

Series: Miscellaneous Single Episodes
Show: Best Plays: Arsenic and Old Lace
Date: Jul 06 1952

CAST:
ANNOUNCER
HOST, John Chapman
ABBY BREWSTER
THE REV. DR. HARPER
TEDDY BREWSTER
OFFICER BROPHY
MARTHA BREWSTER
MORTIMER BREWSTER
ELAINE HARPER
JONATHAN BREWSTER
DR. EINSTEIN
LIEUTENANT ROONEY
MR. WITHERSPOON
NBC ANNCR (1 line)
NBC ANNCR 2 (1 line)
KFI ANNCR (1 line)

MUSIC: DRUM ROLL

ANNOUNCER: From New York, where the American stage begins, NBC presents BEST PLAYS, transcribed, with John Chapman.

MUSIC: THEME

ANNOUNCER: BEST PLAYS, a series of hour-length dramas based on famous theatrical books begun by the late Burns Mantle, now edited by the distinguished drama critic of the New York Daily News, John Chapman.

MUSIC: THEME ... TO A CONCLUSION

ANNOUNCER: Mr. Chapman.

HOST: Good evening. Almost six hundred years ago, a man named Geoffrey Chaucer coined a phrase. He couldn't spell very well, apparently, so what he wrote must have sounded to him something like this -- "Mordre wol out, certeyn, it wolnat faille." We've been practicing up on spelling and pronunciation during the last few centuries and have figured out that what Chaucer meant was "Murder will out, certainly, it can't miss." And so it can't. It rarely misses in the theater.

The season of 1940-41 was an excellent one for murder, and for comedy, in the best plays of the Broadway theater. Owen Davis had adapted a novel by Frances and Richard Lockridge, "Mr. and Mrs. North," about an attractive young couple blundering their way into the detective business and this play was a hit.

Joseph Kesselring wrote another one about murder by the dozen which he originally titled "Bodies in Our Cellar." This turned out to be "Arsenic and Old Lace" which had one thousand, four hundred and forty-four performances. Only six other plays in the history of the Broadway stage have run longer. In the company on the first night of January ten, Nineteen Forty-One were Boris Karloff, Jean Adair and other fine comedians.

Now, in this BEST PLAYS performance, we have Mr. Karloff and Donald Cook as two strangely different brothers. Mr. Cook currently is starring in the Broadway hit, "The Moon Is Blue." Our company also includes Jean Adair and Edgar Stehli from the original production and Evelyn Varden as the nice little lady who likes to give all her guests elderberry wine. The performance is beginning.

MUSIC: INTRODUCTION ... THEN BEHIND HOST--

HOST: On a quiet street under the arching elms in the town of Brooklyn, New York, the old Brewster home stands in dignified and overdecorated glory. The gas mantels are still in the hall, although electricity was installed several years ago. It's tea time and Miss Abby Brewster pours. The minister is visiting and Miss Abby and her nephew Teddy are most attentive.

SOUND: CLINK OF TEA CUPS AND DISHES

ABBY: Won't you have another biscuit, Dr. Harper?

HARPER: Oh, no, Miss Abby. I always eat too many of your biscuits just to taste the lovely jam.

ABBY: But you haven't tried the quince. We always put a little apple in with it to take the tartness out. We'll send you over a jar. Teddy, more tea?

TEDDY: What? (AGREEABLE) Oh, bully. Bully.

SOUND: TEDDY POURS THE TEA

HARPER: Miss Abby, I've been meaning to speak to you about your nephew. Mortimer I mean.

ABBY: Oh, yes, I understand he's taking Elaine to the theatre again tonight. (IMPARTING GOOD NEWS) Teddy, your brother Mortimer will be here a little later.

TEDDY: Dee-lighted!

ABBY: (TO HARPER) We're so happy it's Elaine that Mortimer takes to the theatre with him.

HARPER: Miss Abby, I'll be frank with you. I do not entirely approve of your nephew's unfortunate connection with the theatre. A drama critic is constantly exposed to the theatre, and I fear some of them do develop an interest in it.

ABBY: Well, not Mortimer. You need have no fear of that. Why, Mortimer hates the theatre.

HARPER: Really?

ABBY: Oh, yes! He writes awful things about the theatre. But you can't blame him, poor boy. He was so happy writing about real estate, which he really knew something about, and then they just made him take this terrible night position.

HARPER: My, my!

ABBY: But, as he says, the theatre can't last much longer anyway and in the meantime it's a living.

SOUND: KNOCK AT DOOR

ABBY: Oh, now, who do you suppose that is? (MELODICALLY) I'm coming! I'm com-ing!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

BROPHY: Oh, hello, Miss Brewster.

ABBY: How are you, Officer Brophy? Come in.

BROPHY: Thank you. (TO HARPER) Afternoon, sir.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR CLOSES

TEDDY: Sire! What news have you brought me?

BROPHY: (DUTIFULLY) Colonel, I have nothing to report.

TEDDY: Splendid. Thank you, sir. At ease.

BROPHY: (AT EASE, TO ABBY) We've come for the Christmas toys, Miss Brewster.

HARPER: That's a splendid job you men do fixing toys for the children.

BROPHY: Yeah, well, it gives us something to do when we sit around the station. You get tired playing cards, then you start cleaning your gun, and the first thing you know you've shot yourself in the foot.

ABBY: Teddy dear, go upstairs and get that big box from your Aunt Martha's room.

TEDDY: Dee-lighted!

SOUND: TEDDY'S FOOTSTEPS START SLOWLY UP THE STAIRS DURING FOLLOWING--

ABBY: (MELODICALLY) That's right, dear -- up the stairs. (MORE SOBERLY) How is Mrs. Brophy today?

BROPHY: Pneumonia.

HARPER: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

TEDDY: (A LONG, LOUD SHOUT) CHARGE!

SOUND: TEDDY'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS RUN UP THE STAIRS -- THE OTHERS PAY NO MIND

BROPHY: Oh, she's better now. A little weak still.

ABBY: Well, I'm going to tell sister Martha and she'll bring you over some beef broth for her. (MOVES OFF) And I'll be right back.

BROPHY: Aw, don't bother, Miss Abby! You've done so much for her already.

SOUND: TEDDY BLOWS A LOUD, OFF-KEY BUGLE CALL

BROPHY: Uh oh. (REMONSTRATES, CALLS) Hey, Colonel! You promised not to do that!

TEDDY: (OFF) But I have to call a Cabinet meeting to get the release of those supplies.

SOUND: TEDDY WHEELS AND EXITS, UPSTAIRS DOOR SHUTS

BROPHY: (DISAPPROVING MURMUR, THEN OFFHAND, TO HARPER) He used to do that in the middle of the night. The neighbors complain about him.

HARPER: Oh, he's quite harmless.

BROPHY: Oh, sure, sure. (PHILOSOPHICAL) Eh, suppose he does think he's Teddy Roosevelt. It's a shame, a nice family like this, hatching a cuckoo. The grandfather made a million dollars; er, patent medicine.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES

MARTHA: Well! Officer Brophy. And Dr. Harper. How nice!

BROPHY: Oh, hello, Miss Martha. I come to get the Christmas toys.

MARTHA: Oh, yes! Teddy's Army and Navy. They wear out.

ABBY: (ENTERS) Oh, you're back, Martha. How is poor Mr. Benitzky?

MARTHA: Well, dear, it's pretty serious, I'm afraid. The doctor was there. He's going to amputate in the morning.

ABBY: (MILDLY HOPEFUL) Can we be present?

MARTHA: (SADLY) No, dear. I asked him, but he said it's against the rules of the hospital or - or something.

ABBY: (DISAPPOINTED) Oh.

SOUND: TEDDY'S FOOTSTEPS WALK DOWN STAIRS BEHIND--

ABBY: Oh, here's Teddy with the Army and Navy.

BROPHY: Oh, thanks, Colonel. This'll make a lot of kids happy.

TEDDY: What's this? What's this? What's this? The U.S.S. Oregon?

MARTHA: Oh, no, Teddy, dear. Put it back.

TEDDY: But the Oregon goes to Australia.

BROPHY: Uh, thank you again, ma'am--

TEDDY: Ten-hut!

BROPHY: (AT ATTENTION) Yes, sir, Colonel.

TEDDY: Dismissed.

BROPHY: Yes, sir.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES AS BROPHY EXITS

TEDDY: I shall retire to field headquarters. CHARGE!

SOUND: TEDDY'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS RUN UP THE STAIRS

TEDDY: Charge the blockhouse!

SOUND: TEDDY EXITS, UPSTAIRS DOOR SLAMS

HARPER: (BEAT, PUZZLED) The - blockhouse?

MARTHA: The stairs are always San Juan Hill.

HARPER: Have you ever tried to persuade him he wasn't Teddy Roosevelt?

ABBY: Oh, no!

MARTHA: Oh, he's so happy being Teddy Roosevelt.

ABBY: Once, a long time ago -- remember, Martha? -- we thought if he could be George Washington it might be a change for him.

MARTHA: But he stayed under his bed for days and just wouldn't be anybody.

ABBY: And we'd so much rather he be Mr. Roosevelt than nobody.

HARPER: Well, if he's happy. (CLEARS THROAT) I'd better be running along.

ABBY: Give our love to Elaine and, Dr. Harper, please don't think too harshly of Mortimer because he's a dramatic critic. Somebody has to do these things.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

HARPER: Goodbye.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR CLOSES

MARTHA: Did you just have tea? Isn't it rather late?

