

CUPS:

B = SR table SL
O = SL table SR
G = SR table SR
A = Middle table

P = SL table SL



O = table
|| = ottoman
○ = bar cart

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SCENE 1: THE MAIDS

An austere, erudite sitting room/lounge. Scattered across the room are armchairs, loveseats, and cocktail tables. Several tall candlesticks cast flickering shadows that stretch across the room. The walls are lined with bookcases, their shelves crowded with worn leather-bound volumes. Between the shelves, gilt-framed oil paintings hang of Julius Caesar, Delilah (from Samson and Delilah's story in the Bible), and Iago (from *Othello*). The atmosphere suggests elegance tempered with intellect.

THREE MAIDS enter through stage left pushing a rolling bar cart stocked with crystal glasses, decanters, and bottles. They fan out, polishing glassware, setting coasters, and arranging cocktail napkins.

Through this:

(M1) handles middle table

(M2) handles SL table

(M3) handles SR table

This is a
BIG deal!
Super exciting!

MAID #1

These new coupes are to die for, are they not?

MAID #2

Yes, I adore this stem. So delicate.

MAID #3

Truly exquisite.

-- Beat. All Maids put 1st cup down on respective tables, pick up next --

MAID #2

What is our group looking like today?

walks to bar cart, steps DS of it, very presentational w/ folder -- best to be amused -- draw other two DS

MAID #1 pulls out five resume-like documents from a manila folder on the cart.

MAID #1

The housewife, loyal to a fault...

MAID #3

(peering at the documents)

The bitter college dropout of a son...

↑ Potential conflict is very exciting!

MAID #2 huddles behind MAID #1 to look at the documents as well.

MAID #2

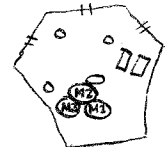
The flirtatious mistress and the pragmatic astrophysicist...

MAID #1

And a poet! We don't get many of those around here.

↑
Pause -- all
look @ each other

↑ All three laugh



→ Maids 3+2 move DS to meet Maid 1 for their lines

Overdramatic,
almost
mocking
each person

MAID #1

(with a mischievous smirk)

Now... what will they drink?

-- All "hmm" + retreat to tables --

MAID #1 begins to mix drinks as the conversation continues. ← (M3) places all 5 coasters

(M2) fills (D) & (D1) coups w/ shaker #1

MAID #3

(M3) fills (B) coupe w/ shaker #2

Once (M3) or (M2) is done, (M3) fills (I) coupe

The poet won't want anything muddled. Something neat. Something that burns.

MAID #1

A whisky, then. No ice. He'll insist he tastes the oak.

MAID #2

The astrophysicist will ask for precision. A classic martini, measured, no nonsense.

MAID #3

Gin, not vodka. And ^{she} ~~he~~ will correct us if we get it wrong.

MAID #1

Of course ^{she} ~~he~~ will.

MAID #2

The mistress... something expensive and conspicuous. Champagne, perhaps.

↳ Really have to think about it -- building excitement

MAID #3

Or one of those pure sugar rushes with the umbrellas, crushed ice mounted high.

These are fun drinks!
A fun & sexy person
to speculate about!

MAID #2

She'll want people to notice when she lifts the glass.

MAID #1

And the wife?

-- Collective reaction. Ugh. She'll be a buzzkill... --
OR "booh, that's a tough one"

MAID #3

Something tells me she'll just want a juice.

MAID #2

-- (M3) crosses to bar cart to get juice
jug, returns to SR table to fill (MF) coupe --

With the least calories possible.

Placement of Drinks:

SR table: Dr. L + Theo

Middle table: Balthazar

SL table: Mrs. F + Juliette

← originally,
Dr. L + Mrs. F
are switched

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MAID #1 lines up five glasses on the cart, each distinct. BALTHAZAR's whiskey is set on the far left, JULIETTE's ombre drink glints on the right. DR. LUDWIG's, THEODORE's, and MRS. FORD's glasses are arranged between them.

MAID #3

I think we're in for a lot of fun tonight... imagine the squabbles between the poet and astrophysicist!

