPSY

Now then, where’s my bag? I need my dinner pants. (Noticing PLANK’s bag that SNYVLING has brought in.) Ah, there we are.

SNYVLING

Actually this one belongs to--

TIPSY

Thank you, Snyvling. Just, Dig through there and ... the brown ones.

SNYVLING

You’re going to change right here?

TIPSY

(stated obviously) Yes.

SNYVLING

Okay.

TIPSY attempts to put on PLANK’s pants which are much too small for him. Hilarity ensues.

TIPSY

Well, nothing that a night cap can’t fix. If anyone needs me, I’ll be at the bar.

TIPSY hands SNYVLING his drink and hops off to his room. PLANK enters in his boxer shorts.

PLANK

Have you seen my pants, Snyvling? They weren’t in the bag you gave me.

SNYVLING starts to point towards TIPSY’s cabin, but thinks better of it and shakes his head no.

PLANK (cont.)

Oh well, at least I can enjoy the night air a little more. Have we made any progress on the case?

SNYVLING

Madame X? She’s a florist.

PLANK

No. The Lady Aberline poisoning.

SNYVLING

Oh. I had forgotten.

SNYVLING slowly leaves during PLANK’s rambling, and TIPSYP enters unnoticed by PLANK.

PLANK

Yes, as has everyone. (sigh) I have a feeling we’re chasing a phantom. If the killer had procured the poison himself from Brazil, what need would he have to return to Brazil. And what are the chances that we’ll find him on this boat? Perhaps we can question the locals once we get to Brazil, but then what? We’ll have a long boat ride back home before we can follow up on any of that information. Why did I let Topsy talk me into this.

TIPSYP

I’m very persuasive.

PLANK is startled.

TIPSYP (cont.)

You’re still awake?

PLANK

Yes. What are you doing?

TIPSYP

Not drowning. Oh, you’ll not believe what I just saw.

DOCTOR and MADAME X enter. SNYVLING enters from the other side.

SNYVLING

Roger Hammersmith has been murdered!

TIPSYP

Nevermind

PLANK

That’s terrible... Who’s Roger Hammersmith?

SNYVLING

He’s the Swedish film producer in cabin 2B.

PLANK

Swedes, you can’t trust them.

TIPSY

I like the Swedes. I like their chocolate.

PLANK

That’s the Swiss, you ignoramus.

DOCTOR

Gentlemen, please! A crime has just been committed.

PLANK

You’re right. Snylvling ...first of all, untie yourself from that cement block. Secondly, tell me what the crime scene looks like.

SNEVILING

Roger Hammersmith, the movie producer, was traveling to California. He was killed with a knife in his private cabin while looking through a book entitled “The Snow White Women of Scandinavia” sort of a travel-lougue.

DOCTOR

It’s been long known that Mr. Hammersmith was indeed a man who enjoyed Scandinavian women, and his wife was all too aware of this fact.

PLANK

It appears to be a clear case of murder. She murdered him for his wandering ways, then put the book in his hand as a sort of “message”.

SNYVLING

Whoever did it, did try to make it look like a suicide, but suicide by stabbing yourself in the back is VERY difficult. Trust me. However, the door was locked, so it could have been a suicide.

TIPSY

What about the porthole?

SNYVLING

Much too small for anyone to use. There were no fingerprints to be found, and no trace of poison.

PLANK

You found all of that out just now?

SNYVLING

Photographic memory.

TIPSY

(Leering at MADAME X) Wish I had me one of those.

PLANK

Snyvling, you'd better take me to look at the crime scene.

DOCTOR

I'll show you.

PLANK and DOCTOR exit.

MADAME X

He was my husband.

TIPSY

What?!

MADAME X

Yes.

TIPSY

Roger Hammersmith?

MADAME X

Yes. We were on our way home to California.

TIPSY

Why take The Lady of Ruby? I thought we were headed for the Dark Continent.

MADAME X

Brazil?

TIPSY

Yes. That as well.

MADAME X

A lot of movie people take this route. Brazil is beautiful this time of year, and The Lady of Ruby is not frequented by people who want an autograph. You can have some anonymity.

TIPSY

Hence, Madame X.

MADAME X

Yes.

TIPSY

I'm sorry for your loss.

MADAME X

Truth be told, I'm not all that upset about it. He never knew how to treat a woman right.

TIPSY

I suppose a movie producer gets a fair amount of women.

MADAME X

I suppose he did.

TIPSY

If you don't mind, I'll need to see your voyage pass, and his, if you have it.

MADAME X

Of course.

TIPSY

Oo. These will get you all the way to Hollywood, and I thought it took practice.

MADAME X

I'm frightened. What if the killer comes looking for me as well.

TIPSY

There there. I'll protect you.

TIPSY embracess MADAME X, and they both seem to enjoy it. PLANK enters.

PLANK

What’s Topsy doing?

SNYVLING

He’s interrogating the widow Hammersmith.

PLANK

Madame X?

TIPSY

You live in Hollywood?

MADAME X

California, that’s right.

TIPSY

Sounds nice--

PLANK

I take it that’s the grieving widow Hammersmith.

TIPSY

Find your own Plank.

PLANK

Pardon me for the interruption.

MADAME X

Quite alright.

PLANK doesn’t leave.

