

MURDER ON THE RUNWAY

by Richard Gremel

Copyright © 2019 by Richard Gremel, All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-64479-085-4

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

RIGHTS RESERVED: All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS: All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

AUTHOR CREDIT: All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this Work must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this Work. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the Work. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

PUBLISHER CREDIT: Whenever this Work is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice: ***Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers LLC.***

COPYING: Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers LLC.

BROOKLYN PUBLISHERS LLC
P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406
TOLL FREE (888) 473-8521 • FAX (319) 368-8011

MURDER ON THE RUNWAY

A One Act Comedic Mystery

by Richard Gremel

SYNOPSIS: Some say that fashion kills, and this play is no exception. Coffee Chantal, the biggest name in the industry, is preparing for her latest fashion show. The models are ready, the stage is set, and everyone can't wait to see her newest designs. But as Coffee takes the stage, she suddenly falls over dead! Who could the murderer be? Was it a model, someone working the show, or a member of her own team? With the help of Detective Earl Lockholmes and Joanne Wadson, and a series of comical flashbacks, you will discover the killer while dying of laughter!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(15 females, 5 males, 1 either, 0-10 extras)

COFFEE CHANTAL (f).....	World famous fashion designer and hated by most of her models and crew; the victim of the murder. <i>(83 lines)</i>
NORMA JEAN (f).....	The newest model and six time Cornhusk Queen. Simple, naive and yearning for her place on the runway. <i>(50 lines)</i>
TYRA BINKS (f).....	An experienced model; befriends Norma Jean. <i>(24 lines)</i>
HEIDI PLUME (f).....	An experienced model. She was highly considered as a contestant for <i>America's Next Top Model</i> season 22. Her runway walk is in need of some work. <i>(24 lines)</i>
CINDY CLAWFORD (f).....	An experienced model; befriends Norma Jean. <i>(25 lines)</i>
GIGI (f).....	A newer model. <i>(26 lines)</i>

BROOKLYN (f)	A model; 30, almost too old to be a supermodel. (25 lines)
CANDICE (f).....	A model. She likes to stress eat. (21 lines)
TIM GUM (m)	The backstage manager; tells it like it is. (30 lines)
JANICE (f).....	Coffee's frantic assistant; balances all of Coffee's needs and all her phones. (51 lines)
KELSEY RANDULL (f)	The angry seamstress. (36 lines)
FRANCOISE (f)	The makeup artist. [Pronounced: Fran-Swah] (18 lines)
FRANC (m)	The hairdresser. [Pronounced: Fronk] (19 lines)
ESTELLE GABLE (f)	Coffee's long-time agent. (32 lines)
M.C. (m)	The bumbling fashion show host. (46 lines)
DR. HUBERT JOHNSON (m)	A history professor in the audience. (20 lines)
DR. ELIZABETH GREEN (f).....	A veterinarian in the audience. (21 lines)
DR. SHELBY SMITH (f).....	A doctor in the audience. (22 lines)
DETECTIVE EARL LOCKHOMES (m).....	A detective, like Sherlock Holmes, but funnier. (76 lines)
JOANNE WADSON (f).....	Lockhomes's assistant. (27 lines)
FAKE DOCTOR (m/f).....	(1 line)
EXTRAS (m/f).....	Any number. Models and audience members. (Non-Speaking)

DURATION: 50 minutes.

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: A Fashion Show in New York's Fashion Week.

SET

Backstage and Runway during New York's Fashion Week. The setting can be as simple or as complex as you'd like. A few chairs and tables, or a mirror or two can represent the backstage. A podium and a path for the catwalk can be the stage. For the flashbacks, a couple of chairs, a small bench, or a small table can help set the scene. I suggest a simple setup for the flashbacks because they happen so quickly.

COSTUMES

Costumes can be anything that looks like it could be on a runway for the models, but they don't have to be expensive. Old prom dresses or bargain thrift store finds will work great for your models. The M.C. should be in a suit or tuxedo and Lockhomes should be dressed to resemble Sherlock Holmes. I suggest performing the flashbacks in the costumes they are wearing for the runway show. Maybe a small costume piece can be added to show a different character, but a full costume change would ruin the pace of the show.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

This play is very melodramatic. The energy and emotions should be played as big as possible. When it says "gasp" or "Dramatic sound" in the stage directions, it should be a big comedic revelation to the characters. If you play this moment big, with the characters showing their gasp out to the audience, you are sure to get big laughs. The thing that makes this play work best is a quick pace. Don't get bogged down by big set and costume changes. A quick reposition of a chair, the addition of a small costume piece, or a simple change in the lights, can tell the story just as well. In the original production, the cast made the "flashback sound" all together, each time they went into a flashback. It was a big hit with the audience and got some big laughs. Most of all, just have fun with the play. Let these characters be full of life and beaming with energy!