MAID #1

The scientist driven by logic and the poet driven by belief? They'll drive each other crazy before we can!

MAID #2

Oh, and the wife and mistress will just tear each other apart!

MAID #3

Especially with that lingering eye from the nineteen year-old son... boys that age can barely compose themselves around a young woman like her.

MAID #1

Imagine the look on his mother's face when he flirts with his father's other woman!

All "hmm"
MAID #2

Who do we place our bets on tonight? I'll put all my money on the astrophysicist, without a doubt.

MAID #3

(in an imitating voice of the WAITRESS)

You can't treat this like a game!

MAID #2 and MAID #1 burst into guffaws at this. → All three laugh

MAID #1

Oh, you kill me.

MAID #2 → Walks to barcart CS

Back to this astrophysicist... PhD, Nobel-Prize worthy research... quite an impressive resume.

MAID #3

I wouldn't be so sure. The poet may have the creativity necessary for a... circumstance as such.

Not look
to others to
signal it's time
for their drink

-- Maids bring shakers + juice jug back to bar cart --

MAID #1

(scoffs)

As if. These... circumstances—this circumstance in particular—requires an analytical, detail-oriented approach. One a scientist must possess.

MAID #2

We can all agree it won't be that blasphemy of a son!

MAID #1

(reading aloud from the resume)

"Dropped out of college after his freshman year to sell *solar-powered flashlights*"... this guy is a nutcase.

The MAIDS laugh in unison just as the WAITRESS walks in.

WAITRESS

Why are you lot still here? They're about to arrive!

MAID #1

We were mixing their drinks!

MAID #2 and MAID #3 snicker.

WAITRESS

What's so funny? My God, you're lucky I've kept you all around this long. Go on, shoo!

The MAIDS file out of the room.

SCENE 2: THE ENTRANCES

The WAITRESS stands by the door motionlessly, as if a statue.

A knock is heard.

The WAITRESS swiftly opens the door and allows in MRS. FORD and THEODORE. As they walk toward the bar, MRS. FORD glances at THEODORE and frowns.

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MRS. FORD

(looking at his button-down shirt)

Theodore, sweetie, you missed a button.

All three maids hold up 2 shot glass 25 a toast

Mocking ① exaggerated, mimicking his cocky mannerisms

All three drink

① enter from SL, lets door slam behind her (startles Maids)

→ Walking to DSL

Extremely sour! They never do what she asks!

Maids leave liquor glasses on bar cart, take cleaning rags offstage

① leaves w/ resume folder

All three exit and close doors one right after the other (M2 SR, M1 USC, M3 SL)*
Waitress does a quick check of windows, then moves bar cart to USL (and takes a swig from one of the liquor bottles)

① drinks until knock heard, then spritzes mouth

* M2 crosses on way out to move Dr. L's drink to final place

M3 crosses on way out to move Mrs. F's juice to final place

Start walking in after ① checks SR windows

① walk behind scrim from SR, knock on door to alert waitress

(cue light will alert when to knock)

Walk to DSL for button convo

Waitress will mostly stay by USC door to open it for each guest

Personally, I was enjoying the fight.

DR. LUDWIG

Of course you were.

→ (DL) returns to SL table
(MF) sits

BALTHAZAR

The battle of two women in love, fighting over the infatuation of a dead man, as if he can dig himself up from the Earth and declare the victor of his cursed heart.

DR. LUDWIG

For decades, Edmund Ford belittled me in my own laboratory, dismissing my contributions on the sole basis of my gender. I could not let that stand—I had no choice but to ensure the truth endured.

MRS. FORD

Dr. Ludwig, we do not disrespect the dead!

DR. LUDWIG

I am not disrespecting him, I am merely restating the words from his very own mouth.

JULIETTE

Are you positive, Dr. Ludwig? My Eddy raved to me about this research; this research seduced him more than I ever could.

THEODORE

← (T) crosses to sit on SR-most ottoman
No research could seduce me more than you, Juliette.

MRS. FORD

Lord, give me strength!

