

## **ACT ONE**

### **FREDDY**

Everyone, we are one hour to air. One hour to air! (*Notices audience*) Oh, hello folks... welcome to the studios of WMDR. We're so glad you could join us for the World Premiere Broadcast of THE SOUND OF MURDER. I'm Freddy Farnsworth, producer and announcer here at the station. We're looking forward to having you participate in the broadcast... and every table will be given its assignment a little bit later. Of course, in compliance with the union contract, you'll all be getting (looks at clipboard) a soup break, a salad break, a dinner break, and... wow, a cake break. Y'all must have a great agent! Anyway, we're on a tight schedule, so just remember to...

*(ROBERT ROLLISON enters. He's rich, handsome, and oh so full of himself.)*

### **ROBERT**

(To Freddy) Oh, there you are. I've been looking all over for you. I need an update on our progress, stat! This show is extremely important to the future of this station! Dad says that EVERYTHING is riding on it! That's why I had you get only the best actors in the entire world!

### **FREDDY**

Yeah, sir, about that...

### **ROBERT**

What?

### **FREDDY**

Well, Sir Gilbert is pretty angry about the script. He's a Shakespearean actor. Someone told him he'd be playing Othello.

### **ROBERT**

He is! (Takes out script) Othello Hickenlooper, owner of Hickenlooper Manor! (Pauses) He already signed the contract, right?

**FREDDY**

Yes sir, but he's not happy.

**ROBERT**

He'll get over it.

**FREDDY**

If you say so. Then there's Vivian Fredricksberg. We may have trouble keeping her...

**ROBERT**

*(Interrupting)* She signed a contract too! Tell her we'll sue if she tries to leave!

**FREDDY**

You didn't let me finish, sir. I was going to say we may have trouble keeping her... sober. Someone left three bottles of vodka in her dressing room, and she's already finished one of them.

**ROBERT**

Well, that's your problem, not mine. Points to another name on the clipboard. What about Roberta Riviera? Did you get her? I remember her doing radio shows when I was a kid!

**FREDDY**

Yeah, about that...

**ROBERT**

What?

**FREDDY**

She's been dead for ten years.

**ROBERT**

*(Annoyed)* Well, cross her off, then.

**FREDDY**

Yes, sir. But that leaves us with one actress voicing all the female characters.

**ROBERT**

Don't you worry your greasy little head, Freddy. As always, I've got the problem solved before it even shows up. *(Calling out the doorway)* Shelley, could you come in here for a second?

*(Shelley Stallings enters. She is young, good-looking and intelligent, although inexperienced)*

Freddy, this is Shelley Stallings. She'll fill in all the parts that Miss Riviera was supposed to play.

**FREDDY**

Great. So you're a professional actress?

**SHELLEY**

No.

**FREDDY**

Ever worked in radio before?

**SHELLEY**

No.

**ROBERT**

Don't worry about that, Freddy, she's specially qualified for the part.

**FREDDY**

How so?

**ROBERT**

She's dating me.

**SHELLEY**

*(Embarrassed.)* I actually did study acting in college. I'm trying to break into the radio business.

**ROBERT**

Radio? Honey, you've got a face made for television!

**FREDDY**

Television? Ha! That's just a fad. It'll never last. *(Handing her a script)* Anyway, we go on in an hour, so I guess you'll do. Here you go, you're reading all the parts marked in red.

**SHELLEY**

Ok, wow... um...

**ROBERT**

See honey? I told you if you stuck with me, I'd make you a star. Here it is, we've been dating two weeks, and you've already got a part *(Coming on to her)* You can show me your appreciation a little later...

**SHELLEY**

*(Noticeably uncomfortable)* Um, well, I.....

*(SIR GILBERT DE BERNAISE and VIVIAN FREDERICKSBURG enter. He is an actor's overactor, chewing scenery every chance he can. She is past her prime, wearing sunglasses, and carrying a full martini glass in her hand)*

**SIR GILBERT**

*(Dramatically)* "Shall we their fond pageant see? Lord, what fools, these mortals be!" *(To audience member)* That's Puck, from A Midsummer Night's Dream.

**VIVIAN**

And I've got a Midsummer Night's hangover. Does anyone have some aspirin?

**FREDDY**

Mr. Rollison, Miss Stallings, this is Sir Gilbert De Bernaise and Miss Vivian Fredericksburg. This is Mr. Rollison, the station owner's son, and Miss Stallings his g....

**SHELLEY**

*(Interrupting)* A fellow actress. *(In awe)* It's a pleasure to meet both of you. You are both legends in your time.

**VIVIAN**

Honey, my time came and went with talking pictures. Now be a dear and go fetch Mama some Vermouth.

**SHELLEY**

Well, I....

**ROBERT**

Freddy will do that for you, won't you Freddy?

**FREDDY**

Well, I really need to...

**ROBERT**

We need to keep our actors happy, don't we?

**FREDDY**

But... *(giving up)* yes, sir.