PROPS

- ☐ index cards
- ☐ papers
- ☐ sketchbooks
- ☐ cellphones
- ☐ coffee cups
- ☐ makeup products
- ☐ hairstyling products
- ☐ scissors
- ☐ pins
- ☐ sewing needle
- ☐ thread
- ☐ makeup design
- ☐ fashion magazine
- ☐ gloves
- ☐ plastic bag
- ☐ paper
- ☐ magnifying glass
- ☐ tea cup
- ☐ measuring tape
- ☐ coat
- ☐ bill
- ☐ business card
- ☐ contract
- ☐ receipt

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Murder on the Runway was originally performed on April 20, 2019 at Live Theatre Workshop in Tucson, AZ. The original cast was as follows:

COFFEE CHANTAL	Maddy Hensley-Kingery
NORMA JEAN	Amelia Krikawa
TYRA BINKS	Ava Garcia
HEIDI PLUME.....	Jaden Jewett
CINDY CLAWFORD	Talya Fleisher
GIGI.....	Riley Snyder
BROOKLYN.....	Atiyanna Mirza
CANDICE	Dahlia Tolby
TIM GUM	Alexander Cramton
JANICE	Mika Fricke
KELSEY RANDULL.....	Molly Crown
FRANCOISE.....	Ana Castro
FRANC.....	Jack Feeney-Munoz
ESTELLE GABLE	Catherine Oda
M.C.....	Jaden Peterson
DR. HUBERT JOHNSON.....	Spencer Kissel
DR. ELIZABETH GREEN	Ellie Henry
DR. SHELBY SMITH.....	Julian Keefer
DETECTIVE EARL LOCKHOMES	Matthew Frankenfield
JOANNE WADSON	Alisa Douglas

DIRECTORS: Holli Diffin, Amanda Gremel

ASST. DIRECTOR: Kyleigh Sacco

SCENE 1

BACKSTAGE OF THE FASHION SHOW

AT START: *Backstage of the fashion show. BROOKLYN is getting her makeup applied, CANDICE is finishing the final fitting of her dress, and GIGI is getting her hair done. Other models are gathered around talking. M.C. is practicing the lines for the fashion show.*

M.C.: Mah-May-Me-Mo-Moo. Mah-May-Me-Mo-Moo. (*Reading off index cards. A period marks when the card should be changed.*) Hello. Ladies. And Gentleman. And welcome to. New. York's. Fashion. Week. (*Dropping all the cards.*) Oh no. (*Trying to pick them up and read them off.*) And Gentleman. Fashion. Welcome to. Ladies. Hello. Oh, I've got to get all of these sorted in time for the show. (*Exits.*)

TIM: Alright, people. Let's get ready. Where are all the models at? I thought there were supposed to be six of you. Oh, I don't have time for this. People are starting to arrive for the fashion show. (*Exits.*)

TYRA: I'm so excited for today's fashion show. I heard that Vogue, ELLE, and Harper's Bazaar are all going to be in attendance.

HEIDI: Not only that, but GQ Style is doing a full spread on the show. This could be just the thing I need to take me from model to supermodel status. Today, New York Fashion Week, tomorrow, the front cover of every big fashion magazine in the world.

CINDY: You wish, Heidi. You may have the looks to get on the magazines, but one look at your runway walk and no one will think twice about you.

TYRA: Cindy's right. Your walk is in need of some serious work. Did you even go to modeling school?

HEIDI: Let me remind you that I was highly considered as a contestant for *America's Next Top Model* season 22. I was one number away from making it to the second round of auditions.

CINDY: Just because they called the number of the girl next to you, does not mean you were one number away.

TIM enters, walking by TYRA.

TYRA: Hey Tim, when is Coffee supposed to get here?

TIM: She should be here any minute. And when she arrives, we need to be ready to go. You know how Coffee gets when she has to wait.

HEIDI: Yeah. She gets bitter.

TIM: This is going to be the biggest fashion show of the week. Everything needs to be perfect. Let's make it work, people. *(Exits.)*

CINDY: Is it just me or is Tim extra stressed today?

NORMA: *(Enters running, she looks disheveled and out of breath.)* Sorry I'm late. I tried to catch a cab, but every time I opened the door, someone else jumped in the seat. I ended up having to take the subway here.

TYRA, HEIDI, and CINDY: First time in New York?

NORMA: How could you tell?

HEIDI: Because each one of us looked exactly like you when we started modeling years ago.

TYRA: I entered my first fashion week with one of the heels on my high heel completely missing.

HEIDI: I had gum in my hair.

GIGI: *(Getting her hair done.)* I showed up at the wrong fashion show.

CINDY: I had my purse stolen.

BROOKLYN: *(Getting makeup done.)* I ripped my dress on the runway.

CANDICE: *(Getting her dress fit.)* I was under so much stress I ate a whole half of a pizza slice.

ALL MODELS gasp!

CANDICE: With ranch.

ALL MODELS gasp!

CANDICE: But not the crust.

ALL MODELS breathe a sigh of relief, phew!

NORMA: Wow. I had no idea modeling could be that rough.

TYRA: It's a tough business, honey. But someone's gotta do it.

FRANC: Alright, Gigi. It's time for me to make a sculpture out of this mess you call hair.

GIGI: Hey! Who am I kidding, you're right. Work your magic Franc!