JULIETTE

This paper is his legacy, I know it.

THEODORE

← (T) stands and steps toward (DL)
It may be his legacy, but Dr. Ludwig is a fifty-something year old woman with no husband nor successors. This paper is her child—a child she would kill for.

DR. LUDWIG

That's it! As soon as I return home, I am calling my lawyer.

JULIETTE ^{Points toward door w/ full arm}

If there ever will be a return. That door won't budge.

-- Everyone looks to ①, then to door --

Everyone pauses, staring at JULIETTE. She has uttered what everyone feared.

MRS. FORD ^{MF moves toward DSC to regain control of group, turns to face rest}

Rather than turning on one another like savages, we should await the ~~announcement~~ of the evidence. ^{upstage}

Shall we not?

^{Not a question, but an order}

-- MF walks toward SR table, all guests freeze -- ^{tickled off}

Lights off.

The MAIDS emerge off to the side. The dinner guests, frozen in time, sit still in a tableau.

Lights on. The MAIDS pluck the empty glasses from the guests' hands to whip up new drinks, chatting as they do. ^{-- ① crosses to SL-most ottoman, sits, listens in --}

MAID #3

^{Said to other maids/walking thru audience}

Did you see the look on the mother's face as she watched her son flirt with her husband's mistress? Priceless!

MAID #1

^{while walking}

Oh, I swear—if we didn't laugh, we'd cry!

^{Mini beat}

MAID #2

^{while walking}

And that poor astrophysicist—the poet is driving her mad!

MAID #3

I just know she was reeling in her seat when he spoke of Camus. No scientist would ever believe that the human quest for purpose is ~~little~~ ^{pointless}

WAITRESS ^{→ ① steps up onto SL-most ottoman}

You can't wait to gossip until you're off the clock?

-- Maids clump closer into a posse DS of MF, in a line --

MAID #1

We're not gossiping. We're... documenting human behavior. For science. ^{→ All Maids laugh after this}

^{Long pause}

MAID #2 ^{→ ① steps down from ottoman}

Exactly. You know, job requirement: observe, survive, and report.

MAIDS

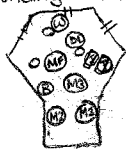
MAID #3

^{Sarcastically mocking Maid Training}
① says "observe," ② says "survive,"
③ says "report"

Self-preservation!

^{same time as MF cross}
M3 enter from SR wing
M2 + M1 enter from audience stairs (M2 HL, M1 HR)

Landing Positions:



WAITRESS

Just make sure your... self-preservation doesn't spill into the drinks.
↑ mocking attitude added

MAID #2 → sarcastic, pretending to be scared
 (producing a tray like a shield)
 The comedy is strictly off-menu, I promise.

MAID #1 → Said as all 3 move to exit USC door, (W) closes door behind them (after shooing them off)
 (whispering to MAID #3)
 Best part of the job: surviving the guests without losing our minds.

MAIDS giggle to themselves as they exit.

Lights off to signal scene change. No set change.

SCENE 4: MRS. FORD'S EVIDENCE

BALTHAZAR stalks around the book cases, observing the titles. He stops on a manila folder peeking out between two books. → (B) picks up napkin to wipe mouth, ultrasound falls out
-- (B) takes big swig from glass, (MF) crosses back to DSC, in disgust, all look @ (MF) --



BALTHAZAR

(in a sing-song voice)

Ta-dah!

-- All look at (B) --

BALTHAZAR shows the manila folder to everyone, then props it open.

BALTHAZAR

Oh dear, if this isn't charming.

THEODORE

What is it?

BALTHAZAR turns the paper to the group.

BALTHAZAR

An ultrasound!

→ Dramatic reveal!
-- (MF) turns, rushes to take ultrasound from (B) --
all guests register this
↑ then takes CS

JULIETTE

→ Dripping w/ sarcasm, looking to (MF)
 I suppose ^mmy Eddy was pregnant?

DR. LUDWIG

← not understanding (J)'s sarcasm
 What a shame. Such a pretty face, but not a thought behind those eyes.