ABBY: Yes. And dinner's going to be late, too.

MARTHA: So? Why?

ABBY: (CALLS, MELODICALLY) Teddy?!

SOUND: UPSTAIRS DOOR OPENS

TEDDY: Yes, Aunt Abby?

SOUND: TEDDY'S FOOTSTEPS WALK DOWN STAIRS BEHIND--

ABBY: Good news for you. You're going to Panama and dig another lock for the canal.

TEDDY: Dee-lighted! That's bully. Just bully. I shall prepare at once for the journey.

SOUND: TEDDY'S FOOTSTEPS START TO WALK UP THE STAIRS ... THEN STOP

TEDDY: (REALIZES HE'S FORGOTTEN SOMETHING) Oh.

SOUND: TEDDY TAKES A STEP OR TWO BACK

TEDDY: CHARGE!

SOUND: TEDDY'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS RUN UP THE STAIRS ... UPSTAIRS DOOR SLAMS

MARTHA: (SURPRISED) Abby! You mean--?

ABBY: Yes, dear!

MARTHA: (DISBELIEF) While I was out?

ABBY: Yes, dear. I just couldn't wait for you. I didn't know when you'd be back and Dr. Harper was coming.

MARTHA: But, dear, all by yourself? I'll run right downstairs and see.

ABBY: Oh, no, no, there wasn't time.

MARTHA: Then where did you--?

ABBY: Martha -- look in the window-seat.

MARTHA: The window-seat?

ABBY: Mm hm. Go ahead, dear. Lift the lid.

SOUND: SLOW CREAK! OF WINDOW-SEAT LID LIFTED

MARTHA: (THRILLED) Oh, Abby. Abby! Isn't it just too delightful? And to think you managed it all by yourself!

MUSIC: BRIDGE

SOUND: AUTOMOBILE ENGINE BACKGROUND ... CAR DRIVES ALONG ROAD

MORTIMER: We're almost home, Elaine. Now make up your mind. Where do you want to go for dinner?

ELAINE: Oh, I don't care, Mortimer, really.

MORTIMER: Well, suppose we wait till after the show?

ELAINE: Well, that'll make it pretty late, won't it?

MORTIMER: Not with the little stinker we're seeing tonight.

ELAINE: Oh, I was hoping it'd be a musical. They seem to have a humanizing effect on you, darling. After a serious play, we join the proletariat in the subway and I listen to that lecture on the drama. It wasn't until we saw a musical that you took me home in a taxi, and, uh, noticed my legs.

MORTIMER: (HAS COME TO A DECISION) Elaine, where could we be married in a hurry -- say, er, tonight?

ELAINE: (CHUCKLES) Well, I'm afraid Father will insist on officiating.

MORTIMER: I'll bet your father could make even the marriage service sound pedestrian.

ELAINE: Are you by any chance writing a review of it?

MORTIMER: (CHUCKLES) Sorry, darling. Occupational disease.

ELAINE: (CHUCKLES)

SOUND: AUTOMOBILE ENGINE OUT

MORTIMER: Here we are. The Brewster Mansion.

ELAINE: (EXHALES HAPPILY)

SOUND: CAR DOORS OPEN AND CLOSE AS ELAINE AND MORTIMER CLIMB OUT ... THEY WALK TO HOUSE DURING FOLLOWING--

ELAINE: Thanks. Isn't that Teddy at the door?

MORTIMER: Yes.

ELAINE: Well, what's he doing in shorts and a sun helmet?

TEDDY: (OFF) Hello, Mortimer!

MORTIMER: How are you, Mr. President?

TEDDY: (CLOSER) Bully, thank you. Just bully! (LOW) What news have you brought me?

MORTIMER: (GRAVELY) Just this. Mr. President, the country is squarely behind you.

TEDDY: Yes, I know. Isn't it wonderful? Well, goodbye!

ELAINE: Where are you off to, Teddy?

TEDDY: Panama!

SOUND: TEDDY EXITS AS CELLAR DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS

ELAINE: (CONFUSED) Well!

MORTIMER: Panama's the cellar. He digs locks for the canal down there.

ELAINE: Oh. You're very sweet with him.

MORTIMER: Teddy always was my favorite brother.

ELAINE: Favorite? Were there more of you?

MORTIMER: There's another brother, Jonathan. We don't talk about him. He left Brooklyn very early -- by request. Jonathan was the kind of boy who liked to cut worms in two -- with his teeth.

ELAINE: What became of him?

MORTIMER: I don't know. He wanted to become a surgeon like Grandfather, but he wouldn't go to medical school first and his practice got him into trouble.

ELAINE: (UNNERVED) Oh. (CHANGES SUBJECT) Well, goodbye, darling. I'll run over and say goodnight to father. Before I go out with you, he likes to pray over me a little.

MORTIMER: Mm hm.

ELAINE: I'll be right back. I'll cut across the cemetery.

SOUND: ELAINE EXITS AS FRONT DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS

ABBY: Hello, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Oh, hello, Aunt Abby. Did you see my chapter on Thoreau? I want to show it to Elaine.

ABBY: No, I haven't seen it, dear. We thought you'd like a little something before you leave. Martha's getting a piece of the Lady Baltimore cake. Dr. Harper was here to tea. He's concerned about Elaine going to the theatre so much.

MORTIMER: (CHUCKLES) He'd love tonight's horror -- "Murder Will Out."

ABBY: Oh, dear. Well, I think I'll open a bottle of wine. (MOVING OFF) It'll be nice with the cake.

SOUND: MORTIMER RUMMAGES AROUND ROOM LOOKING FOR HIS MANUSCRIPT

MORTIMER: Yeah, I can see it all now. The same old thing. When the curtain goes up-- Where is that chapter? The first thing you'll see -- maybe in the window-seat -- will be a dead body.

SOUND: SLOW CREAK! OF WINDOW-SEAT LID LIFTED

MORTIMER: Sure, just like this one. (STAMMERS) A-- A dead body?!

SOUND: WINDOW-SEAT LID SLAMS SHUT

MORTIMER: (TO HIMSELF, LOW) A dead body.

ABBY: (RETURNS, SINGING) "There is a happy land far, far away--" (TO MORTIMER) Lady Baltimore cake is so nice with a little wine, don't you

think, dear?

MORTIMER: Aunt Martha? Aunt Abby?

ABBY: Hm? Yes, dear?

MORTIMER: You told me you were going to make plans for Teddy to go to that, er, sanitarium -- Happy Dale.

ABBY: Yes, dear, it's all arranged. Teddy has to sign the papers.

MORTIMER: He's got to sign them right away. Well, you've got to know sometime. I'm frightfully sorry, but I've got some shocking news for you. Teddy's killed a man.

MARTHA: Nonsense, dear.

MORTIMER: There's a body in that window-seat.

ABBY: Yes, dear, we know.

MORTIMER: Oh. Well, you-- You know?

ABBY: Now, Mortimer, just forget about it. Forget you ever saw the gentleman.

MORTIMER: Forget?

ABBY: We never dreamed you'd peek.

MORTIMER: But - but who is he?

ABBY: His name is Hoskins, Adam Hoskins. That's really all I know about him except that he's a Methodist.

MORTIMER: Well, what's he doing here? What happened to him?

MARTHA: He died.

MORTIMER: Aunt Martha, men don't just get into window-seats and die.

ABBY: No, he died first.

MORTIMER: Well, how?

ABBY: Oh, Mortimer, don't be so inquisitive. The gentleman died because he drank some wine with poison in it.

MORTIMER: How did the poison get in the wine?

MARTHA: Well, we put it in the wine because it's less noticeable. When it's in tea, it has a distinct odor.

MORTIMER: You put it in the wine?

ABBY: Yes. And I put Mr. Hoskins in the window-seat because Dr. Harper was coming.

MORTIMER: Oh. So you knew what you'd done. You didn't want Dr. Harper to see the

body?

ABBY: Well, not at tea -- that wouldn't have have been very nice. Now you know the whole thing, Mortimer, just forget about it. I do think Martha and I have the right to our own little secrets. Butter plates, Martha. Butter plates!

MARTHA: Yes, of course, dear.

SOUND: DISHES, UTENSILS, ET CETERA, IN BACKGROUND

MARTHA: (REMEMBERS SOMETHING) Oh! Oh, Abby, while I was out, I dropped in on Mrs. Schultz. She's much better, yes, and she would like us to take Junior to the movies again.

ABBY: Well, we must do that tomorrow or the next day.

MARTHA: Yes, but this time we'll go where we want to go. Junior's not going to drag me into another one of those scary pictures.

MORTIMER: (AGITATED) Aunt Martha! Aunt Abby! What are we going to do?

MARTHA: What are we going to do about what, dear?

MORTIMER: There's a body in that window-seat.

ABBY: Yes. Mr. Hoskins.

MORTIMER: Well, good heavens, I can't turn you over to the police. What am I going to do?

MARTHA: Well, for one thing, dear, stop being so excited.

ABBY: And, for pity's sake, stop worrying. We told you to forget the whole thing.

MORTIMER: Forget--?! My dear Aunt Abby, can't I make you realize that something has to be done?

ABBY: (A LITTLE SHARPLY) Now, Mortimer, you behave yourself. You're too old to be flying off the handle like this.

MORTIMER: But you can't leave him there.