TIPSY

And yet he remains. Was there something else you wanted Plank?

PLANK

Pardon me for the interruption.

TIPSY

Yes. You said that already.

PLANK

I was hoping you’d pick up the hint that I wanted a word with you.

TIPSY

Sorry (to Madame X) I’m notoriously bad at picking up hints.

MADAME X

Hints maybe, but I’d say he’s pretty good at picking up everything else.

TIPSY

Practically everything.

PLANK

This is supposed to be an interrogation.

TIPSY

You interrogate your way, I’ll interrogate my way.

PLANK

This is not interrogating. At best it’s a minor molestation.

TIPSY

Romancing.

MADAME X

Flirtation.

PLANK

Regardless.

TIPSY

I’m getting information here.

PLANK

You’re compromising our position.

MADAME X

Oh. I’ve always wanted to get caught in a compromising position.

PLANK

For someone who’s husband has just died you’re awfully cheerful.

TIPSY

C'est la vous.

PLANK

C'est la vie.

TIPSY

Of course.

MADAME X

It's a front. I'm using it to hide the pain.

TIPSY

There, you see, a front -- to hide the pain. I think she's an actress.

PLANK

Or perhaps to hide guilt.

TIPSY

I don't think she did it. I'm going to guess it was someone else on the boat. Someone with a familiarity with knives.

PLANK

True. The weapon of choice was a knife. Not just a knife! An engraved knife! A knife that you bought your husband for your 5th anniversary. I have no doubt that we will find your finger prints on the handle. This murder is far too personalized for anyone else to have done it. You knew he consorted with Scandinavian women, thus the book in his hands. And the knife was just a sweet enough ironic twist for you. An anniversary present a sign of commitment to a loving marriage. And, of course the murderer would obviously have to be someone with access to the room.

SNYVLING

Perhaps a locksmith.

TIPSY

I dated a locksmith once.

PLANK

Tipsy, please I'm in the middle of a reveal. The night is still. There is a soft salt breeze coming in from the North.



DOCTOR

West.

PLANK

West. It’s a clear night. A still night. A... dark night. A night like this seems to invite murder. Beckoning to the darker half of us all. Daring us to commit deeds of most unspeakable--

MADAME X

Oh, I think I knew a locksmith once, a cousin.

TIPSY

Do you want to hear my theory?

PLANK

No.

TIPSY

I think he did it.

DOCTOR

It’s true. I confess.

PLANK

Damn it!

DOCTOR

Mrs. Hammersmith, I can’t let you be accused of murder. It was me. I did it. I did it for you. The way he treated you, the lies he told. The people he consorted with. I knew about the Scandinavian women, all of them.... the bastard.

PLANK

Guhhhh! You didn’t even “talk” about it. Just, “I think he did it.”. No art. No panache. Just “blah”.

TIPSY

I was right though.

PLANK

That’s besides the point. Where’s your sense of theatrics?

DOCTOR

I used the porthole as a way of entering the room undetected.

TIPSY

I was right, wasn't I?

PLANK

That's not the point.

DOCTOR

You see, I knew the light mist of salt water in the air would wash my finger prints from the porthole that I squeezed through.

TIPSY

Don't you even want to know how I knew?

PLANK

No.

DOCTOR

You may wonder how I squeezed through such a small opening. My mother and father were circus performers.

TIPSY

I saw him.

PLANK

You saw him?!

TIPSY

Yes.

PLANK

What are you talking about? Circus performers??

DOCTOR

Yes, my mother and father.

PLANK

Oh shut the hell up.

DOCTOR

Okay.

PLANK

You saw him and you didn't do anything about it?

TIPSY

Couldn't. I was on the wrong deck.

The DOCTOR kisses MADAME X. She slaps him and exits. DOCTOR exits after MADAME X, SNYVLING notices but doesn't know what to do.

PLANK

You cheated!

TIPSY

Cheated? I didn't know there were any rules on how to solve a murder.

PLANK

You didn't solve anything! You witnessed a murder. I solved the murder.

TIPSY

But you were wrong.

PLANK

Nonetheless, I certainly put in more effort than you.

SNYVLING finally exits after the DOCTOR.

TIPSY

Hey now. I had to stay up pretty late to see what I saw.

PLANK

You only stayed up late because the bar on this damned boat never closes!

TIPSY

True. Speaking of which., where's that Doctor fellow? I owe him a drink.

PLANK

Sonofa-- (turns towards Topsy, smirking) Well, you certainly botched that one up, didn't you.

TIPSY

We are on a boat. Where's he going to go?

A shot is heard off-stage in the direction that the DOCTOR had exited.

TIPSY (cont.)

If that was a gunshot, I’m going to need a new barber.

PLANK

What?

TIPSY

Nevermind.

SNYVLING enters.

PLANK

It was a gunshot.

SNYVLING

It wasn’t me.

PLANK

I think the Doctor killed himself, or someone else.

TIPSY

Perhaps it was a car backfiring.

PLANK

In the middle of the Atlantic ocean?

TIPSY

A seal backfiring?

PLANK

You two stay here, I’m going to go check it out.

PLANK exits. DOCTOR enters.

TIPSY

Oh, there you are! We missed you.

SNYVLING

And you missed yourself.

DOCTOR

Quite.

TIPSY

What was that noise?

DOCTOR

Noise?