THEODORE

Mother... is it yours?

MRS. FORD

I- I don't understand how anyone got ^{their hands on} ~~a hand~~ of it.

DR. LUDWIG

Mrs. Ford, you are with child?

MRS. FORD → Crosses to CS/CSR

(solemnly)

I discovered it three weeks ago.

THEODORE

I'm going to have a sibling?

DR. LUDWIG

≡ Sincere
Congratulations, Mrs. Ford. It is bittersweet news under these particular circumstances, but it's a blessing to carry a reminder of your husband with you.

MRS. FORD

I can't imagine raising my child without him.

BALTHAZAR

You're afraid that your child will inherit your pain, no?

MRS. FORD

How could I not be? It will grow up without a father.

BALTHAZAR dramatically walks toward MRS. FORD: →

"You tried to curse your husband w/ a child, but instead you cursed yourself and the child"

← BALTHAZAR →
(as he walks)

ⓑ slowly circles ⓂF, very presentational, taking at all other guests

It will grow up in a house that sings Edmund's name with every creak of a step or groan of a door, yet it will never have had the pleasure of making his acquaintance. Its entire childhood will be memories of a father it never had.

-- ⓑ lands DSR --

MRS. FORD → Moved by ⓑ's words -- almost defensive

Is that not devastating?

toward all others
(Does nobody else feel bad for me?)

ⓂF delivers lines to audience -- all other lines are just noise to her

Connected thought -- pissed off -- not listening to others

You attempted murder, you carried on a blackmail for six months. Who knows what else you're capable of?

Genuine in her head, comes off as sarcastic

JULIETTE → Moving closer to ①

I am only capable of love.

BALTHAZAR → Stands to be between ①+②, talking to group

The woman with the war-torn heart. What a poignant poem you would be.

-- ③ sits back down --

JULIETTE → Walks upstage to ④, while ⑤ moves to SR table

Mrs. Ford, you may have loved Edmund, but you secretly resented him for his infidelity. I am the only woman in his life whose love for him was pure and virtuous.

THEODORE → Crossing to ③ at centerstage
(scoffing)

Virtuous? You blackmailed the man!

JULIETTE → Counter-crossing to DSR
I never hurt him.

Crossing to ③ at DSR

MRS. FORD → Cutting through ③'s idealistic, romanticized vision of Edmund's life

He lived his final days in fear that you would release his affair to the world. You hurt him, Juliette. You broke him.

JULIETTE
I never intended to.

Lights off.

The dinner guests freeze into a tableau and the MAIDS emerge off to the side.

Lights on.

① enters USC door → SL table

② enters DSL corridor → SL table

③ enters DSR corridor → SR table

→ Maids bring bottles/shakers of liquor on with them,

④ brings yellow

⑤ brings blue+green

⑥ brings pink/red + orange

MAID #3 → Enter on line

It just gets better and better, doesn't it?

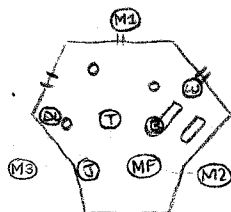
MAID #1 → Enter on line

Juliette survived by the skin of her teeth on that one.

MAID #2 → Enter on line

And the best part hasn't even arrived yet.

Maids take swigs from bottles



WAITRESS

Why aren't you lot refilling their drinks?

MAID #1 → "Ooh! Good idea, Waitress!"

Right! The drunker they are, the more fun we have!

① holds cleaning rag, goes to SL-most chair to sit w/ feet on ottoman, towel over shoulder
 THE MAIDS take the drinks from the guests' hands and begin to make new ones.

→ M1 move to SR table
 M2 move to SL table
 M3 move to center table

Trying to encourage/force more drinking

-- Throughout this convo, Maids refill glasses + deliver them to respective guests --

① refills ⑧ (middle table)

② refills ①+⑤ (SL table)

③ refills ⑦+④ (SR table)

-- Once done refilling, Maids stand at respective tables --

↳ ③ now @ middle table for standing

MAID #3

I saw a job listing for a mortuary assistant.