MARTHA: We don't intend to, dear.

ABBY: No, Teddy's down in the cellar digging the lock.

MORTIMER: You - you mean you're going to bury Mr. Hotchkiss in the cellar?

MARTHA: Hoskins, dear. Oh, yes, dear, of course. That's what we did with the others.

MORTIMER: Oh, no, no, no. You can't bury Mr.-- Others?

ABBY: The other gentlemen.

MORTIMER: When you say "others" -- do you mean --- others? More than one

"others"?

MARTHA: Oh, yes, dear. Let me see, this is --- eleven, isn't it, Abby?

ABBY: No, dear, this makes twelve.

MARTHA: Oh, I think you're wrong, Abby. This is only eleven.

ABBY: No, dear, because I remember when Mr. Hoskins first came in, it occurred to me that he would make just an even dozen.

MARTHA: Well, you really shouldn't count the first one, dear.

ABBY: Oh, well, I was. I was counting the first one. So that makes it twelve.

SOUND: PHONE RINGS

MORTIMER: (TOO DISTRACTED TO PICK UP PHONE) Hello! (REALIZES HIS ERROR, STAMMERS) Oh--

SOUND: RECEIVER UP

MORTIMER: (INTO PHONE) Hello? -- Al? (CHUCKLES) Oh, my, it's good to hear your voice.

ABBY: (COUNTS) Twelve, eleven--

MORTIMER: (TO ABBY) Sh! Sh! Sh! (INTO PHONE) Al? -- Oh, uh, checkin' up? Well, I know I didn't pick up the tickets. -- Yeah, I'm glad you called. Now, get hold of George right away. He's got to review the play for me. -- Yeah. -- Yeah, I'll explain later.

SOUND: RECEIVER DOWN

MORTIMER: Now - now, let's see, where were we? (ABRUPT) TWELVE?!

MARTHA: Yes, Abby thinks we ought to count the first one and that makes it twelve.

MORTIMER: Well, all right now. All right, who was the first one?

ABBY: Mr. Midgely. He was a Baptist. He came here looking for a room.

MARTHA: He was such a lonely old man.

ABBY: All his kith and kin were dead and it left him so forlorn and unhappy.

MARTHA: We felt so sorry for him.

ABBY: And then when his heart attack came and he sat in that chair looking so peaceful-- Remember, Martha?

MARTHA: Mm hm.

ABBY: We made up our minds then and there that if we could help other lonely old men to the same peace, we would.

MORTIMER: He dropped dead right in that chair? Oh, how awful for you.

MARTHA: Oh, no, dear. Why, it was rather like old times. Your grandfather always used to have a cadaver or two around the place.

MORTIMER: Well, I know, but--

MARTHA: You see, Teddy had been digging in Panama and he thought Mr. Midgely was a Yellow Fever victim.

ABBY: That meant he had to be buried immediately.

MARTHA: So we all took him down to Panama and put him in the lock.

MORTIMER: And that's how it started?

ABBY: Of course, we realized we couldn't depend on that happening again, so--

MARTHA: You remember those jars of poison that have been up on the shelves in Grandfather's laboratory all these years?

ABBY: You know your Aunt Martha's knack for mixing things. You've eaten enough of her piccalilli. (CHUCKLES)

MARTHA: (CHUCKLES) Well, dear, for a gallon of elderberry wine, I take one teaspoonful of arsenic, then add half a teaspoonful of strychnine -- and then just a pinch of cyanide.

MORTIMER: (APPRAISINGLY) Should have quite a kick.

ABBY: Yes! As a matter of fact, one of our gentlemen found time to say, "How delicious."

MARTHA: Yes! He did! (CHANGES SUBJECT, MOVES OFF) Well, we'll have to get things started in the kitchen for supper.

ABBY: I wish you could stay, Mortimer.

MARTHA: (OFF, MELODICALLY) I'm trying out a new recipe.

MORTIMER: (MISERABLE) I couldn't eat a thing.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS

ELAINE: Hello, darling. I keep you waiting?

MORTIMER: Hmm? Oh, it's you. You run along home, Elaine; I'll call you up tomorrow.

ELAINE: Tomorrow?

MORTIMER: Well, you know I always call you every day or two.

ELAINE: But we're going to the theatre tonight.

MORTIMER: Oh, no. No, we're not. Elaine, something's come up. Now, you run along home.

ELAINE: Well, what's happened? If we're going to be married--

MORTIMER: Married?

ELAINE: Have you forgotten that not fifteen minutes ago you proposed to me?

MORTIMER: I did? Oh! Oh, yes. Well, as far as I know, that's still on. Now you run along home.

ELAINE: Listen, you can't propose to me one minute and throw me out of the house the next.

MORTIMER: Well, I'm not throwing you out of the house, darling. Will you get out of here?

SOUND: SCUFFLE AS HE PUSHES HER TOWARD THE DOOR

ELAINE: Don't push!

MORTIMER: Now, you get out and I'll call you in a few days.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

ELAINE: Mortimer? Mortimer!

SOUND: ELAINE PUSHED OUT, FRONT DOOR SHUTS

MORTIMER: Whew!

SOUND: PHONE RINGS ... RECEIVER UP

MORTIMER: (INTO PHONE) Hello, Al? -- What? George is in Bermuda? Oh, well, get somebody. Get the office boy. You know, the bright one. The one we don't like. -- All right then, get the printer. He knows what I write. Third machine from the left. -- Yeah, but, Al, he might turn out to be another John Chapman. -- Yeah, all right, all right.

SOUND: RECEIVER DOWN ... KITCHEN DOOR OPENS

MARTHA: Was that Elaine, dear?

MORTIMER: Aunt Martha, Aunt Abby, sit down.

ABBY: But, Mortimer--

MORTIMER: Sit down. There.

MARTHA: Well, dear?

MORTIMER: You can't do things like that. I don't know how to explain this to you, but it's not only against the law -- it's wrong! It's not a nice thing to do. People wouldn't understand.

MARTHA: (HUSHED) Abby, we shouldn't have told Mortimer!

MORTIMER: Well, what I mean is-- Well, this has developed into a very bad habit.

ABBY: Mortimer, we don't try to stop you from doing things you like to do. I don't see why you should interfere with us.

SOUND: PHONE RINGS ... RECEIVER UP

MORTIMER: (INTO PHONE) Hello, Al? -- Oh, all right. Well, all right; I'll see the first act and tear it to pieces. -- All right!

SOUND: RECEIVER DOWN

MORTIMER: Now, look, I've got to go to the theatre. But before I go will you promise me something?

MARTHA: Well, we'd have to know what it was first.

MORTIMER: Will you do this for me?

ABBY: What do you want us to do?

MORTIMER: Don't do anything. I mean, don't do anything. Don't let anyone in this house -- and leave Mr. Hoskins right where he is.

ABBY: Why?

MARTHA: We were planning on holding services before dinner.

MORTIMER: Services?

MARTHA: (A LITTLE INDIGNANT) Certainly. You don't think we'd bury Mr. Hoskins without a full Methodist service, do you? Why, he was a Methodist!

MORTIMER: Well, can't that wait till I get back?

ABBY: (PLEASED) Ohhhhh, then you could join us! Oh, you'll enjoy the service -- especially the hymns. (TO MARTHA) Remember, Martha, how beautifully Mortimer used to sing in the choir before his voice changed?

MORTIMER: And remember, you're not going to let anyone in this house while I'm gone. Have you got some paper?

ABBY: Here's some stationery. Will this do?

MORTIMER: Oh, that'll be fine. I can save time if I write my review on the way to the theatre.

MUSIC: BRIDGE ... WHICH TURNS SINISTER AND CONTINUES IN BG, OUT AT [X]

SOUND: THREE FOREBODING KNOCKS ON DOOR ... KNOB TURNS, FRONT DOOR SQUEAKS SLOWLY AND OMINOUSLY OPEN

JONATHAN: (SEPULCHRAL) Come in, Doctor.

EINSTEIN: I'm right behind you, Chonny.

SOUND: DOOR SQUEAKS SHUT

JONATHAN: Well! This is the home of my youth.

EINSTEIN: Ohhh.

JONATHAN: As a boy, I couldn't wait to escape from this place -- now I'm glad to escape back into it. [X]

EINSTEIN: Yah, Chonny, it's a fine hideout.

JONATHAN: The family must still live here. There's something so unmistakably Brewster about the Brewsters. (LIGHTLY) Huh! I hope there's fatted calf awaiting the return of the prodigal.

EINSTEIN: Yah, I'm hungry. Ooh! Look, Chonny, a drink! (CHUCKLES)

SOUND: CLINK! OF BOTTLE AND GLASS

EINSTEIN: Elderberry wine!

JONATHAN: A good omen.

SOUND: WINE POURED FROM BOTTLE INTO GLASSES

EINSTEIN: Here's to you, Chonny.

SOUND: KITCHEN DOOR OPENS

EINSTEIN: Who's that?

ABBY: Who are you? What are you doing here?

JONATHAN: Why, Aunt Abby! Aunt Martha! It's Jonathan.

MARTHA: You get out of here.

JONATHAN: But I'm Jonathan -- your nephew, Jonathan.

ABBY: Oh, no, you're not. You're nothing like Jonathan, so don't pretend you are! You just get out of here!

JONATHAN: But, Aunt Abby, I am Jonathan. And this is Dr. Einstein.

ABBY: And he's not Dr. Einstein either.

