

Blood Money Murder

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BLOOD MONEY MURDER

Dimly lit room. Caesar is standing with Brutus, setting things up. There is a table with empty glasses. There's two chairs nearby, one covered by a blanket with what might be a body underneath.

Brutus is pouring drinks on a table while Caesar fidgets with a wooden box in his hands.

CAESAR

Brutus, I need you to watch this until the ritual begins.

Brutus steps away from the table to take the box from Caesar.

BRUTUS

Of course, sir.

Brutus places the box beneath the table and continues to pour drinks and generally set up.

CAESAR

Tonight is the night. We have waited so long. It has all aligned.

BRUTUS

(Barely Paying Attention)
Yes it has, sir.

Caesar makes his way to the covered chair.

CAESAR

Alchemy is a tricky thing, my friend. So many obstacles to overcome.

Caesar crouches to be face to face with the covered head.

CAESAR

Years of study. Lots of pain. More suffering than one can fathom.

Caesar rises to stand with a clap.

CAESAR

(Enthusiastic)
But you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs, they say!

BRUTUS

(Apathetically)
And you've broken quite a few, sir.

CAESAR

Let us not speak of the past, but only of the future! Tell me Brutus, who is on our guest list tonight?

BRUTUS

Well sir-

Brutus is cut off by a door buzzing.

BRUTUS

It would seem one of them has arrived.

Brutus makes way to and opens door.

CLEOPATRA

Oh! Brutus! My dear Brutus! How are you!?

Cleopatra pulls Brutus into a hug.

BRUTUS

Ah, Cleopatra. Always a pleasure.

CLEOPATRA

Please Brutus, we've been over this. Call me by my real name-

CAESAR

Shush! We agreed we would not use our true names within these hallowed halls.

CLEOPATRA

Yes, yes. You and your superstitions. And I suppose you named yourself Caesar because you consider yourself all powerful?

CAESAR

But of course.

Caesar embraces a reluctant Cleopatra.

BRUTUS

I was informed you'd be bringing a guest this evening?

CLEOPATRA

Yes! Yes! Basil, what are you just standing there for? Come in!

Basil enters the room, passing Brutus who shuts the door behind him

CAESAR

You seem nervous newcomer. Why the reluctance to enter?

BASIL

Didn't expect my date with someone as lovely as Ti-I mean, Cleopatra to end in a...What is this? An old church? Looks like an old church.

CAESAR

My friend, I like to think of it as a home for new beginnings!

BASIL

(Confused and Concerned)
Ooookay. Anyways! Is that wine!?

BRUTUS

Yes. A 1957 Bordeaux.

BASIL

A good year for wine! I'll have some!

Basil rushes over and picks up a glass.

BRUTUS

Actually it wasn't-And you're drinking it...Seems the night is starting early.

CAESAR

The more we party, the more fun the night will be! You know this!

BRUTUS

Awareness does not equal enjoyment.

CAESAR

Carpe Diem, Brutus!

The door buzzes again, summoning Brutus. Caesar joins Basil at the table.

Marie Antoinette enters and silently converses with Brutus.

CAESAR

So, you're Cleo's current flame, hm? Lucky guy!

BASIL

Yeah, she's pretty great.

CAESAR

So, how did you two meet?

BASIL

Funny story actually! I was-

Cleopatra steps in-between Caesar and Basil.

CLEOPATRA

Not telling that story. Caesar here is just playing with his prey.

BASIL

Prey...?

CLEOPATRA

It's how he sees anyone who might challenge him in any way.

BASIL

I-What?

Marie Antoinette places a hand on Basil's shoulder.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Caesar here lives up to his namesake. He's attracted to power and well, our lovely Cleopatra. Slip up and he might just take you out of the picture.

CAESAR

I do have the money for it!

Caesar and Marie Antoinette laugh together.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

(Through Laughter)
And no one would find the body!

CAESAR

(Coming down from laughter)
Marie Antoinette! Looking lovely as ever!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

You always did know how to charm a girl.

CAESAR

And you've always known how to make an entrance. Now, Brutus, who else are we waiting on?

BRUTUS

As I was trying to say before, our guest list-

Brutus is cut off by loud knocking this time instead of a buzz.

CAESAR

Well don't just stand there, get the door!

Brutus opens the door.

Boudica and Rasputin enter.

BOUDICA

This place remains filthy. You'd think with the money between all of us we'd be able to afford some form of, I don't know, cleaning service?

RASPUTIN

Why bother? We never leave it clean.

BOUDICA

That's the point of a cleaning service.

CAESAR

Boudica! Rasputin! So glad you both could join us!

BOUDICA

I feel like it's not my choice these days.

CAESAR

It's not!

There's a pause.

CAESAR

Now, Brutus, our guest list?

BRUTUS

Yes. As I was trying to say, tonight we have Lady Cleopatra and her own guest Basil.

Cleopatra waves to the others from the table.

BRUTUS

Lady Marie Antoinette.

Marie bows.

BRUTUS

Sir Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

Pleasure as always.

BRUTUS

And finally, Lady Boudica.

Boudica nods.