SNYVLING

Gunshot.

TIPSY

Or a seal.

DOCTOR

Oh, that. Probably my car backfiring.

TIPSY

Ah-Ha! Plank! Get in here.

DOCTOR

I was distraught. I was going to kill myself. I had brought my car along in storage deck B and I thought I'd suffocate myself--

TIPSY

Yes yes. Plank!

SNYVLING

What deck did you say?

DOCTOR

B.

TIPSY

Snyvling. Stay here.

PLANK enters.

PLANK

You're alive!

TIPSY

Yes?

PLANK

Not you. Him!

TIPSY

Oh, right, him too. It was a car. You owe me five pounds.

PLANK

What are you talking about?

TIPSY

The bet we made about the noise.

PLANK

We never --

TIPSY

It was an understood thing. A gentleman's wager. Between gentlemen.

PLANK

That's the stupidest thing I've ever heard. Besides, you said it was a seal.

TIPSY

But first I said it was a car. That's what really counts.

PLANK

No, you only get one guess. You can't just list off a hundred options and then claim victory. God. Do you cheat at everything?

MADAME X enters. The DOCTOR grabs her.

DOCTOR

The man deserved to die, and you wanted him dead.

MADAME X

I never asked you to murder my husband.

DOCTOR

I know, I'm sorry.

MADAME X

I would have asked you if I had known you'd go through with it.

PLANK

Ha! Intention!

TIPSY

But he admitted to murdering Mr. Hammersmith.

PLANK

But she just admitted she would have done the same if she had gotten the chance.

MADAME X

That’s true. I was planning it for this evening.

TIPSY

Who knows if you would have gone through with it or not? There’s no way of knowing.

PLANK

There’s no way of not knowing.

TIPSY

There’s no way of not not knowing.

PLANK

There’s not no way to not not know not.....NOT!

TIPSY

How about we call it a draw.

DOCTOR

I should really probably be cuffed.

SNYVLING

Tipsy 28, Plank 3. One tie.

PLANK

*Thank you, Snyvling.* It never fails to make me feel better to hear those numbers.

TIPSY

It never not fails to--

DOCTOR

Or at least tied up somehow.

PLANK

Oh, it's a boat, where are you going to go?

DOCTOR

Right.

DOCTOR kisses MADAME X and runs off.

SNYVLING

He's jumping over the side.

PLANK

Son-of-a---

TIPSY

(sarcastically) Where's he going to go?

Splash of water off stage.

PLANK

Over the side of the ship, apparently.

They watch the DOCTOR drift away.

TIPSY

Well, he's out of our jurisdiction now.

PLANK

We do have one suspect in custody.

MADAME X

Am I being arrested too?

PLANK

Conspiracy to commit murder.

TIPSY

Or, at least intention of conspiracy, we'll let the courts sort it out. Snylvling, take her down to the brig. How I'll miss you.

SNYVLING

I'll miss you too, sir.



TIPSY kicks SNYVLING in the butt.

TIPSY

Not you, her.

SNYVLING and MADAME X exit.

TIPSY (cont.)

Plank. I’ve discovered what I would like to do with my life. (pause) Aren’t you curious?

PLANK

Yes. Of course I am. I thought we knew what we wanted to do with our lives. We’re doing it currently. Right now we’re doing what we want with our lives.

TIPSY

Perhaps you are.

PLANK

You’re not?

TIPSY

Honestly, I’d prefer having a cocktail rather than what we’re doing now.

PLANK

That goes without saying. But, what are you talking about?

TIPSY

I’m going into moving pictures.

PLANK

Great. Can we discuss this later.

TIPSY

There’s money, glamour, dames.... all of it just waiting for someone like me.

PLANK

You don’t know the first thing about moving pictures.

TIPSY

I know the first thing. And, I believe that I’ve stored up at least a dozen movies in our experiences thus far. All I’ll really be doing is presenting our life story in small chapters. They’ll make the stories into movies, and I’ll be rich.

PLANK

Sounds too easy.

TIPSY

Doesn't it? That's precisely why it's the life for me.

PLANK

What about the crimes that need solving?

TIPSY

I've solved my share, I think.

PLANK

You haven't solved any.

TIPSY

Not by your standards. Besides. There's always going to be more crimes to solve. Even if you solved them all.... there'd be more to solve.

PLANK

Exactly.

TIPSY

Exactly. So, since we can't solve them all, I think it would be better to not bother trying.

PLANK

And instead go and make moving pictures that show crimes being committed. Instructing people on how crime is done. And instructing them on the techniques we use to stop them, so that they can do it themselves and not get caught.

TIPSY

Well, and a laugh or two here and there.

PLANK

I forbid you.

TIPSY

Forbid? That's a bit.... uh... decisive of you. Towards me.

PLANK

Nevertheless. I forbid it. We're partners. We've got a job to do, and we still haven't gotten anywhere on mother's poisoning.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkahn pg. 67

TIPSY

I'm not leaving right now. I'm leaving, after we get to Brazil. Then let's see....(Takes ticket out his jacket) Ooo, a train to Rio.

PLANK

You bought tickets already?

TIPSY

I aquired tickets. Train tickets. After this boat ride I'll be taking a train. Hollywood is a long way away.

PLANK

Give me those tickets.