JONATHAN: Not Dr. Albert Einstein -- Dr. Herman Einstein.

MARTHA: (HUSHED, TO ABBY) His voice is like Jonathan's.

ABBY: (TO JONATHAN) Have you been in an accident?

JONATHAN: (GRIM) No! My face-- Dr. Einstein is responsible for that. He changes people's faces.

MARTHA: Abby? Abby, I've seen that face before. Oh, do you remember when we took the little Schultz boy to the movies and I was so frightened? It was that face!

JONATHAN: (LOW, FURIOUS) Aunt Martha--

EINSTEIN: Easy, Chonny easy! Now, don't worry, ladies. The last five years I give Chonny three new faces. This last one-- Well, I saw that picture, too, just before I operate, and -- (CHUCKLES) -- I was intoxicated.

JONATHAN: (INTENSE) You see, Doctor -- you see what you've done to me? Even my own family--!

EINSTEIN: (SOOTHING) Chonny, Chonny -- you're home -- these are your lovely aunts. They know you.

ABBY: Well, Jonathan, it's been a long time. Where have you been all these years?

JONATHAN: (RECOVERS HIS COMPOSURE) Oh, England, South Africa, Australia. And the last five years, Chicago. Dr. Einstein and I were in "business" there together.

ABBY: Oh, we were in Chicago for the World's Fair.

MARTHA: Yes, we found Chicago awfully warm.

EINSTEIN: Yah, it got hot for us, too.

JONATHAN: (CLEARS THROAT, TURNS ON CHARM) Well, it's wonderful to be in Brooklyn again. And you -- Abby, Martha! -- you don't look a day older. Just as I remembered you. Sweet, charming -- hospitable? And dear Teddy -- I remember him so high -- did he get into politics? You know, Doctor, my little brother was determined to become President.

EINSTEIN: Yah?

MARTHA: (WITH A NERVOUS CHUCKLE) Well, Jonathan, it's very nice to have seen you again.

JONATHAN: Bless you, Aunt Martha. It's good to be home again.

ABBY: (MOVING OFF) Well, Martha, we mustn't let what's on the stove boil over.

MARTHA: Oh, yes. Yes, of course. If you'll excuse us, Jonathan. (HOPEFUL) Unless you're in a hurry to go somewhere.

ABBY: (CALLS, FROM OFF) Martha!

MARTHA: (MOVING OFF) Oh, yes, I'm coming, Abby.

SOUND: KITCHEN DOOR CLOSES, OFF

EINSTEIN: Well, Chonny, where do we go from here? The police have pictures of that face. I've got to operate on you right away. We got to find some place for Mr. Spenalzo, too.

JONATHAN: Don't waste any worry on that rat.

EINSTEIN: But, Chonny, we got a hot stiff on our hands. You can't leave a dead body in the rumble seat. You shouldn't have killed him, Chonny. He's a nice fellow -- he gives us a lift -- and what happens?

JONATHAN: (BITTERLY) He said I looked like Boris Karloff! That's your work, Doctor. You did that to me!

EINSTEIN: Now, Chonny we find a place somewhere -- I fix you up quick!

JONATHAN: Tonight!

EINSTEIN: Chonny, I - I got to eat first. I'm hungry -- I'm weak.

SOUND: KITCHEN DOOR OPENS

ABBY: Jonathan, we're glad you remembered us and took the trouble to come in and say "Hello." But, um, you were never happy in this house and we were never happy while you were in it, so -- we've just come in to say goodbye.

JONATHAN: But, Aunt Abby, I promised Dr. Einstein that if ever we came to Brooklyn, I'd bring him here for one of Aunt Martha's home-cooked dinners.

EINSTEIN: Yah.

MARTHA: (CHUCKLES, FLATTERED)

ABBY: I'm sorry. I'm afraid there wouldn't be enough.

MARTHA: Oh, Abby, it's a pretty good-sized pot roast.

JONATHAN: (HOW LOVELY!) Pot roast!

MARTHA: I think the least we can do is--

JONATHAN: (QUICKLY, INSISTENT) Thank you, Aunt Martha! We'll stay to dinner.

ABBY: (NERVOUS CHUCKLE) Well, we'll - we'll hurry it along. And, Jonathan, if you want to freshen up, why don't you use the washroom in Grandfather's old laboratory?

JONATHAN: Huh? It that still there?

ABBY: Oh, yes. Come along, Martha -- we're all in a hurry.

SOUND: KITCHEN DOOR SHUTS AS MARTHA AND ABBY EXIT

EINSTEIN: Well, we get a meal anyway.

JONATHAN: (INSPIRED) Grandfather's laboratory!

EINSTEIN: Hm?

JONATHAN: Doctor, a perfect operating room.

EINSTEIN: Oh, too bad we can't use it.

JONATHAN: I'll handle this. Why, this house'll be our headquarters for years.

EINSTEIN: You mean--? (IMPRESSED) Oh, that would be beautiful, Chonny! This nice quiet house. And those aunts of yours -- what sweet ladies. I love

them already. I get the bags from the car.

JONATHAN: But! We must wait till we're invited.

EINSTEIN: And if they say no?

JONATHAN: (ARE YOU KIDDING?) Doctor -- two helpless old ladies?

EINSTEIN: Oh. (CHUCKLES, GENTLY) Ahh, it all comes true, a beautiful dream. It's so peaceful.

JONATHAN: (SLOW AND GENTLE) That's what makes this house so perfect for us -- it's so peaceful.

SOUND: BUGLE CALL! LOUD AND OFF-KEY

TEDDY: CHARGE!

SOUND: TEDDY'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS RUN UP THE CELLAR STAIRS

TEDDY: CHARGE!

MUSIC: CURTAIN

HOST: Richard Lockridge, co-author of "Mr. and Mrs. North," took a sporting view of "Arsenic and Old Lace" on that January first night in Ninety Forty-One. His own play was to open two nights later. But here he was, the drama critic of the New York Sun, bound to report truthfully on what he thought about "Arsenic." Lockridge wrote, "It is a noisy, preposterous, incoherent Joy. You wouldn't believe that homicidal mania could be such great fun." This was gallant of him -- and accurate, too. Now, our second act of "Arsenic and Old Lace" begins.

MUSIC: INTRODUCTION

SOUND: DISHES CLEARED AWAY FROM DINNER TABLE

JONATHAN: (PLEASED) Ohhh, Aunt Martha, you haven't lost any of your skill.

MARTHA: (TICKLED) Why, thank you, Jonathan.

ABBY: And now, I know you and Dr. Einstein both want to get where you're going.

JONATHAN: But, my dear aunts, I'm so full of that delicious dinner, I just can't move a muscle.

EINSTEIN: Yah, it's so nice here.

MARTHA: Well, after all, it's - it's very late--

SOUND: DOOR OPENS

TEDDY: I found it! I found it!

ABBY: Did you lose something, Teddy?

TEDDY: I found it! The story of my life -- my biography. (TO EINSTEIN) You

see? Here we are, both of us. "President Roosevelt and General Goethals at Culebra Cut." That's me, General, and that is you.

EINSTEIN: My, how I've changed.

TEDDY: Well, you see, that picture hasn't been taken yet. We haven't even started work on the Culebra Cut. General, we will both go to Panama now to inspect the locks.

ABBY: No, Teddy, not to Panama.

EINSTEIN: Yah, Panama's a long way off.

TEDDY: Nonsense, it's just down in the cellar.

JONATHAN: The cellar?

MARTHA: Yes, we let him dig the Panama Canal in the cellar.

TEDDY: General, as President of the United States, I demand that we inspect the locks immediately.

JONATHAN: (ANNOYED) Teddy! I think it's time you went to bed.

TEDDY: I beg your pardon. Who are you?

JONATHAN: I'm Woodrow Wilson. Go to bed.

TEDDY: (CLOSE EXAMINATION) No. You're not Wilson. But your face is familiar. Let me see. Ah. Perhaps I meet you later on my hunting trip to Africa. Yes! Yes, you look like someone I might meet in the jungle!

JONATHAN: (STIFFENS) Teddy--!

ABBY: (TO TEDDY) It's your brother, Jonathan, dear.

MARTHA: He's had his face changed.

TEDDY: Ohhhh. So that's it. A nature faker!

ABBY: And perhaps you had better go to bed, Teddy. Jonathan and his friend have to go to their hotel.

JONATHAN: (AN ORDER, TO EINSTEIN) General Goethals, inspect the canal.

EINSTEIN: But, Chonny--

JONATHAN: (INSISTS) Inspect the canal.

EINSTEIN: (TO TEDDY) All right, Mr. President. We go to Panama!

TEDDY: Bully! Bully!

SOUND: CELLAR DOOR OPENS

TEDDY: Follow me, General. Oop! I have to wear a sun helmet. It's down south, you know.

EINSTEIN: Of course. (TO THE OTHERS) Well -- bon voyage!

SOUND: THEY DESCEND CELLAR STAIRS ... CELLAR DOOR CLOSES

JONATHAN: Aunt Abby, I must correct your misapprehension. We have no hotel. We came directly here. This is my home.

ABBY: But, Jonathan, you can't stay here.

JONATHAN: Aunt Abby, you have a most distinguished guest in Dr. Einstein. I'm afraid you don't appreciate his skill. (CHUCKLES) In a few weeks, you'll see me looking like a very different Jonathan.

MARTHA: Oh, but he can't operate on you here.