MAID #2

Oh, I hear the benefits are to die for, → punch the pun vocally

-- Group laugh --

MAID #1

At least with corpses, they stay quiet.

MAID #3

At least the emotional baggage is tangible there.

MAID #2

Emotional baggage that comes in a myriad of smells, more like it.
 ↳ corpses smell horrific

MAID #3

You don't support me?

MAID #2

Honestly, can you even call it a "career" if the main clients can't scream at you?

MAID #1

I mean, I'd take mortuary assistant over... well... literally anything else that involves spirits you can't drink.

MAID #3 → Crossing to DSC in contemplation

(leaning in, conspiratorial) ← A bimbo having a sudden deep thought

Sometimes I wonder if we're training for a very specific kind of apocalypse here.

MAID #1

That's why we laugh about it.

-- Group laugh --

THEODORE → Genuine confusion -- he doesn't know he missed when he attempted to shoot Edmund
So we all murdered my father?

JULIETTE → steps toward centerstage, pointing at ①
A-ha! You admit it, Theodore!

DR. LUDWIG → Energy building
(dismissing THEODORE and JULIETTE)
No, no... your father's not dead.

MRS. FORD
Right, he's a missing person. But it is presumed that he is dead.

DR. LUDWIG stands up from her seat, ghostly pale in shock.

DR. LUDWIG → Very presentational, moves to centerstage → [Exciting] "Ahz!" moment
No, no, he is very much alive. I'm afraid we are the dead.
↑ Turns upstage

Silence. Shock. → ③ drops knife so it clatters on floor (picks it up during the scramble)

Lights off to signal "scene" change. The door is removed by the MAIDS.
Lights on.

SCENE 9: THE REVEAL

The WAITRESS emerges, clapping her hands. → ④ walks to centerstage

WAITRESS
Well done!

MRS. FORD
Excuse me?

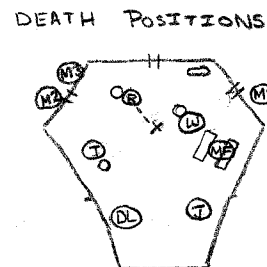
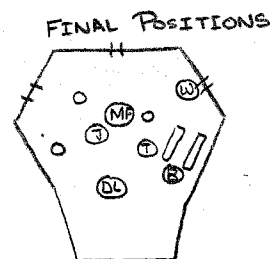
WAITRESS
My apologies! I forgot to formally introduce myself, how rude of me! I am Death.

The WAITRESS bows. Everyone stares at the WAITRESS in shock.

-- Guests all laugh --

WAITRESS
What, did you think that Death was a man? These aren't the Middle Ages, women can be anything! You lot didn't watch *Barbie*.

↑ Circling around centerstage, pointing accusatorily at all guests



-- There is slightly chaotic, shocked movement across the stage (all guest move to death position spots) --

THEODORE

Can we circle back to the "dead" part?

WAITRESS

Right, right, that tends to confuse some people. Good news: none of you are going to prison because you're all dead!

THEODORE

Is this some kind of sick joke?

MRS. FORD → Turns to look at/for door

Perhaps if we push on the door hard enough...

MRS. FORD glances to where the door used to be. → (MF) turns to face (W)

MRS. FORD (cont.)

Where is the door?

JULIETTE

Can I be excused? I have a rendezvous at 9 o'clock that I must attend to.

WAITRESS

You see, the purpose of this dinner party wasn't to uncover a murder. It was to come to terms with your own! I would never wish for any of you to become ghosts with unfinished business, would I? I may be Death, but I'm no monster.

*↑ said genuinely not sarcastic
or as a joke*

MRS. FORD

This entire time... we were solving our own murders?

WAITRESS

Exactly! There were times when I thought you would rip each other to shreds. Not like it would do much—you're already dead!

WAITRESS laughs. Everyone stares.

↑ Cue for Maids to get to positions behind scrim

WAITRESS

(disappointed)

I had a better audience yesterday.

DR. LUDWIG
Did Edmund *kill us*?