TIPSY

I don't think that would be a good idea.

Wrestle for the tickets bit.

PLANK

I would greatly appreciate it if you were to concede defeat in this current argument.

TIPSY

Don't be a complete moron Plank. I'm winning.

PLANK

Are you calling me an ignoramus?

TIPSY

I wouldn't call you that. I'm not sure if I would know how to use it properly.

PLANK

You offend me.

TIPSY

Well, you confuse me.

PLANK

I challenge you, to a duel

TIPSY

A duel? Aren't we a little, oh I don't know, modern to be having a duel?

PLANK

Coward!

TIPSY begins taking off his jacket and preparing to fight. PLANK does too.

TIPSY

When I win, will you allow me to go to Hollywood.

PLANK

I am a gentleman.

TIPSY

Good.

PLANK

If I win, we'll stay on this boat as detectives until we solve mother's poisoning.

TIPSY

When I win, will you promise not to talk to me for the rest of the voyage.

PLANK

That will be the case no matter who wins.

They duel with various foolish and hilarious stage fighting. TIPSY wins.

TIPSY

No hard feelings chum.

SNYVLING enters.

TIPSY (cont.)

Oh, and Snyvling. You're fired.

PLANK

You can't fire him, he's our assistant. He works for us.

TIPSY

And we don't work for each other. So, you're fired too.

PLANK

You can't fire me.

TIPSY

I'll fire myself if that's what it takes.

SNYVLING

Am I really fired?

TIPSY

Yes.

PLANK

No.

TIPSY

Okay. Fine. You're working for me.

PLANK

He can't work for you, he works for me.

TIPSY

Us.

PLANK

That's what I said.

TIPSY

If he doesn't work for me, then he can't work for either of us.

SNYVLING

Why?

TIPSY

Jealously, my dear boy.

PLANK

Well, he's not working for you. He's a detective's assistant, he can't be a movie producer's assistant.

SNYVLING

I'm a chauffeur--

TIPSY

You stay out of this. We'll let you know when this concerns you, well, Plank will let you know.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkahn pg. 70

PLANK

Oh, “Plank will let you know” very nice. Yeess of course I’m the bad guy here. Just because I’d rather maintain some sense of normality rather than gallivant around the world in pursuit of-- I don’t even know what.

TIPSY

It’s amazing how he talks and he’s right on the edge of making sense then -poof- it’s gone.

PLANK tries to strangle TIPSY.

SNYVLING

I should probably just quit.

END OF ACT I

ACT II

One year later at Lady Aberline’s home. Another dead body on stage, this time a skeleton with a knife in the back. SNYVLING enters with LADY ABERLINE, covering her eyes.

SNYVLING

Happy Birthday.

LADY ABERLINE

Oh, Snyvling, you never cease to amaze me. Will the boys be here?

SNYVLING

Tipsy couldn’t make it, he sends his regards. Plank should be here.

PLANK (off-stage)

I am here.

PLANK enters and hangs his hat on a hook on the wall. The hook moves and a mechanical sound can be heard. A spiked ball on a chain swings from the door and misses PLANK. PLANK doesn’t even flinch.

LADY ABERLINE

I thought I told you to remove the death traps.

SNYVLING

I did.... then I put up some new ones... Sorry. Habit.

LADY ABERLINE

Plank, my dear boy. I haven’t seen you in a year. How are you? What have you been doing?

PLANK

Just wasting my brilliance. On a boat.

SNEILVING

Same as usual then?

PLANK

Yeeees.

SNYVLING

Any leads?

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 72

PLANK

Nooooo. (pause) Looks like another of mother’s exciting birthday parties.

LADY ABERLINE

Tipsy can’t make it, so you’re on you own for this one.

PLANK

Looks like another “Cannibal Murderer” scenario.

SNYVLING

Yes.

PLANK

I do enjoy that one.

LADY ABERLINE

So do I.

PLANK

Do we know who this is?

SNYVLING

That’s General Ribling.

PLANK

Ribling? Funny.

LADY ABERLINE

Ribling? What a strange name.

SNYVLING

I got it from your will.

LADY ABERLINE

Did you?

PLANK

Shall we begin?

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, please do.



“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 73

PLANK

We’ll start by looking at ways of entry, shall we? Seems like the thing to do, anyway.

SNYVLING

Makes sense to me.

PLANK

The killer crept in through this window.

SNYVLING

Yes, why not the door?

PLANK

Because he’s a murderer, and he’s got a diabolical mind. Wily, like a cat... in a tree, or some such thing. The window is open, and there’s dirt on the window sill. I’ll say, the gardener did it.

SNYVLING

Look outside.

PLANK looks out the window.

PLANK

Is that skeleton the gardener?

SNYLVING

Yes.

PLANK

Well, that was wrong. Okay. Let’s see. They killed the General, and ate him... then stabbed him. Seems redundant. And thorough. Did the General have an accountant? They’re pretty thorough.

SNYLVING

The hall closet.

PLANK exits momentarily to the hall and returns with a skull.

PLANK

Accountant?

SNYVLING

Yes.

PLANK

Cook?

SNYVLING

Kitchen.

PLANK exits momentarily to the kitchen and returns with a skeleton hand.

PLANK

And again. It seems as though the killer is killing off whom ever is the main suspect at the time. Why would they be doing that?