JONATHAN: Oh, I forgot to tell you. We're turning Grandfather's laboratory into an operating room. We expect to be quite busy.

SOUND: CELLAR DOOR OPENS

EINSTEIN: (EXCITED) Hey! Hey, Chonny, down in the cellar--

JONATHAN: Dr. Einstein, my dear aunts have invited us to live with them.

EINSTEIN: Oh, you fixed it?

ABBY: Well, you're sleeping here tonight.

JONATHAN: Aunt Abby -- please get our room ready.

ABBY: But--

JONATHAN: Now.

ABBY: Well-- (MOVING OFF) Come along, Martha dear.

EINSTEIN: (BEAT, LOW, MERRILY) Chonny, when I go down in the cellar, what do you think I find?

JONATHAN: What?

EINSTEIN: The Panama Canal.

JONATHAN: (SCORNFUL) Ah, the Panama Canal.

EINSTEIN: It's a hole Teddy dug, six feet long and four feet wide.

JONATHAN: (STUNNED) Down there?

EINSTEIN: And it just fits Mr. Spenalzo. (CHUCKLES BEHIND--)

JONATHAN: (LAUGHS) Rather a good joke on my aunts, their living in a house with a body buried in the cellar. (CHUCKLES) Come on, we'll bring it in through the window.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

MARTHA: Poor dear Mr. Hoskins, he's been so patient in the window-seat.

ABBY: I think Teddy had better get Mr. Hoskins downstairs right away.

MARTHA: (ADAMANT) Abby, I will not invite Jonathan to the funeral services.

ABBY: Oh, no. We'll wait until they've gone to bed and then come down and hold the services.

SOUND: CELLAR DOOR OPENS

TEDDY: The General was very pleased. He says the Canal is just the right size. He says that--

ABBY: Teddy! Teddy, there's been another Yellow Fever victim.

TEDDY: Oh, dear me. This will be a shock to the General. But I'll have to tell him. Army regulations, you know.

ABBY: No, Teddy, we must keep it a secret.

MARTHA: Yes!

TEDDY: (HE LOVES THEM) A state secret?

ABBY: Yes, a state secret.

MARTHA: Promise?

TEDDY: (WHAT A SILLY REQUEST) You have the word of the President of the United States. Cross my heart and hope to die. (SPITS TWICE)

ABBY: Now, Teddy, you must take the poor man down to the Canal.

MARTHA: And we'll come down later and hold services.

TEDDY: You may announce that the President will say a few words. (LOW) Where is the poor devil?

MARTHA: He's in the window-seat.

TEDDY: Oh. Seems to be spreading. We've never had Yellow Fever there before.

SOUND: CREAK! OF WINDOW-SEAT LID LIFTED ... THEN TEDDY LIFTS BODY OUT AND CARRIES IT TO CELLAR DOOR BEHIND--

TEDDY: (WITH EFFORT) Up we go! He died for his country. Open the cellar door, Aunt Abby.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

SOUND: NOCTURNAL BACKGROUND (OWL HOOTING, ET CETERA)

EINSTEIN: (LOW) Chonny? Chonny? Are you out there?

JONATHAN: (LOW) Wait. I'll lift up Mr. Spenalzo.

EINSTEIN: Wait, I can't see good, Chonny. It's so dark.

SOUND: CRASH! OF EINSTEIN FALLING INTO THE OPEN WINDOW-SEAT

JONATHAN: (ALARMED) What happened?

EINSTEIN: (SLIGHTLY MUFFLED) Someone left the window-seat open. I fell in.

JONATHAN: Well, get out. And take Mr. Spenalzo.

SOUND: JONATHAN & EINSTEIN STRUGGLE WITH BODY DURING FOLLOWING--

EINSTEIN: Oops. I lost a leg.

JONATHAN: Here--

EINSTEIN: Chonny! Somebody's coming!

JONATHAN: Get him in the window-seat -- quick!

EINSTEIN: All right, all right.

SOUND: CREAK! OF WINDOW-SEAT LID LOWERED ... JONATHAN CLIMBS THROUGH WINDOW DURING FOLLOWING--

JONATHAN: Give me a hand in through the window.

EINSTEIN: Here, here. Are you in?

JONATHAN: Yes. Sssshhhhh!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

ELAINE: Miss Abby? (NO ANSWER) Miss Martha? (NO ANSWER) Miss Abby, it's so dark in here--

SOUND: ELAINE STUMBLES INTO JONATHAN

ELAINE: (GASPS)

JONATHAN: (SINISTER) Who are you?

ELAINE: (TERRIFIED) Elaine Harper; I live next door!

JONATHAN: Turn on the lights, Doctor.

EINSTEIN: Yah.

SOUND: LIGHT SWITCH

ELAINE: Who are you? Where are Miss Abby and Miss Martha?

JONATHAN: Perhaps we'd better introduce ourselves. This is Dr. Einstein.

ELAINE: Dr. Einstein? I suppose you're going to tell me you're Boris Kar--

JONATHAN: I'm Jonathan Brewster.

ELAINE: (NERVOUS) Oh, you're Jonathan?

JONATHAN: Oh, you've heard of me.

ELAINE: Just this afternoon. Well, I'll be running along home now.

JONATHAN: Oh, no. (TO EINSTEIN) I think she's dangerous. She's seen us.

EINSTEIN: (MUMBLES DISAGREEMENT) Let her go, Chonny.

JONATHAN: She saw us! Remember that!

SOUND: ELAINE STRUGGLES BEHIND--

ELAINE: Stay away from me! Take your hands off me!

SOUND: CELLAR DOOR OPENS AS TEDDY ENTERS

ELAINE: (DESPERATE) Oh, Teddy--!

TEDDY: (SIMPLY) It's going to be a private funeral.

ELAINE: Teddy, tell these men who I am! Please!

TEDDY: What? That's my daughter Alice!

ELAINE: Oh, no.

TEDDY: CHARGE!

SOUND: TEDDY'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS RUN UP THE STAIRS

JONATHAN: Doctor! Your handkerchief!

ELAINE: (STRUGGLES, SCREAMS) Oh, help! Help! (THEN MUFFLED BEHIND--)

JONATHAN: Get her down to the cellar! Quick!

EINSTEIN: (TO ELAINE) Right this way. Come, please.

ABBY: (OFF) What's going on down there? What are you doing?

JONATHAN: We caught a burglar; a sneak thief. Go back to your room.

SOUND: DOOR BELL RINGS

EINSTEIN: Look out, Chonny! She got away!

ELAINE: Let go of me!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

MORTIMER: Elaine?

ELAINE: Mortimer! Where have you been?

MORTIMER: At the Henry Miller Theatre. Who's this?

ABBY: This is your brother Jonathan. And this is Dr. Einstein.

MORTIMER: Well, I know this isn't a nightmare, but what is it?

JONATHAN: I've come back home, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Jonathan? Jona--? You always were a horror, but do you have to look like one?

JONATHAN: (THREATENING) Mortimer, have you forgotten the things I used to do to

you when we were boys? Remember the times you were tied to the bedpost, the needles under your fingernails?

MORTIMER: It is Jonathan. Oh, I remember. I remember you as the most vicious, venomous form of animal life I ever knew.

ABBY: Now don't you boys start quarreling again the minute you've seen each other.

MORTIMER: Jonathan, you're not wanted here; now get out!

JONATHAN: Well, I'm sleeping here tonight -- in your room!

EINSTEIN: Er, Chonny, maybe we better sleep down here, hm? On the - window-seat?

JONATHAN: Window-seat?

MORTIMER: Window-seat?

EINSTEIN: Yah, the window-seat.

MORTIMER: Oh, the window-seat! Well, maybe I'd better sleep down here.

JONATHAN: Oh, we wouldn't trouble you. We insist on sleeping down here. Doctor, we'll go up and get our bags. (MOVING OFF) You can have the room in a moment, Mortimer.

ELAINE: (BEAT, UPSET) Mortimer!

MORTIMER: What's the matter with you, dear?

ELAINE: I have almost been killed.

MORTIMER: You've almost been--? (REPROVING) Abby! Martha!

MARTHA: Oh, no! It was Jonathan.

ABBY: He mistook her for a sneak-thief. Would you like some coffee, dear?

MORTIMER: Oh, great idea. Coffee, sandwiches. I haven't had any dinner.

MARTHA: (MOVING OFF) Well, we'll get it ready. Come, Abby.

MORTIMER: (CALLS AFTER THEM) Uh, no wine.

ABBY: (OFF, REASSURING) No, no, dear.

MORTIMER: I'm sorry I'm so late, Elaine. But it's after twelve and I-- Twelve! Elaine, you've got to go home!

ELAINE: What?! Mortimer, I want to know where I stand. Do you love me?

MORTIMER: I love you very much, Elaine. I love you so much, I can't marry you.

ELAINE: Have you suddenly gone crazy?

MORTIMER: Oh, I don't think so, but it's just a matter of time. You see, insanity runs in my family. It practically gallops.

ELAINE: Now just because Teddy is a little--

MORTIMER: No, no, no -- it goes way back. The first Brewster, the one who came over on the Mayflower-- You know, in those days the Indians used to scalp the settlers? He used to scalp the Indians.

ELAINE: But, darling, this doesn't prove you're crazy. Well, look at your aunts -- they're Brewsters, aren't they? -- and the sanest, sweetest people I've ever known.

