

MUSTARD.

Bribing all these good people?
I don't get it! What's in it for you?!

WHITE.

You're such a typical man!
Better off dead!

(WHITE emerges at the front of the group to expertly knee BODDY in the groin.)

SCARLET. *(Impressed:)* Ooooh. Mrs. White, in the Study with her knee!

WHITE. Thank you. I've studied martial arts.

(They take a wary step away from WHITE.)

WADSWORTH. *(Getting their attention once more:)* There is one more piece of information you may like to have.

ALL. What?!

WADSWORTH. The police are coming in less than an hour!

ALL. What? / Why? / The police?! / What are you talking about? *(Etc.)*

BODDY. *(Recovering:)* Unless . . .

ALL. Unless, what?

(BODDY refers to his briefcase.)

BODDY. You agree to double down.

SCARLET. And why would we agree to that?

BODDY. Because if you don't, I'll put this briefcase—containing all the evidence needed to expose your wrongdoings—in the hands of the police, the press, and the House Un-American committee. With the right spin, those fellas can make a commie outta anyone. I think some of you would face a lifetime of jail, and others, a lifetime of shame.

ALL. That's why you've brought us all here?! / You bastard! / Get that briefcase! / You're taking advantage of a tenuous political situation! *(Etc.)*

BODDY. Unless . . .

ALL. *(Including WADSWORTH:)* Unless what?!

BODDY. Well, there is something you could do for me that would change the game. Something I just can't bear to do myself.

ALL. *(Including WADSWORTH:)* What?!

BODDY. *(To GUESTS:)* Have a seat, please.

(The GUESTS move to the sofa. The ladies sit, the gentlemen stand behind. After a brief silence . . .)

GREEN. (Re: a side table behind the sofa:) Is it all right if I sit here . . .
(Before he can get the word out, GREEN sits on the edge of the table which surprisingly collapses noisily.)

GREEN. (Bouncing back up:) Sorry, sorry. Little accident prone. Sorry.

WADSWORTH. (Then—genuine to BODDY:) What's this about, sir?

BODDY. In this bag, there are six packages that I thought our guests might find useful this evening.

(BODDY begins to empty a duffle bag full of packages into the arms of WADSWORTH.)

WADSWORTH. Packages?

BODDY. Presents, if you will. I'm a generous sort of fellow.

WADSWORTH. Are you?

BODDY. Wadsworth, will you please see to it that each guest receives a gift?

WADSWORTH. Gladly.

(WADSWORTH moves to distribute the gifts.)

BODDY. (Pouring himself a brandy:) Anyone wanna make a guess as to what's in your boxes?

SCARLET. Perfume?

WHITE. Candy?

PEACOCK. A rare single-malt Scotch whiskey?

BODDY. (With a laugh:) Aren't guessing games fun?

(Then:)

Please—open them.

(SCARLET opens her box. Puzzled, she lifts out a heavy brass Candlestick.)

[MUSIC CUE #16]

(Music sting. She looks at BODDY.)

SCARLET. A Candlestick? What's this for?)

(One by one, with a music sting, each of the GUESTS open their boxes, pulling out their "gift.")

MUSTARD. A Wrench . . .

GREEN. A Lead Pipe . . .

PEACOCK. A Dagger . . .

PLUM. A Revolver . . .

WHITE. Ahhhhhh! A snake! Oh, no. It's a Rope.

(Then:)

BODDY. In your hands you each have a lethal weapon.

(They gasp.)

BODDY. You all came tonight because you believed the evidence against you was so terrible that you would do anything to keep it a secret. I'm putting that theory to the test.

WADSWORTH. You are?

BODDY. Mr. Wadsworth here is the only other person who knows your secrets; and it's costing us all dearly to keep him quiet.

GREEN. What do you mean?

BODDY. I wouldn't have to double your payments if I didn't have to pay Mr. Wadsworth for his silence.

ALL. Wadsworth?!

WADSWORTH. That's a lie!

BODDY. He may look suave and charming . . .

WADSWORTH. Thank you . . .

BODDY. But really he's conniving and manipulative.

WADSWORTH. False!

BODDY. Why do you think he's called the police?

PLUM. (To WADSWORTH:) You called the police?

WADSWORTH. Only because HE instructed me to do so!

BODDY. Did I?

(Then:)

Ladies and gentlemen . . . if you can manage to get rid of Mr. Wadsworth, I'll have no need to increase your blackmail or expose you to the police.

PLUM. Get rid of?

PEACOCK. (To WHITE:) Does he mean . . . kill him?!

BODDY. In fact, if you can eliminate Wadsworth . . .

WHITE. Yes, I think that's what he means.

BODDY. . . . Who not only knows all of your secrets, but also mine—then I will eliminate your blackmail altogether and be done with this terrible business once and for all.

WADSWORTH. You would never!

PLUM. But why make us do it, Boddy?! Why don't you do your dirty work yourself?

GREEN. Yeah!

BODDY. Why should I when the six of you are so uniquely motivated . . . and armed?

SCARLET. What a patriot.

WADSWORTH. After all I've done for you?!

(To GUESTS:)

He's a liar! I'm one of you! I'm not a butler! I'm an indentured servant!

BODDY. A familiar refrain.

(Darkly:)

Don't make a scene, Wadsworth. It's over.

(To GUESTS:)

The police are on their way. Now's your chance. The only way for you to end your blackmail and avoid finding yourselves on the front pages is for one of you to kill Wadsworth . . . NOW!

(He switches off the lights. BLACKNESS. CHAOS. SCREAMS. A GUNSHOT. MORE CHAOS AND SCREAMS. Lights.)

(BODDY lies on the floor. Prone. Face down. EVERYONE else is spread throughout the Study.)

WHITE. It's Mr. Boddy!

WADSWORTH. *(Enormously relieved:)* Oh thank God.

SCARLET. Is he breathing?!

(They rush to him in a hubbub.)

PLUM. *(Cutting off the hoopla:)* Stand back, I'm a doctor!

(They move back. PLUM gives BODDY a cursory examination.)

PLUM. He's dead.

WHITE. Who had the gun?

PLUM. I did.

PEACOCK. So you shot him!