SNYVLING

Perhaps they’re trying to help.

PLANK

You mean, by letting me know I’m wrong?

SNYVLING

Perhaps.

PLANK

I propose we try an experiment. I believe that I am the main suspect for the crime! I had the motive. I had the means! I think it was him!

PLANK points to himself .

PLANK (cont.)

Plank! I accuse you!

But, me? Me? What have I done? You have no proof, nothing.

Oh really?

PLANK stalks himself around the room switching between the accusing character and the accused.

PLANK (cont.)

You were the one closest to the Chef when he died.

That could have been any number of people...We were all in the house.

You had the motive, you hated the Chef for under feeding you all these years.

Yes, so, even if I did hate him, I didn’t hate him enough to kill him, and how does that explain the further murders?

Once you had a taste for blood you couldn’t stop. You killed the Chef and ate him to destroy

PLANK (cont.)

the evidence.

Nonsense! How could I possibly eat a person? I couldn't do that.

Oh couldn't you?

No, no I'm sure of it. Impossible.

You learned from the airplane crash in the Alps. No food for weeks.

How did you know about--?

I know everything about you! You were the first to suggest cannibalism!

No, I wasn't, I swear...I ... I may have suggested it, but I never intended to--

Shut-up! The thought was there.

No!

Once you get a thought like that in your mind, it's like a tiny seed that germinates and grows and grows--

No--

And grows until it becomes an enormous vicious tree of carnivorous proportions!! You're a murderer. A cannibal murderer! The worst kind.

There.

Now, with me firmly accused of the crime, the real killer should try to get to me next.

Pause.

PLANK (cont.)

Okay. I give up, who did it?

LADY ABERLINE

You can't just give up.

PLANK

Certainly I can. I just did.

LADY ABERLINE

What's the matter Plank?

PLANK

Please don't call me that Mother.

LADY ABERLINE

Everyone calls you that.

PLANK

Then call me that if you wish.

LADY ABERLINE

You *are* upset.

PLANK

Yes. If you must know, I am.

LADY ABERLINE

Why dear boy?

PLANK

I'd rather not say. (Pause as ABERLINE gives him a look.) Because if I tell you then you'll just say I'm being foolish and it's nothing to be upset about. (pause. Another look.) Fine. I went to see a movie that Topsy had made.

SNYVLING

Oh, “The Woman from Tangiers”?

PLANK

Yes, that's the one.

SNYVLING

I've heard good things about it.

PLANK

Yeeees. I was hoping it would be terrible. But it wasn't. It was wonderful. The crowd loved it. I loved it. And that's what ruined my day.

LADY ABERLINE

(pause) Plank. You're being foolish--

PLANK

Ah- HA! I told you.

LADY ABERLINE

Well, you are. That's really nothing to be upset about.

PLANK

I knew it, I knew it. I knew the words before they came out of your mouth. Every single word. I could predict it. I did predict it.

LADY ABERLINE

You could predict it because it's true. You know yourself that you are being foolish.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 77

PLANK

Yes. Of course I do. And that’s what makes it all the more upsetting. He has everything I’ve ever wanted. Fame. Fortune.

LADY ABERLINE

You’ve never wanted those things.

PLANK

I didn’t. At least I didn’t know that I wanted those things until he achieved them.

LADY ABERLINE

You’ve said you don’t want fame and fortune. You’ve said those exact words.

SNYVLING

She’s right. You’re on record as saying that. The London Times, last year, “I don’t do this for fame or fortune, I do this for the love of---

PLANK takes paper away from SNYVLING

PLANK

Where did you get this?

SNYVLING

I save all news articles about you.

PLANK

And you just happen to have the one that quotes me contradicting myself? You just HAPPEN to have that with you in your pocket?!

SNYVLING

(pause) Yes.

LADY ABERLINE

He is a fantastic assistant.

PLANK

Yees. He’s *great*.

PLANK exits.

LADY ABERLINE

Well, it’s been a splendid birthday regardless. Some cake?

SNYVLING

Uhm--

LADY ABERLINE

Are some of these cakes poisoned?

SNYVLING

One is. Sorry. Habit. (They examine the cakes.) I think it's this one. I think.

LADY ABERLINE

Really Snyvling.

SNYVLING and LADY ABERLINE sit and eat cake.

LADY ABERLINE

Oh dear. I think I should lie down. I believe I may be dying.

SNYVLING

Did you get the poison one again?

LADY ABERLINE

No. Just regular dying.

SNYVLING

You know you are? Lucky you.

She grabs his nose and pulls him close.

ABERLINE

This is no time for jokes and light banter,... Snyvling.... I'm very old. It was bound to happen sooner or later. I'm dying.

SNYVLING

I know.

LADY ABERLINE

I see a light. A tunnel. I... I...there's something that I need to tell Topsy and Plank. Something I've never told them....about who they are... tell my sons.... tell them.... rosebud.

She falls limp.

SNYVLING

Rosebud? Like the sled?

ABERLINE sits up quickly.

LADY ABERLINE

No! Not the sled! .... oh..... rosebud.... Topsy will know....rosebud.

ABERLINE she dies, but SNYVLING is unconvinced, he stares at her warily. PLANK enters unnoticed.

PLANK

Someone poison her again?

SNYVLING

I think she’s dead.

