



NAME YOUR

POISON

MURDER IS SERVED

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STRYCHNINE

NAME
POI

BELLAD



BAMBI EVERSON

M, U, R, D, E, R

MURDER IS SERVED

One act, approx. 45 min.

CHARACTERS

RITA LOWENTHAL (83) Strident, tactless and high-strung.

STEVE LOWENTHAL (90) Long-suffering second husband to Rita.

MAUDE ELLIOT (84) Quintessential nurturing grandmother.

DETECTIVE ROBERT BAILEY (age unspecified) Seasoned professional.

SETTING: Modest home in California.

TIME: The present.

SYNOPSIS: A murderous love triangle amongst octogenarians in an assisted living facility. Married for 40 years, Steve Lowenthal's life has been made intolerable by his henpecking wife, Rita. Finding new love in the rehabilitation center leads to deceit, treachery, revenge and cheating at Scrabble.

PRODUCTION NOTE: You can use brightly colored play-dough for Rita's Christmas candies. It should look hideous.

SCENE 1

Rita and Steve's kitchen table. It is cluttered from years of living. Steve (age 90) and Rita (age 83) are playing Scrabble, as they have done for years. Rita is an aggressive player. Steve clearly has something on his mind.

RITA

Go!!

STEVE

Can we put this in hold for a while? We really need to talk.

RITA

Typical. You always want to stop when you're ahead. You're trying to break my concentration. Not happening! It's your move, so *go!*

STEVE

(Sighs)

Fine. "Proctors." 19 points.

RITA

What is a proctor? Is that an ass doctor? I'm getting the book.

STEVE

A proctor. Someone who watches a person during an exam. Plural. There were 7 proctors at the SAT exam. I think I get an extra 50 for using all my letters, right?

RITA

God damn it!! 69 points! Fine!

STEVE

It doesn't make much difference at this point, but the c is on a double word score. So it's actually 88...

RITA

God damn it!!!

STEVE

Let's just call it a night. You're getting yourself all worked up, and frankly I'm really not having much fun.

RITA

Do you want a drink?

STEVE

Sure. Maybe that will help. A nice glass of Ovaltine. Thanks!

RITA

I'm not getting it. You get it. After you pick your letters. I can't trust you if my back is turned.

STEVE

(Taking his letters)

I have never cheated at Scrabble. There. Happy?

Gets up from table to make Ovaltine. He is slow and shuffles over.

STEVE (CONT'D)

You want something?

RITA

Shhhh! I'm thinking. Yeah, bring me a root beer. And some of those fudge cookies. And don't spill anything. God damn crappy letters.

Steve returns with her root beer and his Ovaltine.

RITA (CONT'D)

Dump, triple letter score. 18. Where are the god damn cookies?

STEVE

Sorry.

Gets back up to get cookies. Meanwhile, Rita sneaks a peek at his letters. She seems satisfied.

RITA

You have a mind like a sieve!

STEVE

I don't know how you put up with me.

Steve starts studying his scrabble letters and board.

RITA

It's not easy believe me. Go! We haven't got all night.

STEVE

We don't?

RITA

Oh my God! I told you. I have to decorate for my folk dancing group.

STEVE

Right!! Ok, not much here so S-T-E-R.. Dumpster 3,4,7,13,14,15, double letter 17 points.

RITA

I hate it when you add on to my words!

STEVE

It's allowed, right?

RITA

Yes. It's allowed. Its just annoying. Ha! On your R ,a, v, e, n. 8, double word 16.

STEVE

Good one.

RITA

Don't patronize me. Your move.

STEVE

G, o , a, on the T, e and your other e - goatee.

RITA

Dammit dammit dammit!

STEVE

I can't do this anymore.

RITA

Fine!

Throws the Scrabble bag at him, tips over the board.

RITA (CONT'D)

You clean it up then! I'm going to change for dance.

STEVE

Doesn't it start at 8?

RITA

I have to set up chairs. And decorate. I have a lot of responsibility. You would know that if you ever came with me.