CANDICE: Ouch! Hey Kelsey, watch where you stick those pins!

KELSEY: Sorry. But I'm never going to finish this dress in time for the fashion show if you don't stop moving.

CINDY: (*To NORMA.*) So, what's your name?

NORMA: Norma Jean McDonald.

GIGI: You're joking, right?

NORMA: Nope.

GIGI: McDonald?

NORMA: Yep. You know Old McDonald had a farm? Well, that's my dad.

GIGI: And you came straight from your small town farm to the big city to make your big break.

BROOKLYN: I'll bet you were the prettiest girl in your town, right?

NORMA: Well I wouldn't say the prettiest, but I did win Miss Cornhusk Queen six years in a row.

BROOKLYN: We've got a farmie.

Some of the MODELS laugh.

TYRA: Don't pay any attention to her, Norma. That's Brooklyn. She's just mad because she hasn't had her big break yet and she's almost too old to be a supermodel anymore. She's almost thirty.

NORMA: What's a farmie?

HEIDI: It's what we call the girls that come from small towns.

CINDY: You see, New York is full of girls trying to break into the modeling business. They come from all over: small towns, big towns, forests, cities, and farms. Each one, the prettiest from their hometown. Each one looking for their chance to become a supermodel. We've got prom queens, pageant winners,—

TYRA: Miss Cornhusk Queens.

CINDY: Exactly. And all of us are trying to make our big break. But there are some who think that the small town girls shouldn't be here.

HEIDI: But not us. Stick with us, Norma, and we will show you the ropes.

TYRA: First things first. We need to find you a new name.

NORMA: What's wrong with my name?

HEIDI: Nothing, if you want to be a normal person working at the Burger Shack. But you want to be a model, so you have to have a model name. Using your own name is so...

CINDY: Plain Jane.

NORMA: No, it's Norma Jean.

FRANC: What's the difference?

NORMA: What are your names?

TYRA: Tyra Binks.

HEIDI: Heidi Plume

CINDY: Cindy Clawford.

NORMA: Those are great model names. What do you think mine should be?

GIGI: I have a quiz, in my Cosmo, which lets you pick your supermodel name. We could use that.

NORMA: Okay.

GIGI: Alright. What's your mother's middle name?

NORMA: Norma.

GIGI: And what month were you born?

NORMA: June.

GIGI: And finally, what is the name of your first pet?

NORMA: McDonald. Our family isn't very creative when it comes to picking names.

CINDY: So, what is her model name?

GIGI: Well, according to the supermodel name creator, your model name is Norma June.

NORMA: Oh... I love it! Goodbye Norma Jean and hello Norma June. Wow, I feel different already. Look out, runway, because Norma June is going to take you by storm! (*Does a runway walk across the stage.*)

FRANC: These models are wrong about you, Farmie. You've got some style!

JANICE enters frantically walking across the stage, carrying a bunch of papers (including the makeup design sheet), sketchbooks, three phones, and a drink holder with four cups of coffee.

FRANCOISE: Hey, Janice. Do you know when Coffee is going to get here? I need to know what makeup she wants to be done on these girls.

JANICE: What, do I look like her personal assistant?

FRANCOISE: Um, yes. That's why I was asking.

JANICE: Sorry, Francoise. I'm just under a ton of pressure right now. I need this fashion show to go off without a hitch.

FRANCOISE: Well, I can't get any of the girls finished until I know what she wants.

JANICE: Wait. I know she told me something about the makeup, I just need to find it.

JANICE hands several of the items in her hands to the MODELS standing around her.

JANICE: Here, could you hold these drinks a sec? Be careful, they're hot. And could you hold this phone? And this one, and this one also? And can you hold these? Thanks. Okay, here it is. *(Pulls out a small sheet of paper with a makeup design on it.)* Here you go.

FRANCOISE: This looks easy enough. Thanks Janice.

JANICE: Thank you. *(Begins to take back her possessions.)*

FRANC: Janice, how come you need three cell phones?

JANICE: One is for Ms. Chantal's publicity contacts, one is for her personal contacts, and one is for contacts where she doesn't know which other phone to put them on. *(Takes the phones.)* Thanks for holding them all.

TYRA: Why are you under so much pressure right now, Janice? You've done hundreds of these fashion shows for Coffee before. Why is this one so different?

JANICE: Because if everything goes great, then this might become my last. I have applied to be the new fashion consultant for Vogue, and a beaming recommendation from Ms. Chantal could be just the thing to get me the position. But if any aspect of this show goes wrong, I can kiss Vogue goodbye.

HEIDI: Do you know when Coffee's going to get here? The fashion show is about to begin.

JANICE: Beats me. Last time I heard from her was at three a.m. when she texted me her latte order for the day.

SFX: JANICE'S phone rings.

JANICE: Hey, would you mind putting that phone by my ear? *(The phone is placed near her ear and she squeezes it with her shoulder.)* Hello, Ms. Chantal's personal secretary. How can I help you? *(Crosses to a corner of the stage and continues to have a silent conversation on the phone.)*

CINDY: If you couldn't tell, that was Janice. She is Coffee's personal assistant.