MORTIMER: Well, even they have their - peculiarities.

ELAINE: Mortimer, you're not even looking at me. Come away from that window-seat.

MORTIMER: (ABSENTLY) Yeah, right away, Elaine.

SOUND: CREAK! OF WINDOW-SEAT LID LIFTED

MORTIMER: (SHOCK) Ahhh!

SOUND: WINDOW-SEAT LID SLAMS SHUT

MORTIMER: (TO HIMSELF) Another one! (QUICKLY) Elaine, you've got to go. Something very important has just come up.

ELAINE: Up? From where? We're here alone together.

MORTIMER: Elaine, if you love me, will you get the devil out of here?!

ELAINE: (CHANGES TACTICS) Mortimer, will you kiss me good night?

MORTIMER: Why, of course, darling. Quickly.

ELAINE: (MAKES A BIG PRODUCTION OF THIS KISS) Mmmmmmmmmmm!

MORTIMER: (UNAFFECTED) Well, good night, dear, I'll call you in a day or two.

ELAINE: (INHALES SHARPLY, INSULTED) You--! You--! Critic!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS AS ELAINE EXITS

MORTIMER: Aunt Martha! Aunt Abby! Come in here!

ABBY: (APPROACHES) Yes, dear, what is it? Oh. Where's Elaine?

MORTIMER: You promised me-- Who is that in the window-seat?

ABBY: No one, dear.

MORTIMER: Look.

SOUND: SLOW CREAK! OF WINDOW-SEAT LID LIFTED

MORTIMER: And it is not Mr. Hoskins.

ABBY: (BEAT) Well, who can that be?

MORTIMER: Are you trying to tell me you've never seen that man before?

ABBY: I certainly am.

MORTIMER: Now, Aunt Abby, don't try to get out of this. That's another of your gentlemen!

ABBY: Mortimer, how can you say such a thing? That man is an impostor! And if he came here to be buried in our cellar he's mistaken.

MORTIMER: But, Aunt Abby, you put Mr. Hoskins in the window-seat. Now, this man couldn't have just gotten the idea from him! By the way, where's Mr. Hoskins?

ABBY: In Panama, waiting for the services, poor dear. We haven't had a minute with Jonathan in the house. Oh, dear. We always wanted to have a double funeral, but-- But I will not read services over a total stranger.

MORTIMER: A stranger! Aunt Abby, how can I believe you? There are twelve men down in the cellar and you admit you poisoned them.

ABBY: Yes, I did. But you don't think I'd stoop to telling a fib.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

MORTIMER: Jonathan, I want a word with you. Aunt Abby, Aunt Martha, I think Jonathan is leaving at once.

JONATHAN: Oh, no, Mortimer.

MORTIMER: Oh, yes! And you're taking your cold companion with you -- from the window-seat.

JONATHAN: The window-seat?!

MORTIMER: You're my brother and I'm going to give you a chance to get away -- and if you don't take it, I'm going to call the police.

JONATHAN: (A THREAT) Mortimer, remember -- what happened to Mr. Spenalzo can happen to you, too.

SOUND: KNOCK ON DOOR

ABBY: Oh, dear. (CALLS) Come in!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

ABBY: Why, Officer Brophy!

BROPHY: Hello, Miss Martha, Miss Abby. I saw your lights on and I thought there might be sickness in the family.

MORTIMER: Oh, come in. Come in, Officer. This is my brother Jonathan.

BROPHY: Oh--? Hey! He looks familiar. Ain't I seen him somewhere?

JONATHAN: I don't think so.

MORTIMER: Yes, it's too bad Jonathan can't stay, isn't it?

BROPHY: Well, if everything's all right--

MORTIMER: Ohhhh, don't-don't-don't go, Officer. Stay and have some coffee and a sandwich.

BROPHY: Well, if you say so.

MORTIMER: We'll all go into the kitchen while Jonathan collects his things. All his things. Come along, Officer.

BROPHY: (MOVING OFF) Yeah, sure. Say, Mr. Brewster, I been meaning to ask you about the play I been writin'--

SOUND: KITCHEN DOOR CLOSES

JONATHAN: Doctor, this affair between my brother and me has got to be settled.

EINSTEIN: Now, Chonny--

JONATHAN: We're going to sleep right here tonight.

EINSTEIN: With a cop in the kitchen and Mr. Spenalzo in the window-seat?

JONATHAN: That's all he's got on us! So we take Mr. Spenalzo down and we dump him in the bay, and come right back here. Hide the suitcases in the cellar. Go on!

EINSTEIN: (RELUCTANT) I think we should get out, Chonny.

SOUND: CELLAR DOOR OPENS

EINSTEIN: (BEAT) Chonny! Come quick!

JONATHAN: What is it?

EINSTEIN: That hole in the cellar! We got an ace in the hole!

MUSIC: BRIDGE

MORTIMER: Still here, Jonathan? I thought I told you--

JONATHAN: We're staying.

MORTIMER: You think I was bluffing? You think I won't tell Officer Brophy what's in the window-seat? (CALLS) Officer Brophy?!

JONATHAN: If you tell Brophy what's in the window-seat, I'll tell him what's in the cellar.

MORTIMER: The cellar?

JONATHAN: There's an elderly gentleman down there who seems to be very dead.

MORTIMER: What were you doing in the cellar?

EINSTEIN: Ah, what's he doing in the cellar?

BROPHY: (COMING ON) No, thank ye, ma'am. That's all the coffee I can drink.
(TO MORTIMER) Oh, Mr. Brewster, I'd like to tell you the plot of that play I'm writing--

MORTIMER: No, no, Brophy, no, you can't stay here. You've got to go and call in. The precinct--

BROPHY: Yeah, but I want to tell you about this here play--

MORTIMER: Well, we'll talk about it later. Some place, later.

BROPHY: All right. How 'bout the back room at Kelly's?

MORTIMER: Fine! Fine! I'll meet you at Kelly's. Later.

BROPHY: Great, Mr. Bewster. I'll be there. (MOVING OFF, JOVIAL) Unless I drop dead! (CHUCKLES)

MORTIMER: Yeah. (MIMICS HIS CHUCKLE)

MUSIC: BRIDGE

ABBY: Is that you, Mortimer?

JONATHAN: It's Jonathan, Aunt Abby. Mortimer went out.

ABBY: Where are you going?

JONATHAN: To Panama. To bury Mr. Spenalzo.

ABBY: But he can't stay in our cellar.

JONATHAN: There's a friend of Mortimer's downstairs waiting for him. He and Mr. Spenalzo will get along fine together. They're both dead.

MARTHA: (HUSHED, TO ABBY) They must mean Mr. Hoskins.

JONATHAN: (SURPRISED) You - you know about what's downstairs?

ABBY: Of course we do, and he's no friend of Mortimer's. He's one of our gentlemen.

JONATHAN: Your gentlemen?

ABBY: Besides, there's no room for Mr. Spenalzo. The cellar's crowded already.

JONATHAN: Crowded? With what?

ABBY: There are twelve graves down there now.

JONATHAN: Twelve graves?!

ABBY: That leaves very little room and we're going to need it.

JONATHAN: You - you mean you and Aunt Martha have murdered--?

ABBY: Murdered?! Certainly not. It's one of our charities. So you just take your Mr. Spenalzo out of there.

JONATHAN: (DISBELIEF) You've done that here in this house and - and you've buried them down there?

EINSTEIN: (ADMIRING) Chonny, we've been chased all over the world. They stay right here in Brooklyn and do just as good as you do.

JONATHAN: What?

EINSTEIN: You've got twelve and they've got twelve.

JONATHAN: (PROTESTS) I've got thirteen.

EINSTEIN: No, Chonny, twelve.

JONATHAN: Thirteen! There's Mr. Spenalzo.

EINSTEIN: Yah.

JONATHAN: Then the first one in London -- two in Johannesburg -- one in Sydney - - one in Melbourne -- two in San Francisco -- one in Phoenix--

EINSTEIN: Phoenix?

JONATHAN: (ANNOYED) The filling station!

EINSTEIN: (REMEMBERS) Oh, yah.

JONATHAN: The three in Chicago and the one in South Bend. That makes thirteen!

EINSTEIN: But you can't count the one in South Bend. He died of pneumonia.

JONATHAN: He wouldn't have got pneumonia if I hadn't shot him.

EINSTEIN: No, Chonny. You got twelve and they got twelve. (DELIGHTED) The old ladies are just as good as you are! (CHUCKLES)

JONATHAN: Oh, they are, are they? Well, that's easily taken care of. All I need is one more, that's all -- just one more.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS AND SHUTS

MORTIMER: Well, here I am!

MUSIC: BRIDGE

ABBY: Mortimer, where have you been?

MORTIMER: I've been over getting a doctor's signature on Teddy's papers.

MARTHA: Mortimer, what is the matter with you?

ABBY: Running around getting papers signed at a time like this!

MARTHA: Do you know what Jonathan is doing down there?

ABBY: He's putting Mr. Hoskins and Mr. Spenalzo in together.

MORTIMER: Well, let him. Is Teddy in his room?

MARTHA: Teddy won't be any help.

MORTIMER: Well, you had to go and tell Jonathan about those twelve graves. If I can make Teddy responsible for those, I can protect you, don't you see?

ABBY: No, I don't see. And we pay taxes to have the police protect us. We'll call them.

MORTIMER: Oh, but you can't. They'll find out about Mr. Hoskins and the other twelve gentlemen.