PLANK

Did she say anything?

SNYVLING

Rosebud.

PLANK

Rosebud?

SNYVLING

Yes.

PLANK

Like the sled?

SNYVLING

Yes.

ABERLINE sits up quickly again causing SNYVLING to do another hilarious pratfall.

LADY ABERLINE

NO! Not like the sled. Listen my dear boy, if you can’t remember a woman’s dying words I’ll just have to tell them to someone else.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkaln pg. 80

PLANK

Mother, you're alive.

LADY ABERLINE

Not for long. I need to do one more thing before I expire. My will. Snyvling, fetch me my will.

PLANK

Mother you should rest.

SNYVLING

Yes. You should.

LADY ABERLINE

Oh what's going to happen? Am I going to die faster if I don't rest. I've already said my last dying words. I've already died. Tell me, why should I rest. Now, are you going to get my will, or not?

SNYVLING

Your mother certainly has a handle on an original death.

PLANK

She's always been--

LADY ABERLINE

Good God, I'll get it myself.

ABERLINE gets up and gets the will.

LADY ABERLINE (cont.)

Just need to cross off this name...

SNYVLING

Hey! That's me! Ooo. This close.

LADY ABERLINE

Well if you hadn't messed up my last dying word.

SNYVLING

But I didn't. "Rosebud" that's what you said.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, but not like the sled.



PLANK

Then like what mother?

LADY ABERLINE

Tipsy will know.

PLANK

Tipsy?

LADY ABERLINE

Rose.... bud.

She slumps dead with the will in her hand.

PLANK

Rosebud?

SNYVLING

Did she put a new name on the will?

PLANK

She didn't cross yours off.

SNYVLING reaches for the will, ABERLINE clutches it closer to her and away from him.

PLANK

Rosebud. Tipsy. Damn.

SNYVLING

I'm the sole heir to the Plank fortune.

PLANK

Bully for you.

SNYVLING

I'm rich.

PLANK

By all accounts, yes. Enjoy it.

SNYVLING picks up a cake and is about to eat it.

PLANK (cont.)

Do you have a will?

SNYVLING

I’ve got to get out of this house.

PLANK

You can drive us into town, and we can make funeral arrangements.

SNYVLING

We probably shouldn’t take the car.

PLANK

Brakes cut?

SNYVLING

Yes.

PLANK examines the spiked ball and chain that almost hit him on his entrance.

PLANK

Is there any safe way out of this house?

SNYVLING

Yes.

SNYVLING starts to exit. Pauses, and rethinks his exit. They exit the other way.

TIPSY enters with GERTRUDE, a showgirl.

TIPSY

And the bear says, “Sir, that’s no way to shoe a horse!” (laughs, then notices the state of the room.) Looks like we’re just in time for the party.

GERTRUDE

There’s a skeleton on the table.

TIPSY

And it looks like my mother is dead.

GERTRUDE

She’s dead.

TIPSY

Probably.

GERTRUDE faints.

TIPSY (cont.)

And my fiance has fainted.

PLANK and SNYVLING enter. PLANK is covered with dirt and/or dust.

SNYVLING

Again, sir, I’m very sorry.

PLANK

No problem Snyvling, we’ll just make a mental note not to use the front door anymore, until we’ve filled in that tiger trap.

TIPSY

Plank. Snyvling.

SNYVLING

Welcome home, sir.

TIPSY

Doing some gardening?

PLANK

Just falling in holes.

TIPSY

Good work, if you can get it.

PLANK

Mother is dead.

TIPSY

Yes, I see. Snyvling, could you park my car? It’s just out front.

TIPSY tosses SNYVLING his keys. SNYVLING exits.

PLANK

I thought you couldn't make it.

TIPSY

The world is full of surprises. I'm just doing my part.

PLANK

Oh my lord, who is that?

TIPSY

That's Gertrude. She's a showgirl. A professional dancer.

PLANK

Well, she's going to have to put some clothes on. Our mother?

TIPSY

I don't think mother currently minds.

CHEF LOUDE enters.

CHEF LOUDE

Mr. Tipsy, sir. Welcome home.

CHEF LOUDE hugs TIPSY.

CHEF LOUDE (cont.)

(coldly) Mr. Plank.

CHEF LOUDE exits.

PLANK

Is she alright?

TIPSY

Just fainted, I think.

PLANK starts to give GERTRUDE smelling salts.

TIPSY

It's good to see you again.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkahn pg. 85

PLANK

Yes. You as well. (pause) How’s the movie business?

TIPSY

Yes. About that. I have something to tell you. I’m not nearly as successful as I may have let on.

PLANK

So--- have you fallen on hard times recently, or---

TIPSY

I’ve lied to you about everything.

PLANK

Everything?

TIPSY

Yes.

PLANK

The movies?

TIPSY

I’d watch them in the states, before they got released here, and I’d pretend that they were mine.

PLANK

Including “The Woman from Tangiers”?

TIPSY

That was a good one, wasn’t it?

PLANK

Yes. I liked it. It’s not one of yours?

TIPSY

No. None of them are. I’ve.... don’t tell her this, but I’ve never made a movie in my life.

PLANK

Of course you haven’t! Gah!

TIPSY

You’re upset.

