

# **The Nifty-Fifties Malt Shop Murder**

*A Mystery-Comedy  
by  
Craig Sodaro*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

A quintessential 1950s mom, June Seevers, and her committee are working hard to win the "Small Town USA" title and a cash prize for their town of Sunnydale. The judges are due in two days to verify that it is, indeed, an All-American, apple pie-eating, crime-free hamlet. Did we say crime free? Then what about the mysterious customer at the Malt Shop who falls over dead during the committee's final meeting? It looks like he was poisoned, and the victim's sister may be a committee member! But who? With the help of her family, the prissy librarian, and even the goofy deputy sheriff, June manages to unmask the killer, but not before the killer tries to outsmart -- and silence -- the amateur sleuth.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(6 m, 14 w)*

TERRI: 16, a waitress.

VICTIM: A man.

HUEY SCHUTT: 20, the deputy.

SHERIFF GOODHUGH: 40s.

MOIRA FLYNN: 40s, owner of a malt shop.

ELAINE SANDERS: 40s, one of the committee.

PLUM GIBSON: 60s, another.

RHONDA JAME: 40s, another.

MAGNOLIA MCBEE: 50s, another and Moira's sister.

JUNE SEEVERS: 30s, committee chairperson.

LINDA: 16, another waitress.

VICKI SEEVERS: 16, June's daughter.

RICKY SEEVERS: 12, June's son.

WARD SEEVERS: 30s, June's doctor husband.

SANDRA STILES: 20s, an ambitious newspaper reporter.

LOUELLA PURDY: 30s, piano and music teacher.

BETSY: 12, a star music student.

DARLENE: 17, a drugstore counter girl.

CAROLINE HACKETT: 50s, the librarian.

GEORGE MORGAN: 70s, the county clerk.

VOICE: Elvis himself.

*CASTING NOTE: The actor who plays George can double as the Victim, since the victim has his back to the audience the entire time he's on stage—alive.*

## **SETTING**

The play is set in the 1950s in Moira's Malt Shop located in the small town of Sunnydale. Entrance down left leads to the kitchen and a back door. Entrance down right leads outside to Main Street. There is a counter up center with several stools in front of it. Behind the counter are a few classic diner elements: a pie case, milk shake machine, shelves stocked with condiments, baskets, and so on, posters, perhaps a neon light. A large menu listing diner food items should hang on the upstage wall. There is a phone by the cash register. Three or four tables are downstage set with three or four chairs each. Brightly covered tablecloths cover the tables which are topped with napkin holders, mustard and ketchup dispensers, and so on.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

Scene 1: Moira's Malt Shop, a stormy summer evening.

Scene 2: The following morning.

### **ACT II**

Scene 1: That evening, around eight.

Scene 2: The following afternoon.

**PRODUCTION NOTE:** There's opportunity for several songs in Act II. Be sure to obtain permission to use any copyrighted music.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: Moira's Malt Shop, a stormy summer evening with occasional THUNDER and LIGHTNING. At table left sit SHERIFF GOODHUGH and HUEY. LINDA cleans tables. TERRI serves VICTIM, who sits at counter, his back to audience. ELAINE, PLUM, MAGNOLIA, and RHONDA sit at table right, where Plum is holding a rolled up banner. They talk animatedly.)*

TERRI: More coffee? *(VICTIM shakes his head.)* You all right, mister? You look a bit pale. *(SHE gets no answer, then shrugs and goes back to work.)*

HUEY: Maybe it's somethin' you ate, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: Huey, I ain't had nothin' to eat yet!

HUEY: Well, shucks, where is this pain?

SHERIFF: I'm lookin' at him!

HUEY: *(Slow to catch on.)* You're lookin' ... oh, you know what my ma always says, Sheriff.

SHERIFF: What's your ma always say?

HUEY: You can't be too sick if you still got your sense of humor! *(Laughing hysterically.)* And you just told a joke!

SHERIFF: Who's joking? *(Winces in pain and grabs his right side.)* Ahhhh! Feels like I'm gettin' stabbed!

HUEY: Can't blame that on me! I ain't even got a knife!

*(MOIRA enters SL with two hamburger plates.)*

MOIRA: Two Big Boppers with the works!

SHERIFF: 'Bout time!

MOIRA: These are each a pound of beef and unless you want it to moo at you from the plate, it takes a bit of time to cook 'em through!

HUEY: Sure looks tasty! Whatdaya think, Sheriff -- is this gonna fill that hollow leg you're always complainin' about?

*(SHERIFF doubles over in pain.)*

*The Nifty-Fifties Malt Shop Murder*

- 6 -

MOIRA: *(To SHERIFF.)* What, you don't think we serve enough food here?

*(SHERIFF moans in pain. ELAINE, PLUM, MAGNOLIA, and RHONDA move to Sheriff's table.)*

HUEY: *(Terrified.)* Hey! I think Sheriff's really sick!

ELAINE: Is it a sharp, stabbing pain?

SHERIFF: Ah ha!

PLUM: Where does it hurt?

*(SHERIFF points to his right side.)*

RHONDA: Sounds like food poisoning to me!

MAGNOLIA: Why, gracious me! I once ate grits that just turned my stomach. It hurt for three days!

ELAINE: If it's food poisoning, everybody better watch out!

MOIRA: He hasn't touched a thing here! If he got poisoned, it was on those Twinkies he eats all day!

PLUM: I say you can't be too careful!

SHERIFF: *(Moans and stands, holding his side.)* Huey ... Huey ...

HUEY: Yes, Sheriff? *(SHERIFF points off SR.)* You want me to leave?

*(SHERIFF shakes his head.)*

MOIRA: You want to leave?

*(SHERIFF nods.)*

HUEY: Where do you want to go?

*(SHERIFF points left.)*

ELAINE: To the kitchen?

RHONDA: That's silly! You didn't finish your hamburger yet!

*The Nifty-Fifties Malt Shop Murder*

- 7 -

*(SHERIFF staggers right, almost bumping into JUNE who has just entered.)*

JUNE: Oh, why Sheriff! Are you all right? You look like you need to see my husband!

HUEY: I think he's sick, Mrs. Seevers. Real sick!

JUNE: Maybe you ought to drive the Sheriff to the hospital, Huey. *(SHERIFF nods.)* I'd say some little boy's going to need his appendix out! And Huey, you'd better hurry! I'll call Ward and tell him to meet you at the emergency room.

HUEY: C'mon, Sheriff, I'll even turn on the siren.

JUNE: Don't worry, Sheriff! Ward will cut that nasty old appendix out just like that!

*(SHERIFF screams in pain as HUEY helps him off SR.)*

ELAINE: Are you sure it's his appendix, June?

JUNE: I bet a box of butter cookies I'm right.

PLUM: That's what you get for marrying a doctor.

RHONDA: Instant diagnoses!

JUNE: *(Moves to phone behind counter.)* Moira? Can I call Ward on your phone?

MOIRA: Sure, honey!

*(JUNE dials.)*

MAGNOLIA: Wait a second! If Sheriff Goodhugh's in the hospital, who'll take care of crime in Sunnydale?

RHONDA: What crime? Elvis never sang "Jailhouse Rock" about Sunnydale!

ELAINE: You and Elvis! Honestly! We moved here because there is no crime!

PLUM: I've lived here all my life and the most exciting thing the Sheriff's done is get a cat or two down from a tree, so let's not worry about that.

JUNE: *(Into phone.)* Ward? Sheriff Goodhugh's on his way to the emergency room. No! Of course nobody shot him. He's got appendicitis! Oh, and Ward, don't use my good carving knife again. See you later, sweetie. *(Hangs up.)*

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