STEVE

It's just not my thing. The music is always so loud.

RITA

That's because some of us don't like to wear our hearing aids. Especially Manny the sound guy. No one is complaining though. You need to get out of the house more. Dancing is good for your heart.

STEVE

I have arthritis in both knees. And you always kick me if I'm not moving fast enough. I'd rather go to a nice movie. Couldn't we just do that tonight? There is a silent movie festival at the Paramount. Douglas Fairbanks.

RITA

NO! I have dance. Oh, I should have married Arthur Wisenbaum. Now he knew how to have a good time.

STEVE

He's dead.

RITA

Well, he'd still be more fun than you.

STEVE

Can you just sit for a moment?

RITA

I was sitting. If I am late, the chairs will not be set up properly.

STEVE

You have never been late for anything in 36 years. You just wind up sitting in the parking lot for 2 hours.

RITA

That's because I need the best spot.

STEVE

Please. Just 5 minutes.

RITA

Go!

STEVE

Sitting, please. Put your phone down.

RITA

No. You said 5 minutes. You now have 4 minutes and 48 seconds. You are wasting time.

STEVE

This is hard with you looking at a stopwatch.

(Pause)

I think I need to leave.

RITA

Well hurry up then. You can't be seen wearing that. If I'm driving you we have to leave NOW.

STEVE

Rita, I'm not leaving with you. I am leaving without you.

RITA

Ha. You never go anywhere without me.

STEVE

Actually, That's not true. This is really hard. I have been seeing someone else.

RITA

That's ridiculous! Who? The cleaning lady? I never did trust that woman. I think she's been stealing my marijuana gummy worms!

STEVE

Her name is Maude. I met her in my PT group. She had cataract surgery and a hip replacement.

RITA

So she's blind? Well, that makes sense. I doubt she'll stick around once she regains her eyesight. You're not exactly Paul Newman, you know.

STEVE

Newman is dead. I told her I look like Milton Berle gone to seed. But its not like that. Maude is quiet. A homebody. Bakes cookies.

RITA

So how old is Donna Reed?

STEVE

Maude will be 84 in February.

RITA

I'm 83! How will I explain to my friends that you left me for an older woman? A blind cripple at that! How will I live that down? I am not a toaster that you can return to Walmart.

STEVE

You are not a toaster. I am not trading you in for another model. But Rita, you can't possibly be happy living like this. You see me as an albatross. A cross to bear.

RITA

My albatross! My cross-eyed bear! Who are you to question my happiness? This is me happy. I have been fucking happy for 36 fucking years. You can't toss a person away like garbage. Garbage collection is on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Do you want me to just sit there and wait for the truck?

STEVE

Don't you think we both deserve a little peace and quiet? After all this time, don't you think we could use a little rest?

RITA

I'll rest when I'm dead! Does she - this person - know your schlong hasn't worked in years? Does she know it needs to be wrapped in papier-mâché and propped up with duct tape? And that barely works because you have to pee as soon as the cast dries?

STEVE

It's not about that. It's about companionship. It's about going gently into that dark night.

RITA

Get in the car. I have to go to dance. I am not discussing this any more.

STEVE

Please. I'd rather just stay home. I promise I'll watch a movie and we can talk when you get home.

RITA

Fine, but give me your cell phone.

STEVE

Why?

RITA

I don't want you having phone sex with Helen Keller while I'm gone.

STEVE

That doesn't make sense. Helen Keller wouldn't have a phone. What if there's an emergency?

RITA

Guess you should have thought of that before you became a geriatric Valentino!

She grabs the phone. She steps on a scrabble piece.

RITA (CONT'D)

DAMMIT!

Rita takes the scrabble piece and throws it at him. Picks ups other and throws it at him.

RITA (CONT'D)

Damn you! I'll be home by ten.

Rita exits slamming the door hard! Steve slowly and carefully puts all the scrabble pieces back in the box and then tosses the box in the trash.

STEVE

Finish - 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, double word 24. Game over.

BLACKOUT