PLANK

At myself. That’s a one piece mystery. Why couldn’t I put it together? (to Gertrude who’s still unconcious.) My brother Topsy produces movies. But he doesn’t know the first thing about producing movies! He’s not producing movies! Mystery Solved! I cannot believe that you so transparently misrepresented yourself to me.

TIPSY

Would the truth have made you feel any better?

GERTRUDE comes to.

TIPSY (cont.)

Ah, there she is, just the person to derail this awkward conversation (to PLANK) Your fault, by the way. (to GERTRUDE) Darling, I would like to introduce you to my brother. You can call him Plank, everyone else does.

PLANK

I can’t believe I thought you were fabulously wealthy.

TIPSY

That’s a matter of opinion.

PLANK

No it’s not. You either have money or you---

TIPSY

(Covering GERTRUDE’s ears.) Her opinion of me is that I’m wealthy, and that’s the only opinion I am currently willing to entertain.

PLANK

You’ve lied to me, and you’re lying to her.

TIPSY

I’ve never lied to you... not verbally, anyway. Wait-- Maybe I have.

PLANK

(Taking TIPSY’s hands off GERTRUDE’s ears.) He’s lying to you.

GERTRUDE

He is?

TIPSY

No I'm not.

GERTRUDE

About what?

PLANK

He's not wealthy.

GERTRUDE

You're not?

TIPSY

I am. He's lying.

GERTRUDE

He is?

PLANK

No, I'm not. He's poor. Destitute. Bankrupt.

GERTRUDE

You are?

TIPSY

Who are you going to believe? This clumsily dressed man whom you've just met, or the man who's paying for your dinner at the Cirque Club?

GERTRUDE

Cirque Club?

PLANK

How are you going to buy dinner there?

TIPSY

You're buying.

PLANK

No I'm not.

TIPSY

Sure you are. I'm a guest. You feel obligated. Oh, don't let her know you're buying.

“The Brothers Plank” by Mike Eserkahn pg. 88

PLANK

I’m not buying. I’m sorry my good lady, you’ll have to leave. My brother has no more funds to entertain you.

SNYVLING enters.

SNYVLING

The car is parked sir.

TIPSY

Thank you Snyvling. You didn't park too close to the cliff now, did you? (pause) Did you?

SNYVLING

Dear Lord, I can’t stop myself. Yes.

TIPSY

Go and move it closer to the house...away from danger.

SNYVLING

Yes sir.

SNYVLING exits.

GERTRUDE

There’s a skeleton in here.

PLANK

And a dead woman.

GERTRUDE faints again. PLANK attends to her with smelling salts.

TIPSY

And, we’re out again. Did she say anything before she died?

PLANK

Rosebud.

TIPSY

Like the sled?

PLANK

Yes.



LADY ABERLINE gets up suddenly.

LADY ABERLINE

No! Not like the sled.

TIPSY

Lady Aberline, you're alive.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, and a fine thing too. (with disgust) Rosebud. The details, boys, the details.

GERTRUDE wakes up.

TIPSY

There she is. Gertrude St. James, it is my pleasure to introduce you to my beloved adoptive mother, the honorable Lady Aberline. My mother.

LADY ABERLINE

Charmed. Topsy? Is she a prostitute?

TIPSY

Mother! No, she's a respectable lady. A professional dancer.

PLANK

A showgirl.

LADY ABERLINE

Of course, of course.

GERTRUDE

(distressed) There's a skeleton in your living room.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, may I introduce to you, the late, General.

PLANK

General Ribling. A victim of the Cannibal Murderer.

GERTRUDE

Your husband?

LADY ABERLINE

He wishes. No, just one of my many lovers.

TIPSY

Mother's never been married.

LADY ABERLINE

A showgirl. It's splendid to have a hobby, isn't it. I've taken up dying lately. As a hobby, I mean. It's delicious fun.

PLANK

What are you talking about Mother?

LADY ABERLINE

I've been pretending to die for awhile now. Surely you knew.

PLANK

I did not know. No. No.

TIPSY

Now that you're alive, mother I'd like to announce my engagement to Gertrude.

LADY ABERLINE

I know. I heard you refer to her as fiancée.

TIPSY

You are good at faking dead, mother.

PLANK

How long have you been faking dead?

LADY ABERLINE

Just a couple of minutes.

PLANK

Not this time. In general. How many times?

LADY ABERLINE

More and more lately.

PLANK

The poisoning? The Lady Aberline Poisoning case?

LADY ABERLINE

Oh, that, yes, that was fun, wasn't it?

PLANK

You weren't poisoned?

LADY ABERLINE

(to TIPSY) Have you set a date?

TIPSY

I've always liked March, but Gerturde's more of a May girl.

GERTRUDE

That's when we met, in May.

PLANK

I went on a boat to solve your murder! A boat!

SNYVLING enters.

SNYVLING

I'm afraid I've started your car on fire.

TIPSY

On purpose?

SNYVLING

Hard to say.

TIPSY

That can't be good for the upholstery.

TIPSY and SNYVLING exit.

LADY ABERLINE

(to GERTRUDE) My birthdays aren't normally this much fun.

GERTRUDE

Is that skeleton real?

LADY ABERLINE

I think so, why not?

GERTRUDE faints again.

PLANK

Mother. Why have you been faking your death?