NORMA: Being her personal assistant doesn't look like a very fun job. Three phones, latte orders, and all that paperwork. I can't even imagine keeping all that organized.

ESTELLE: *(Entering, speaking on a phone. Takes the phone from her ear and covers it with her hand.)* Still no word from Coffee?! If you see her before I do, let me know right away. We've got some serious business to discuss. *(Crosses to a corner of the stage and continues to have a silent conversation on the phone.)*

NORMA: Who was that?

TYRA: That's Estelle Gable. She's Coffee's agent.

HEIDI: She helped her get her big break in the fashion world.

CINDY: She's usually at these fashion shows signing the next big contract. But I've never seen her this upset.

NORMA: That doesn't look like a fun job either.

M.C.: *(Entering, carrying index cards.)* I think I finally got all the cards back in order. Hello. Ladies. And Gentlemen. Welcome to—

CANDICE: *(Being poked with a pin by KELSEY. Screaming.)* —Ouch!

M.C. reacts to the scream and drops all the cards.

KELSEY: Hold still would you?! I need to get these last minute touches done. You know how Coffee gets. If there is just one stitch out of place, then my job will be toast.

M.C.: Oh no. (*Reading the cards.*) York's. Week. New. Fashion. Ladies. Hello. Oh, I've got to get these cards right before the show starts or Coffee will be so upset. And we all know how Coffee is when she's upset. (*Crosses to another part of the stage and begins to sort the cards.*)

TIM: (*Entering.*) M.C., you've made a mess back here.

M.C.: I'm trying to clean it up.

TIM: Hurry it up. We need the backstage clear before the show. Everything needs to be perfect.

BROOKLYN: What are you doing?

FRANCOISE: Just following the design that Janice gave me. Coffee wants it this way.

BROOKLYN: I look like a raccoon!

FRANCOISE: She wanted a dark smokey eye.

BROOKLYN: I think we have left the realm of smokey eye and entered woodland creature!

FRANCOISE: Well that's what Coffee wants. And what Coffee wants, Coffee gets.

CINDY: If you haven't noticed by now, Norma, doing a fashion show for Coffee Chantal is pretty stressful.

NORMA: You're right. I sure am glad I'm just a model for tonight's fashion show, because working for Coffee Chantal seems like the worst job a person could ever have.

As NORMA speaks the next line, COFFEE enters.

NORMA: I would never want to work for Coffee Chantal.

COFFEE: Is that so?

NORMA: (*Turning around and seeing COFFEE.*) Ms. Chantal?! Let me just say, I'm so excited to be working for you.

TYRA: This is Norma June, Coffee. She's our newest model.

HEIDI: She was Miss Cornhusk Queen six years in a row.

CINDY: And now she's here in New York trying to make her big break.

COFFEE: Oh, a farmie. Makes sense. All right everyone, listen up. It is almost time for the fashion show to begin. It will take great effort from all of us to make this show a success. I want you all to give your best today. I will certainly be giving mine. Now let's get this show on the runway!

NORMA: I don't know what all the stress was about. Seems like Coffee is nice and calm.

TYRA: You haven't seen the real Coffee yet.

HEIDI: Just wait and see.

JANICE: I brought you your latte, Ms. Chantal.

COFFEE: Thank you, Janice. *(Takes a sip from the first latte and spits it out.)* What is this?! I told you I wanted a nonfat soy latte with three and a half sugar packets and a hint of cinnamon. This clearly has three sugar packets. Where is the half a packet? Where?!

JANICE: Sorry. Ms. Chantal. I gave them your order exactly as you told me. But don't worry. I had them make four just in case the first was wrong. Try this one.

COFFEE: *(Takes a sip of the next and spits it out.)* That one has a sprig of cinnamon not a hint. *(Spits again.)* That one has almond milk not soy. *(This time, she spits it on JANICE.)*

JANICE: What was wrong with that one?

COFFEE: I'm just not feeling in the latte mood anymore. Go and find me a nice hot tea, would you.

JANICE: Sure. I'll get you a nice hot tea with a little poison mixed in.

COFFEE: What was that?

JANICE: Nothing, Ms. Chantal. I will go get that tea right away. *(Exits.)*

NORMA: I see what you were saying now.

CINDY: You haven't even seen half of it.

M.C.: Hello. Ladies. And Gentlemen.

COFFEE: *(Crossing to M.C.)* How are the descriptions coming along for today's show?

M.C.: They're all ready to go, Coffee. Would you like to see them?

M.C. hands COFFEE the index cards. COFFEE begins to read through them, throwing each card on the floor as she reads them.

COFFEE: Hmm. Yes. Yes. Alright. Good. *(Throws the last one on the floor.)* Not bad. You did a good job of capturing the essence of the designs in your descriptions. *(Seeing all the cards on the floor.)* But it looks like your cards are all out of order. You better get them organized before the show.

M.C.: I'd like to drop you to the floor like you did my cards.

COFFEE: Did you say something?