ABBY: Mortimer, I don't think the police would pry into our private affairs if we asked them not to.

MORTIMER: No, no, you can't do this. I won't let you.

ABBY: Well, if Jonathan and Mr. Spenalzo are not out of this house by morning, we're going to call the police.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

SOUND: SHOVEL PATS DOWN DIRT

EINSTEIN: (EXHALES, CHUCKLES) There! It's all done, Chonny. Mr. Hoskins and Mr. Spenalzo, all put away neat and tidy. We're all done.

JONATHAN: (GRIM) You're forgetting, Doctor. My brother Mortimer.

EINSTEIN: Now, now, Chonny, now-- Tonight? We do that tomorrow -- or the next day.

JONATHAN: No, tonight! Now!

EINSTEIN: No, Chonny, please -- I'm tired. And tomorrow I got to operate. Not tonight -- we go to bed, huh?

JONATHAN: Doctor -- it's going to be done tonight.

EINSTEIN: (RELUCTANTLY CONVINCED) Mmm, Chonny, I know dat look! Okay. But the quick way, huh? The quick twist, like in London. (MAKES A NOISE)

JONATHAN: (LOVINGLY) No, Doctor. This calls for something special. I think perhaps - the Melbourne method.

EINSTEIN: Chonny, no -- not that. Two hours! And when it was all over, the fellow in London was just as dead as the fellow in Melbourne.

JONATHAN: Get your instruments!

EINSTEIN: No, Chonny!

JONATHAN: Get them! We operate tonight, Doctor -- on brother Mortimer.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

TEDDY: My bugle! Mortimer, hand me my bugle.

MORTIMER: No, Mr. President. Just sign these papers.

TEDDY: I cannot sign any proclamation without consulting my cabinet.

MORTIMER: But this must be a secret.

TEDDY: A secret proclamation? How unusual.

MORTIMER: Japan mustn't know until it's signed.

TEDDY: Oh, Japan, eh? I'll sign it right away. I'll take it into the closet. A secret proclamation has to be signed in secret.

MORTIMER: But at once, Mr. President.

TEDDY: I'll have to put on my signing clothes. Interview's at an end!

MORTIMER: Thank you, Mr. President.

SOUND: CLOSET DOOR OPENS BEHIND--

MORTIMER: (TO TEDDY) Sign it right away-- (ABRUPTLY MUFFLED; HE'S BEEN GAGGED; TRIES TO SCREAM, BUT CAN'T)

JONATHAN: Close the door, Doctor.

SOUND: CLOSET DOOR CLOSSES ... MORTIMER DRAGGED ACROSS TO CHAIR, STRUGGLING MANFULLY, DURING FOLLOWING--

JONATHAN: Now, won't you sit down, Mortimer?

MORTIMER: (MURMURS DEFIANTLY THROUGH HIS GAG)

JONATHAN: Don't chew on the handkerchief. It's imported lace.

MORTIMER: (MURMURS)

JONATHAN: Doctor, the curtain cord!

EINSTEIN: Yah.

SOUND: JONATHAN TIES UP MORTIMER BEHIND--

JONATHAN: Mortimer, I've been away for twenty years, but every night, I've dreamed of you. In London, I dreamed of you and in Melbourne, I-- There! Tight and neat. (EXHALES) Now, Doctor, your instruments. We go to work.

MORTIMER: (MURMURS IN FEAR)

EINSTEIN: Please, please, Chonny. For me, the quick way!

JONATHAN: All ready for you, Doctor.

EINSTEIN: I gotta have a drink. I can't do this without a drink. That wine-- Remember this afternoon? Were did the old lady put--? (FINDS IT) Oh! Here!

SOUND: CLINK! OF BOTTLE

EINSTEIN: (SNIFFS) Elderberry wine. I split it with you. We both need a drink.

SOUND: POURS WINE INTO TWO GLASSES

JONATHAN: Very well, Doctor. We'll drink to Mortimer.

MORTIMER: (MURMURS A DESPERATE WARNING)

JONATHAN: (A SINISTER TOAST) To my dear dead brother.

SOUND: BUGLE CALL! LOUD AND OFF-KEY

EINSTEIN: Ach Gott!

SOUND: WINE GLASSES DROPPED, WINE SPILLED

TEDDY: (SHOUTS) Cabinet meeting! On the double!

SOUND: DOOR SLAMS OFF

JONATHAN: (FURIOUS) That idiot! He goes next!

EINSTEIN: No, not Teddy -- that's where I shtop. I draw the line at Teddy!

JONATHAN: Now we've got to work fast!

EINSTEIN: Yah, yah, the quick way, eh, Chonny?

JONATHAN: Yes, Doctor, one quick twist of the silk handkerchief.

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

BROPHY: Hey! Hey, the Colonel's gotta stop blowing that horn!

JONATHAN: (CALMLY) It's all right, Officer. We're taking the bugle away from him.

BROPHY: We promised the neighbors he wouldn't do that any more.

MORTIMER: (MURMURS DESPERATELY)

BROPHY: Oh, hey, Mr. Brewster! Why are you all tied up?

EINSTEIN: (THINKS FAST) He was explaining the play he saw tonight. That's what happened to the fella in the play.

BROPHY: Oh, yeah? Gee, they practically stole that from the second act of my play. I'll tell ya about it--

MORTIMER: (MURMURS DESPERATELY)

BROPHY: No, no, wait a minute. I'm gonna leave ya this way. This time, Mr. Brewster, you'll listen to the plot. (WITH RELISH) Well, it starts - it starts in me mother's dressing room where I was born only I ain't born yet--

MUSIC: DENOTES A BRIEF PASSAGE OF TIME FOR BROPHY TO TELL HIS STORY

BROPHY: (FINISHING THE PLOT) --then we get back to me mother. There she is,

lying unconscious in her lingerie (MISPRONOUNCED LIN-jer-ee) -- the fiend is standing over her with an ax! (EXHALES) There! How do you like it so far, huh, Doctor?

EINSTEIN: (IT CAN'T BE THAT BAD) Vell, it put Chonny to sleep.

BROPHY: Oh, that's just the second act. Now, the third act!

SOUND: KNOCK ON DOOR

EINSTEIN: (LOW) Chonny? Chonny, wake up. (BEAT, TO HIMSELF) I can't wake him!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR OPENS

ROONEY: What's going on in here?

EINSTEIN: (PANICS, URGENT, LOW) Chonny! Chonny! It's cops! Cops!

ROONEY: Brophy?

BROPHY: Oh, hiya, Lieutenant! This is Mortimer Brewster. He's going to help me write me play.

ROONEY: Did you have to tie him up to make him listen? The whole precinct is out looking for you. It's eight o'clock in the morning. Give me the phone and untie him.

SOUND: PHONE RECEIVER UP, THEN DIALING, BEHIND--

BROPHY: Gee, Mr. Brewster, I'll have to run through the third act quick.

ROONEY: (INTO PHONE) Hello, Captain? Brophy's here. You don't have to worry. -
- Hm?

JONATHAN: (YAWNS BROADLY, WAKING JUST IN TIME TO HEAR--)

ROONEY: (INTO PHONE) Yeah, we found him in the Brewster house so you can call off the big manhunt. You want us to bring him in?

JONATHAN: (TO HIMSELF) Manhunt? Oh, so I've been turned in, eh?

BROPHY: Aw, no, buddy, you've got us wrong.

JONATHAN: I suppose you and that stool-pigeon brother of mine will split the reward?

SOUND: RECEIVER DOWN

ROONEY: Reward?! Grab him, Brophy!

BROPHY: (GRABS JONATHAN) You stay still, mac!

JONATHAN: Now I'll do some turning in! There are thirteen bodies buried in our cellar!

BROPHY: Oh, yeah?

JONATHAN: I'll show you! You come on down to the cellar with me! Thirteen bodies!

ROONEY: Maybe you'd better go down, Joe.

BROPHY: With him? Not me. He looks like Boris Karloff.

JONATHAN: (GOES BERSERK) Aarrgghh!

SOUND: STRUGGLE AS JONATHAN ATTACKS BROPHY--

BROPHY: Get him off me, Rooney! Help me! Help me!

ROONEY: Get your head out of the way.

SOUND: THWOK! AS JONATHAN IS CLUBBED ON THE SKULL

JONATHAN: (LONG MOAN)

SOUND: THUD! AS JONATHAN'S BODY SLUMPS TO THE FLOOR

BROPHY: Whew! Well, what do you know about that? Imagine him claiming there was thirteen bodies buried in the cellar! Ha!

ROONEY: Get him out of here.

BROPHY: I'll have to drag him by the feet.

SOUND: JONATHAN'S BODY DRAGGED SLOWLY ACROSS THE FLOOR BEHIND--

BROPHY: (WITH EFFORT) I'll take him into the kitchen.

ROONEY: (SARDONIC) What a story. Ha! Thirteen bodies buried in the cellar.

TEDDY: Sire! There are thirteen bodies buried in the cellar!

ROONEY: Who are you?

TEDDY: I'm President Roosevelt.

ROONEY: (TOTAL DISBELIEF) What is this?

BROPHY: (HELPFULLY) He's the one that blows the bugle.

TEDDY: (SEES JONATHAN, DISMAYED) Oh, dear. Dear me. Brother Jonathan, the Yellow Fever victim.