All guests gasp
Bingo! It's a really funny story, actually, because every reason you concocted for why you each killed Edmund is actually the reason he killed you! Irony, gotta love it.

JULIETTE
I'm not loving anything.

Lights shift dramatically. A spotlight hits DR. LUDWIG, JULIETTE, MRS. FORD, THEODORE, and BALTHAZAR. Each actor holds a "prop" representing their murder: juice, lipstick, apple, gun, knives. The MAIDS enter with popcorn, commenting on the spectacle—MAID #3, however, shows strain on her face. MAID #1 offers her the popcorn, but she denies.

--All Maids enter w/
popcorn--
(M1) stands @ SL window
(M2) stands @ SR window
(M3) stands @ SR window

WAITRESS
At eighteen hundred hours, before leaving his office at Princeton, Edmund kills Dr. Ludwig by poisoning her evening juice.

DR. LUDWIG raises her prop glass, drinks theatrically, convulses, and collapses in exaggerated slow motion. MAIDS gasp and whisper to each other.

(L) "poisons" glass
hands to (SL)
(SL) drinks from
glass, stumbles,
convulses, falls;
one final jerk up;
slam to floor

WAITRESS
If he lost the court case, he would ruin his entire career, so this was his last resort.

WAITRESS (cont.)
Edmund takes the Amtrak train to the Upper East Side. He enters his home and kills Mrs. Ford next using an apple slicer, as she was attempting to trap him into a pregnancy.

MRS. FORD theatrically lunges. THEODORE swings the slicer; exaggerated motions. She flails, finally "falls" on a chair.

(L) crosses to SR of (MF)
(MF) holds apple slicer
to her left shoulder w/
her left hand, stumbles
back into SL-most chair,
falls, drops apple slicer

BALTHAZAR bursts into guffaws.

MRS. FORD
Excuse me? Is my assassination funny to you?

JULIETTE
Don't fret—it's not an assassination because you were never relevant to begin with!

BALTHAZAR

Noting + amused by the irony/symbolic connection

Eve cursed humanity by eating the forbidden apple, and centuries later, Edmund kills his trickster wife with an apple slicer. After all, you cursed him with a child, didn't you?

WAITRESS

That must join my list of most creative murders.

MRS. FORD → sitting up briefly

Do not disrespect the dead!

JULIETTE

We're all dead! Can't we all disrespect each other now?

DR. LUDWIG

(ignoring the argument)

What happened next?

WAITRESS

Juliette, if I am correct, you had been blackmailing Edmund for months. To set himself free, at 1945 hours, he murders Juliette in a cabaret bathroom in Midtown using the knife in the lipstick.

① crosses to ②

① twists lip stick to reveal knife, slits it across her throat toward SR, drops knife, swirl falls

JULIETTE "dies" in dramatic slow motion, holding a lipstick. She twirls like it's choreography, collapsing into an overdone faint.

JULIETTE

(stunned)

I died at the hands of a lipstick?

WAITRESS

Next, Edmund's plan was to go to the East Village and pay Theodore a... friendly visit at his usual club. He was well aware that Theodore was orchestrating a homicide, and he had to strike first. However, he turns around in the metro station of 14 street/Union Square to see Theodore behind him. Theodore shoots with his gun, but misses. Edmund throws two knives, but the first one misses and hits a bystanding artist returning home after another failed poetry reading.

throw knife #1

throw knife #2

THEODORE pantomimes firing a gun. EDMUND (mimed by WAITRESS) throws knives; BALTHAZAR staggers, clutching himself in absurd agony, falling to the floor. MAIDS whisper commentary and throw popcorn as if watching a movie.

BALTHAZAR

That's how I died?

① tries to fire a [fake] gun → ② watches bullet fly past

② throws 2 imaginary knives, one at a time, toward ① then ③

③ + ① pretend to stab themselves with the knives, then drop them (clatter sound) and fall

③ walks into the line of "fire"

trick: pull knife out of pocket & make it seem like they're catching the knives as they hit their chests

① crosses back toward SR door