M.C.: Me? Nope. Just organizing these cards.

COFFEE: (*Noticing BROOKLYN'S makeup.*) What is that on your face?!

BROOKLYN: What?! Where?! Is it a spider? I hate spiders!

COFFEE: No! It's that hideous makeup job.

BROOKLYN: I told Francoise that I look like a raccoon.

COFFEE: You look more like roadkill raccoon to me. That is not the design I gave you.

FRANCOISE: Yes it is. Take a look. (*Holds out the design for COFFEE to see.*)

COFFEE: It looks like something spilled on this and smudged my design.

FRANCOISE: That's the one Janice gave me.

COFFEE: Janice! Well, clearly this isn't what I intended with the design. Wash this off her face and start over. And make it quick. We've got a show to run.

FRANCOISE: Well, what do you want me to do?

COFFEE: Do what I designed, just do less of it. And make it snappy.

FRANCOISE: Ugh! I sometimes wish she would just die!

COFFEE: Hmmm?

FRANCOISE: I didn't say anything.

COFFEE: And you, Candice. You look a little... how shall I say it... rounder? Keep it up and you won't fit in the dresses.

CANDICE holds up her hands in a strangling motion towards COFFEE as she walks by.

NORMA: I can't believe it. She's so... so... so—

TYRA: Evil

HEIDI: Malicious

CINDY: An absolute terror that it is hard to believe anyone in their right mind would want to work for her, much less talk to her at all?

NORMA: Well I was going to say mean, but... yeah.

ESTELLE: Coffee. We need to go somewhere and talk.

COFFEE: There's not time now, Estelle. I've got a show to put on.

ESTELLE: Listen to me. You are making a huge mistake. You are ruining your name, and more importantly, you are ruining me. And I won't let you ruin me. I found you. I made you who you are today and this is how you repay me?!

COFFEE: I'm not talking business right now.

ESTELLE: Well, when are you going to talk business? Because you stabbed me in the back! And no one stabs Estelle Gable in the back without getting stabbed back, in the back, you backstabber.

COFFEE: Give it a rest, Darling. Now you're just babbling.

ESTELLE: I can't believe this!

SFX: ESTELLE'S phone rings.

ESTELLE: We aren't done discussing this issue. Hello? *(Crosses to a corner of the stage and continues to have a silent conversation on the phone.)*

COFFEE: *(Crossing to KELSEY.)* Are the dresses almost finished? We are showing them in less than twenty minutes!

KELSEY: Almost finished, Coffee. Just adding the last few details. If Candice would just hold still, I could have been done by now.

COFFEE: Now, now, Kelsey. You know it's not polite to blame your own procrastination on others. You knew we were going to show them today, so you should have had these details done last week.

KELSEY: Well, I didn't get the final designs until two days ago. How was I supposed to have them done last week without the final designs in hand?

COFFEE: Not my problem, Kelsey.

KELSEY: Yes, it is your problem, Coffee. You are the designer, are you not?

COFFEE: You know very well that I am the designer for this show. All these designs, every last detail are mine, all mine.

KELSEY: Then I prove my point. If you had sent me the designs sooner, then I would have been done.

COFFEE: There we go blaming others again.

KELSEY: What I wouldn't give to drive my scissors into your back!

COFFEE: What did you just say to me?!

KELSEY: You heard me!

COFFEE: You watch your tongue, Kelsey Randull. You are speaking to Coffee Chantal, world class fashion designer. If you want to keep working in this business, which I assume you do, you will do the work you are given and only speak when spoken to. Is that clear?

KELSEY: Yes. Sorry, Ms. Chantal.

COFFEE: Good. Now get back to finishing these dresses before the show starts, or this will be the last fashion show you ever do for me or anyone else in this city! *(Now addressing the group.)* Alright. We are moments away from the start of the fashion show.

TIM: Okay, People. We are going to places. Tonight is going to be a fashion show the audience will never forget!

SCENE 2

THE FASHION SHOW RUNWAY

AT START: *The set has now been changed to be the fashion show runway. The backstage items are removed and a podium sits to one side of the entrance where the models will come from. You can set up the runway across the stage or out into the audience. Need to find a place for the HUBERT, ELIZABETH, SHELBY, DETECTIVE, FAKE DOCTOR, and WADSON in the real audience, or if there is an audience onstage. OPTIONAL SFX: Feel free to add music, lighting effects, and/or camera flashes to make the runway show as fun as possible.*

M.C.: And that, folks, brings us to our final collection of the evening. These next few dresses are the spring line collection. Ms. Chantal titles this collection “An Evening in Paris”. Her inspiration was the sights, the smells, and the sounds of Paris. *(Tries to do his best French laugh.)*

The fashion show continues with each MODEL walking the runway one at a time, with NORMA being last.

M.C.: What a wonderful collection that was. I felt like I was in France. Didn't you? Now let's bring the girls out one more time.

ALL MODELS enter and line the runway. NORMA is the last one on.

M.C.: And finally, let's bring out the woman behind this fashionably fabulous collection, Ms. Coffee Chantal!