BROPHY: (REASSURING) No, no, Colonel, he's a spy we caught in the White House.

ROONEY: (ANNOYED) Well, will you get him out of here?

SOUND: JONATHAN'S BODY DRAGGED OUT THROUGH THE KITCHEN DOOR

ROONEY: (TO MORTIMER) Now, you--

MORTIMER: (MURMURS DESPERATELY)

ROONEY: Didn't anybody untie you yet?

MORTIMER: (MURMURS "UH UH")

ROONEY: Here, I'll do it.

MORTIMER: (BEAT, EXHALES AS GAG COMES OFF) Now, Lieutenant, listen to me--

ROONEY: That crazy brother of yours has got to be put away! We don't want no more bugles blowing.

MORTIMER: Yes, yes, I know. I have the papers right here. Teddy's going to Happy Dale. Now, about those thirteen bodies--

ROONEY: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Can you imagine what would happen if that cock-eyed story got around? And now he's starting a Yellow Fever scare. It's lucky I didn't fall for that story. Ha! Thirteen bodies!

MUSIC: BRIDGE

WITHERSPOON: I beg your pardon. I'm Mr. Witherspoon of Happy Dale. I believe I am to pick up a gentleman.

MORTIMER: (CALLS) Oh, Teddy?

TEDDY: (APPROACHES) Just finished my cabinet meeting. Yes, Mortimer?

MORTIMER: Mr. President, I have very good news for you. Your term of office is over.

TEDDY: Ohhhh? Then I start on my hunting trip to Africa, don't I?
(SUSPICIOUS) Well -- who's this? Trying to get into the White House before I've moved out?

MORTIMER: Who, Teddy?

TEDDY: Taft!

MORTIMER: Oh, this isn't Mr. Taft, Teddy. This is Mr. Witherspoon. He's your guide for Africa.

TEDDY: (WON OVER) Oh, bully; bully, bully. Glad to meet you, sir. (CALLS) Aunt Martha? Aunt Abby? I'm on my way to Africa! Isn't that wonderful?! (LOW, TO WITHERSPOON) Oh. If the safari comes, tell them to wait. (LOUD) CHARGE!

SOUND: TEDDY'S POUNDING FOOTSTEPS RUN UP THE STAIRS ... UPSTAIRS DOOR SLAMS SHUT

MORTIMER: Aunt Abby, Aunt Martha, this is Mr. Witherspoon from Happy Dale. Teddy's going with him.

ABBY: No, he is not.

MARTHA: Not while we're alive.

MORTIMER: The police want him to go. He blew his bugle again.

ROONEY: That's right, ma'am.

ABBY: Well, if he goes, we're going with him.

MARTHA: Yes, we won't be separated from Teddy.

WITHERSPOON: But we can't take sane people at Happy Dale.

ROONEY: Look, will you settle this? There are still murders to be solved in Brooklyn.

MORTIMER: (TELL ME ABOUT IT) Yes! (RECOVERS) Oh, are there?

ROONEY: Teddy's got to go. With the story he's telling, we'd have to dig up the cellar. He says there are thirteen bodies buried down there.

ABBY: But there are thirteen bodies buried in our cellar.

ROONEY: (PLAYS ALONG) I'll take your word for it, lady. I'm a busy man. How 'bout it, Witherspoon?

WITHERSPOON: Well, they'd have to be committed.

MORTIMER: Well, Teddy committed himself. Can't they commit themselves? Can't they sign the papers?

WITHERSPOON: Certainly.

MARTHA: Oh, well, then -- if we can go with Teddy, we'll sign the papers. Where are they?

ABBY: Yes, where are they?

ROONEY: Sign 'em up, Witherspoon. I want to get this cleaned up.

SOUND: WITHERSPOON OPENS BRIEFCASE ... SHUFFLE OF PAPERS

WITHERSPOON: Oh, my. We've overlooked one thing. We're going to need the signature of a doctor.

MORTIMER: A doctor? Oh! Oh, oh, yes, a doctor. (CALLS) Dr. Einstein?!

EINSTEIN: (STAMMERS NERVOUSLY) Me?

MORTIMER: Come over here. We'd like you to sign some papers.

EINSTEIN: (RELUCTANT) Please, I must go.

MORTIMER: No, just come right over, Doctor. (CHUCKLES, TO THE OTHERS) At one time last night, I thought the Doctor was going to operate on me.

EINSTEIN: Oh, please, please--

MORTIMER: Yes, Doctor, just come right over here. Sign right here, Doctor.

EINSTEIN: Yes. Very well. I-- Here.

SOUND: SCRIBBLE! OF EINSTEIN'S SIGNATURE

EINSTEIN: There.

ABBY: Are you leaving us, Doctor?

EINSTEIN: I think I must go.

MARTHA: Oh, aren't you going to wait for Jonathan?

EINSTEIN: I don't think we're going to the same place.

WITHERSPOON: There, now. Everything's quite in order.

ABBY: Well, I'm almost relieved. I'm really looking forward to going. The neighborhood here has really run down so.

MUSIC: BRIDGE

ABBY: Well, Mortimer, we're all ready to go now. The house will be yours, and we want you to live in it.

MORTIMER: Oh, no. No, Aunt Abby. The house is too full of - of - of memories.

MARTHA: Oh, dear, but you'll need a house when you're married.

MORTIMER: I'm afraid I can't ever marry Elaine. Or anybody.

ABBY: Oh, there's something else, Mortimer. You signed our papers as next of kin.

MORTIMER: Of course. Why not?

MARTHA: But, you see, dear -- you're not really a Brewster.

MORTIMER: Not a Brewster?

ABBY: No, dear. Your mother was a widow when she came to us as a cook and you were born about three months afterward. But she was such a good cook that we didn't want to lose her so - brother married her.

MORTIMER: (STAMMERS) I'm not really a Brewster?

MARTHA: Now, don't feel badly about it, dear.

MORTIMER: (DOESN'T FEEL BADLY AT ALL) Oh, no. No.

ABBY: Oh, it's a tragedy, isn't it? Nobody knows who your father is.

MARTHA: He might be anybody!

MORTIMER: (THRILLED) You're right. You're right! Well, isn't it wonderful?! He might be anybody! I've got to tell Elaine! He might be anybody!

SOUND: KITCHEN DOOR OPENS

ROONEY: All right, Jonathan, come on.

JONATHAN: (SURLY) I'm coming, Lieutenant. (TO ABBY & MARTHA) Huh. Good-bye, Aunties. So this house is seeing the last of the Brewsters. Well, I can't better my record now, but neither can you! At least I have that satisfaction. The score stands even, twelve to twelve!

SOUND: FRONT DOOR SHUTS

MARTHA: Huh! Jonathan always was a mean boy. Never could stand to see anybody get ahead of him.

ABBY: I wish we could show him he isn't so smart!

WITHERSPOON: Well, ladies, perhaps we'd better be going.

ABBY: (BROADLY HINTING) Um, Martha?

MARTHA: Yes, Abby? (REALIZES) Oh! Oh, yes. Uh, er, Mr. Witherspoon? Does your family live with you at Happy Dale?

WITHERSPOON: I have no family.

ABBY: Oh, that must make it very lonely for you.

WITHERSPOON: I suppose it does.

ABBY: Well, er, Martha--?

MARTHA: Mm hm?

ABBY: Uh, Mr. Witherspoon, I think at least we should offer you a glass of elderberry wine.

WITHERSPOON: Elderberry wine? You grow your own elderberries?

MARTHA: No, but the cemetery's full of them.

SOUND: GLASS POURED BEHIND--

WITHERSPOON: Well, you don't see much elderberry wine nowadays. I thought I'd had my last glass of it.

ABBY: Ohhhhhh, no.

MARTHA: (WITH RELISH) Here it is.

WITHERSPOON: (A TOAST) Well, ladies, to a long life!

MUSIC: FOR A FINISH

ANNOUNCER: You have just heard the BEST PLAYS production of "Arsenic and Old Lace," starring Boris Karloff and Donald Cook. Now, here again is your host, drama critic John Chapman.

HOST: Joseph Kesselring never wrote a sequel to "Arsenic and Old Lace," so we don't know what happened to Mr. Witherspoon. Perhaps someday the author will get around to it. In the meantime, we will have another BEST PLAY for you next Sunday. It will be a rather strange and quite lovely piece, "Dark of the Moon," which Howard Richardson and William Berney made from the old hillbilly folk song about "Barbara Allen." Our star will be Alfred Drake. Let's all meet again next Sunday in the mountains called the Great Smokies. This is Chapman saying goodbye until then.

MUSIC: CLOSING THEME ... THEN BEHIND ANNOUNCER--

ANNOUNCER: "Arsenic and Old Lace" was transcribed and adapted for radio by Ernest Kinoy. Boris Karloff was Jonathan; Donald Cook was Mortimer; Evelyn Varden and Jean Adair appeared as Abby and Martha; Edgar Stehli as Dr. Einstein; Wendell Holmes as Teddy Brewster; Joan Tompkins as Elaine; Arthur Maitland as Mr. Witherspoon; Ted Osborne as Reverend Harper and Ed Latimer as Brophy. BEST PLAYS is an NBC production supervised by William Welch and directed by Edward King. This is Fred Collins speaking.

NBC ANNCR: Tonight, America's press conference -- it's MEET THE PRESS on NBC.

NBC ANNCR 2: At six-thirty.

MUSIC: NBC CHIMES

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