LADY ABERLINE

Because, Plank, it's fun. Isn't it?

PLANK

I'm glad you're having fun.

LADY ABERLINE

I thought it was fun for you as well.

PLANK starts giving GERTURDE smelling salts.

PLANK

What?

LADY ABERLINE

Solving mysteries with your brother.

PLANK

I've never like solving mysteries. And I've especially never liked solving them with my brother.

LADY ABERLINE

Really?

PLANK

Really.

LADY ABERLINE

And here all along I thought you enjoyed the mysteries that life brought you.

PLANK

Well, I don't.

GERTRUDE wakes up.

LADY ABERLINE

I suppose we should stop being cruel to this dear lady. Gertrude? Gertrude, was it?

GERTRUDE

Yes?

LADY ABERLINE

Skeleton’s a fake. I’m quite alive. No need to pass out on us again. Okay.

GERTRUDE

Okay.

LADY ABERLINE

There, see, now we can all have fun again.

GERTRUDE

Where’s Topsy?

LADY ABERLINE

Outside in a burning car.

GERTRUDE starts to faint, but PLANK holds her up keeps her awake.

LADY ABERLINE (cont.)

I don’t know what kind of life you and Topsy will have if you keep fainting like that.

GERTRUDE

He’s more fun to be around. Less shocking.

LADY ABERLINE

Welcome to the family.

TIPSY enters.

TIPSY

Snyvling has just driven my car off the cliff. On the plus side, the fire is out. He should be back up in a minute. I saw him swimming this way, anyway.

PLANK

He’s alive?

TIPSY

Much to his chagrin, yes.

PLANK

No, he wants to live now. Or, at least he did when Mother was dead.

TIPSY

Of course.

LADY ABERLINE

Plank doesn't like being a detective.

TIPSY

Not surprised. I never much liked it either, but really what else are you going to do?

PLANK

Frankly, I've always wanted to be a chemist.

TIPSY

That's not exciting at all.

PLANK

I know. It's perfect.

LADY ABERLINE

Your father was right. Darn him.

PLANK

My father?

LADY ABERLINE

Your father, and your father. He's the same man. Your father. My husband.

TIPSY

Father? Husband?

PLANK

You've never been married.

LADY ABERLINE

Actually, I have been. Numerous times. But your father--

SNYVLING enters. He's soaking wet.

SNYVLING

I’m okay. Sorry about the car. Lady Aberline, you’re alive.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, and in the middle of a reveal, Snyvling. Please.

PLANK

She’s our real mother. We’re actually brothers, not just thrown together by chance adoption.

TIPSY

Now you’re up to speed.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, and you’re out of the will. I’ve always enjoyed mysteries. I like watching them get solved. Franz was the same. We used to challenge each other all the time with mysteries. Then you two came along, and I thought it would be delicious fun to have my own junior mystery solvers around the house. You’ve been solving mysteries all your life. I had thought you enjoyed it, your father thought that you should find your own passions in life.

PLANK

Why did you tell us we were adopted?

LADY ABERLINE

A mystery to solve. What adopted child is not curious about who their real parents are? Apparently you two.

PLANK

Well, I give up. Who’s our father?

LADY ABERLINE

Rosebud.

PLANK

That again.

TIPSY

Our father’s name is Rosebud?

LADY ABERLINE

I told you Topsy would know.

TIPSY

I don't know anyone named Rosebud.

GERTRUDE

I do. Franz Rosebud. General Franz Rosebud.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, that would be him.

GERTRUDE

He's a movie producer.

LADY ABERLINE

Yes, I know.

GERTRUDE

Yes, I auditioned for him.

LADY ABERLINE

(to TIPSY) Well, perhaps you should mention that you're his son.

PLANK

Rosebud.

SNYVLING

You'd think she'd mention him in the will.

SNYVLING takes out the will, and TIPSY grabs it and reads it.

TIPSY

He's all over this will. Corpal Rosebud, Captain Rosebud.

SNEILVING

Ribling.

TIPSY

Rosebud.

PLANK

You've always had bad hand writing.



TIPSY

Mystery solved.

PLANK

That’s not a mystery, it’s poor penmanship!

LADY ABERLINE

If you become a chemist, Plank, I will miss these birthday party games.

PLANK

My entire life has been a lie! A sham! Guh! I think I’ve gone blind!

LADY ABERLINE

I can’t believe you weren’t curious.

TIPSY

I’ve always been curious to know which one of us was older.

LADY ABERLINE

Tipsy. By one year.

TIPSY

My little baby brother.

PLANK

Don’t call me that.

TIPSY

Plank. My baby brother. I love you. Let me hug you.

PLANK

You stay away from me.

TIPSY

Your own brother.

TIPSY tries to hug PLANK. PLANK slaps at him.

TIPSY (cont.)

You can’t hurt me Plank, my love for my baby brother has made me impervious to pain.

SNYVLING

It might be the liquor.

TIPSY

It might at that, nevertheless, I am impervious. My baby brother.

PLANK

I can think of no worse solution to a mystery!

PLANK storms out.

TIPSY

Think of me! I’ve got to be YOUR brother!

TIPSY exits.

GERTRUDE

They seem upset.

LADY ABERLINE

If you think they’re upset now, wait until they find out that Snyvling is their younger brother.

SNYVLING faints.

Blackout.