COFFEE enters, waving her hand at the audience. She has a hidden piece of paper in her hand. Suddenly, COFFEE falls over. Falling in a way that her back is not visible to the audience, so as not to reveal the scissors sticking out of her back. When she falls, the MODELS scream.

M.C.: Ms. Chantal?! Ms. Chantal?! Are you alright?

COFFEE: Help me!

GIGI: There's something wrong with her!

COFFEE: Help... me!

NORMA: Oh my goodness. We need to get her some help. Quick, is there a doctor in the house?

HUBERT: I'm a doctor.

M.C.: Well then come up here.

HUBERT: *(Crossing to COFFEE.)* I'm Dr. Hubert Johnson, what can I do for you?

NORMA: Please, can you help Ms. Chantal?

HUBERT: Sure. What seems to be the problem?

BROOKLYN: Can't you see? She's hurt or something and saying "Help... me". I think she may be dying.

HUBERT: Oh. I can't help her with that.

M.C.: Why not? You are a doctor, aren't you?

HUBERT: Well, I'm not a medical doctor.

ALL MODELS and M.C.: You're not?

HUBERT: No. You see, I'm a Professor at NYU.

CANDICE: I thought you said you were a doctor?

HUBERT: I am. I have a PhD in early American History. So, if you need help with understanding anything from Columbus' discovery of America through the Civil War, then I'm your guy. But if you're dying, then I can't help with that. Sorry.

GIGI: If you can't help someone that's dying, then why did you raise your hand when we asked for a doctor?

HUBERT: Because, like I said, I am a doctor. I'm just not a medical doctor.

GIGI: You know, most people assume that when we say “Is there a doctor in the house” that we mean a medical doctor.

HUBERT: Sorry. I guess I’ll just go and return to my seat? Yeah... yeah, I’ll just... sorry. *(Returns to his seat.)*

COFFEE: Help me... please!

TIM: *(Entering.)* What is happening out here? The show should be over by now.

TYRA: It’s Coffee.

TIM: What are you talking? Oh my gosh. Coffee! What’s wrong? Are you sick? Hurt? Dying? What should we do? Think, Tim, think. I know. Is there a doctor in the house?

HUBERT raises his hand.

BROOKLYN: *(To HUBERT.)* Not you, Professor. He means a doctor who cares for patients.

ELIZABETH: *(Raises hand.)* I’m a doctor.

BROOKLYN: But do you care for patients?

ELIZABETH: I care for my patients every day.

TIM: Please, Doctor—

ELIZABETH: *(Crosses to COFFEE.)* You can call me Dr. Green. I’m Dr. Elizabeth Green, at your service. How may I help you?

TIM: It’s Ms. Chantal here. She looks like she’s dying. Please help her.

ELIZABETH: Oh. I can’t help her.

HEIDI: Here we go again.

TIM: Why not?

ELIZABETH: Because I’m not that kind of doctor.

BROOKLYN: But you said you care for patients.

ELIZABETH: And I do, but my patients are dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, lizards, snakes, mice, rats, ferrets... you know, animals. So, I can’t really help your dying friend here.

TIM: Then why did you raise your hand when we asked for a doctor?

ELIZABETH: Because I am a doctor.

TIM: I meant a medical doctor, one that cares for humans, like Ms. Chantal here.

COFFEE: Somebody... please... help me!

ELIZABETH: Well then, next time try and be more specific when you ask for a doctor in the house. *(Returns to her seat.)*

JANICE: *(Entering, carrying a cup of tea.)* What is going on out here?

ESTELLE: *(Entering.)* Yeah. Is this show over yet? I need to talk with Coffee.

CINDY: Oh. You won't be doing much talking with Coffee.

ESTELLE: And why is that?

M.C.: Because she's dying?

ESTELLE: She'll wish she was dead when I get done talking with her.

TIM: No. Look here. She is actually dying!

COFFEE: Help!

ESTELLE: Oh! I see what you mean now.

JANICE: Ms. Chantal?! Do you still want your tea? *(Holding up a cup of tea.)* Also, I know this might not be the best time, but do you think you could get my letter of recommendation done before... you know...

COFFEE: Can't you see I'm dying here?! For Pete's sake, can someone please help me? Anybody?

JANICE: Sorry. *(Kneeling down next to COFFEE, she sets the cup of tea down.)* Of course. Someone please help! Is there a doctor in the house?

FAKE DOCTOR: I play a doctor on TV!

ALL: No!

SHELBY: I'm a doctor!

CANDICE: A real doctor.

GIGI: Not a PhD of history doctor.

BROOKLYN: Or a veterinarian doctor.

CANDICE: But an actual medical doctor who cares for human patients.

SHELBY: Yes. I'm Dr. Shelby Smith. I work in the ER at Immaculate Heart Hospital.

M.C.: Well, if you're a doctor, why didn't you speak up the first time we asked for a doctor in the house, instead of letting the ole' professor here do it?

TIM: Or the veterinarian?

SHELBY: I sort of figured the other two had it under control.

TIM: Well they didn't and now Ms. Chantal is dying.

JANICE: Please help her, Doctor. Before it's too late.

SHELBY crosses to COFFEE.

COFFEE: Please... help... (*Dies.*)

SHELBY: Let me have a look. (*Feeling her pulse.*) She's dead.

ALL ad lib. "Oh no.", "Oh my.", "It can't be.", etc...

ESTELLE: Doctor. Do you know what she died from?

SHELBY: Well, if I had to guess, I would say that she was murdered.

SFX: Dramatic sound.

TYRA: Murdered?

HEIDI: You mean, like—

CINDY: —Killed?

SHELBY: Yep. She was definitely murdered.

ESTELLE: And you can tell that just by feeling her pulse?

SHELBY: Nope. I can tell that by the pair of scissors sticking out of her back. (*Holds up a pair of scissors.*)

SFX: Dramatic sound. ALL ad lib. "Oh no.", "Oh my.", "It can't be.", etc...

NORMA: But if she was murdered, that means that one of us out here, or backstage, is the murderer!

SFX: Dramatic sound.

GIGI: Well, if that's the case, how are we going to find out who the murderer is?

TIM: I guess we could ask if there is a detective in the house.

BROOKLYN: You've got to be kidding me. You honestly think that if we just yell out "Is there a detective in the house?", that one is just going to stand up and say—

WADSON: (*Stands up.*) —I'm a detective!

BROOKLYN: Wow. I would have never thought in a million years that that would actually work. So, you're really a detective?

WADSON: No. Not really. I'm actually a detective's assistant.

GIGI: Just like the doctors. We've got a so-called detective in the audience who actually isn't a detective. Well, if you're a detective's assistant, then where is the detective?

DETECTIVE: (*Stands up.*) I'm right here! Detective Earl Lockhomes at your service. And this is my assistant, Joanne Wadson. And it seems we have a murder to solve.

TIM: Do you really think Ms. Chantal was murdered, Mr. Lockhomes?

DETECTIVE: That's Detective Lockhomes. And yes, I do think Ms. Coffee Chantal was murdered.

NORMA: How can you be so sure, Detective?

DETECTIVE: Well, like all good murders, the killer needs a motive for hurting the victim. And my guess here is that there are plenty of people who have thought about killing Ms. Chantal at one time or another.

ALL ad lib. "Yeah, I guess he's right.", "I know I've thought about killing her.", etc...

DETECTIVE: Then if my detective skills are right, I'd say we've got a case of murder on the runway.

ALL gasp and/or SFX: Dramatic sound.

M.C.: I have another job to get to, so... I'm going to leave now.

WADSON: No. No one goes anywhere. This is a murder crime scene and everyone here is either a witness or a suspect.

DETECTIVE: My assistant here is correct. Everyone needs to remain here until we discover who the murderer is.

TIM: How are you going to do that? Question us all?

DETECTIVE: Not all of you, just those of you who have a motive for wanting Ms. Chantal dead. Wadson, take everyone backstage so I may have a chance to examine the crime scene. When I am finished, we will reconvene out here and go through each account. Then we will all discover who the murderer is.

WADSON: Will do, Lockhomes. Alright everyone, you heard the detective, get backstage. I don't want any funny business. Now move it!

ALL exit with WADSON except for DETECTIVE, HUBERT, ELIZABETH, and SHELBY.

DETECTIVE: Now to inspect the crime scene. *(Takes out some gloves and puts them on, then he picks up the scissors [the murder weapon] and pulls out a plastic bag and puts the weapon in the bag. Then he pulls out a magnifying glass and looks around the crime scene. He pays close attention to a piece of paper in COFFEE'S hand.)* Hmm. Very interesting. I see. I have a question for the doctor in the house.

HUBERT: Yes? What is your question about early American history? The landing of the Pilgrims, the signing of the constitution, anything like that?

DETECTIVE: Sorry. I didn't mean you, Professor.

HUBERT: Oh. I see. That's alright. I'll just be right here if you need me.

ELIZABETH: Were you needing me? Having problem with your cat or pet canary?

DETECTIVE: Sorry. I wasn't speaking to you either. I was trying to ask the medical doctor a question.

ELIZABETH: I see. You know, us vets are doctors too. Just because we don't care for humans doesn't mean we didn't go to just as much school to care for our patients. It says doctor in front of my name just like all the rest.

DETECTIVE: I didn't mean to offend you. I just had a question for the doctor who found the murder weapon.

ELIZABETH: Oh. I can't help with that. Go ahead.

DETECTIVE: Thank you. Now, Dr. Shelby Smith, you were the one who discovered the murder weapon, correct?

SHELBY: Yes.

DETECTIVE: And how did you know it was this weapon that killed her?

SHELBY: Well I saw the scissors sticking out of her back and then she died. So, I sort of put two and two together.

DETECTIVE: So, what you're saying is that two and two makes murder?

SHELBY: Yes?

DETECTIVE: Precisely. *(Calling offstage.)* Wadson?!

WADSON: (*Poking head in.*) Yes, Lockhomes?

DETECTIVE: I am ready. Are you ready?

WADSON: Ready for what?

DETECTIVE: Ready to bring in the group for questioning.

WADSON: Yes. I'm ready. Are you ready?

DETECTIVE: I am ready. Go ahead and bring them in, please.

WADSON: You got it, boss. (*Offstage.*) Alright, everybody to the stage. Let's move it people.

As ALL enter the stage, you may want to bring chairs for people to sit during the questioning. These could also be used to stage the flashbacks.

FRANC: (*Entering with the group and addressing the DETECTIVE.*)

Listen here, Bub. I was just informed backstage that Coffee kicked the bucket out here and I just want to be the first to say that I had absolutely nothing to do with it.

DETECTIVE: I know.

FRANC: You do? How?

DETECTIVE: Let's just say that I have my methods. You see, based on my inspection of the crime scene, I conclude that there are seven possible suspects in this murder case. And you are not one of them.

FRANC: Okay. Good talk. I'll just be over here if you need me.

DETECTIVE: Now, to begin the investigation with our first suspect.

WADSON: It was the butler who did it!

DETECTIVE: What are you doing, Wadson?

WADSON: I am stating my accusation.

DETECTIVE: But we haven't begun the questioning.

WADSON: But it's always the butler that did it.

DETECTIVE: Sure, if you have a butler. But this is a fashion show. There are no butlers.

WADSON: Oh, you're right. Well in that case, I've got nothing.

DETECTIVE: Which is why, Wadson, we need to get to the bottom of this case. Now, which one of you is Ms. Chantal's assistant?

JANICE: That would be me, Detective. I'm Janice Tompkins, but you can just call me Janice. I am, or was, Ms. Chantal's assistant.

DETECTIVE: And how did you come to be her assistant, if I may ask?

JANICE: Well it all started a couple years ago. I was—

DETECTIVE: Hold on one minute. I'm more of a visual learner. Would you mind telling me this in a flashback?

JANICE: What do you mean?

TYRA: A flashback is a device used in theatre, film, and television, to provide the audience with information from the past.

JANICE: Huh?

HEIDI: He wants you to show him.

CINDY: Yeah... you know... act it out.

JANICE: But how would I do that? Like Tyra said, flashbacks are only done in theatre and stuff. This is real life, it's not like we are in a show right now.

WADSON clears her throat and motions to the real audience.

JANICE: Oh. Right. Flashback it is. Like I said, it all started a couple of years ago.

ALL make a sound as we travel into the flashback. COFFEE stands up and gets into place.

JANICE: I had just graduated from college with a degree in fashion journalism. Unfortunately, no one would hire me because of my lack of experience, so naturally, I went to work as a barista at Cup of Joe Coffee Shop. *(Now becomes part of the flashback scene.)* Hello. Welcome to Cup of Joe, what can I make you?

GIGI: *(Steps to JANICE, As Sarah.)* I'll take a grande mocha chip frappe, heavy on the chip and easy on the whip.

JANICE: Alright, that's one grande mac frap, loaded and light. And your name for that order?

GIGI: Sarah.

JANICE: With an H?

GIGI: How'd you know?

JANICE: Lucky guess. We'll have that right up. Next?

COFFEE walks in and steps up to the counter.

JANICE: Hi. Welcome to Cup of Joe. What can I make you?

COFFEE: I'll have a venti nonfat soy latte with three and a half sugar packets and a hint of cinnamon. Did you get all that? Most of these places never get my order right.

JANICE: That was one venti nonfat soy latte with three and a half sugar packets and a hint of cinnamon.

COFFEE: Impressive.

JANICE: And a name for that order?

COFFEE: Coffee.

JANICE: Oh. Okay. Would you like cream and sugar in that?

COFFEE: Excuse me?

JANICE: With your coffee?

COFFEE: I didn't order coffee, I ordered a latte.

JANICE: I know, a venti nonfat latte, but you just asked for coffee.

COFFEE: No, I didn't.

JANICE: Oh, sorry. I must have misheard you. Can I get a name for your latte?

COFFEE: Coffee.

JANICE: I'm sorry do you want a coffee or not?

COFFEE: Not.

JANICE: And your name is...?

COFFEE: COF-FEE.

JANICE: Oh! Sorry, you must get that a lot. You know my favorite fashion designer's name is Coffee.

COFFEE: Coffee Chantal?

JANICE: Yes. Do you know of her?

COFFEE: I am her.

JANICE: OMG! I'm so embarrassed. I'm a huge fan! I wrote my final paper in my modern fashion class on your work. Your "colors of Manhattan" line was awe inspiring. I'm a fashion journalist major by the way.

COFFEE: That's nice. Now, can I get my latte?

JANICE: Sure. Right away Coffee, I mean Ms. Chantal.

JANICE hands a cup to COFFEE, she sips and then, suddenly, a spotlight on COFFEE and a heavenly sound.

***Thank you for reading this free excerpt from MURDER ON THE RUNWAY
by Richard Gremel. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of
the script, please contact us at:***

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC
P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406
Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011
www.brookpub.com**