CAESAR

Lovely! That means everyone is here! Remember, tonight is a special night. So enjoy yourselves before our festivities! Mingle! Catch up! And remember, no real names. Anonymity is sacred.

BASIL

Soooo, did you and Caesar used to date?

CLEOPATRA

Lord no. Why ask such a thing?

BASIL

The names and all that. Didn't Caesar and Cleopatra like, hook up back in the day?

CLEOPATRA

Well, let me assure you that our Caesar and I have never dated. Names are just names.

BOUDICA

Ah, Cleopatra and a conversation that fails the Bechdel test. What's new?

CLEOPATRA

Clearly not your mastery of language. Bechdel involves a conversation between women. But the subtleties of language have never been your strength, have they?

BOUDICA

Hm. I guess you're right. Either way, another boytoy for the meat grinder I suppose. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go see about that cleaning crew.

Boudica reaches for a couple glasses of wine, but Basil hands her them. She goes to mingle with Caesar.

BOUDICA

Thank you.

BASIL

Why do I get the feeling me being here is an issue?

RASPUTIN

Nonsense lad! Cleo's companions are as much a part of the family as anyone else!

BASIL

Yeah...I feel, right at home.

Marie Antoinette approaches as Rasputin leaves taking a glass of wine.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Pay them no mind. They're of an...older generation. I think it's lovely that Cleo brings her romantic friends to our little get togethers.

BASIL

How often is that...?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Oh, who can say!? I lose track of the days. Too many parties. Too many names. Too many forgotten faces.

Marie Antoinette grabs a glass of wine. She raises it towards Basil.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

L'chaim!

BASIL

Your friends are certainly something.

CLEOPATRA

Friends is not the word I'd use. Could you smell it?

BASIL

Smell what?

CLEOPATRA

The stench of Caesar on her.

Brutus joins Cleopatra and Basil near the table. He reaches under the table and pulls out another bottle. He refills the glasses in Basil and Cleopatra's hands. He puts the bottle back beneath the table.

BRUTUS

Yes, well, Lady Antoinette has become a frequent guest at Sir Caesar's offices. I for one don't trust her to have his best interests at heart.

CLEOPATRA

Power attracts power.

CAESAR

Boudica! Rasputin! How goes things in your sector of the world?

BOUDICA

You know how it goes. Tech development is a lot of trial and error.

RASPUTIN

I for one see the constant ups and downs of progress as something to be excited about!

BOUDICA

Is that why you drag me along to these things every time?

CAESAR

No my dear. He does that because it is as Caesar commands. While all of you may not know who each other is, I do. And your continued attendance is required because I do not trust you not to share the details of what happens within these walls.

BOUDICA

Is that a threat...Lawrence?

CAESAR

Judging by your need to address me in such a way, I'd say you know it is...Helena.

RASPUTIN

Friends! Please! Let's calm down! There's no need to bicker and fight like we're some commoners! We're here tonight because Caesar here says he's finally cracked the code!

CAESAR

Yes! Tonight's the night!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

I hope it is! While I find your constant failure amusing, it's getting somewhat old.

CAESAR

My dear Marie, would I ever boast with nothing to back it up?

COLLECTIVELY (ASIDE FROM BASIL AND BRUTUS)

YES!

CAESAR

Ehem. Well...The time is almost upon us. Shall we finish preparations?

BASIL

This have anything to do with what's going?

Basil goes to uncover the body, but is promptly stopped by Caesar.

CAESAR

Best not spoil surprises.

BASIL

Come on! One little look under the blanket won't hurt, right?

CAESAR

Well...If you insist. Go ahead! Take a look!

BASIL

Well alright then!

Basil removes the blanket to reveal the body. He is shocked and horrified.

BASIL

Wh-What is that thing!?

CAESAR

That my friend, is what the more alchemically inclined would call a rebis! The perfect being!

BASIL

Doesn't look very perfect...

CAESAR

Not yet. Brutus? Rasputin?

Brutus and Rasputin grab Basil by the arms and begin dragging him towards the other chair.

BASIL

H-hey! Let go! What are you doing!?

RASPUTIN

He's a squirmer! Good lad! Don't go quietly!

BRUTUS

I'd recommend not struggling. It will make things a bit easier.

Rasputin and Brutus force Basil into the chair and tie him up.

BASIL

Alright guys! Real funny! Let me out of this!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Oh quit whining! It'll only hurt for like, a few seconds.

BOUDICA

He's one of the louder ones.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Well, we usually drugged them beforehand.

CAESAR

Our sacrifice being conscious will help the ritual. That I am certain of!

CLEOPATRA

You've been certain about a lot of things...

BASIL

Tini...Please...

Cleopatra looks away.

RASPUTIN

(Comforting)

Tough luck, lad.

BRUTUS

It's just about time, sir.

CAESAR

Yes! Yes! Bring me the blade, Brutus!

Brutus goes and retrieves the box from under the table. He presents it to Caesar who pulls a knife from it.

CAESAR

Beautiful.

BASIL

Let's calm down now! No reason to do anything rash!

CAESAR

Rash is the wrong word to use, cause trust me...This has been well thought out.

BASIL

W-Well! We're in a church! Are none of you religious!? What would the big G think!?

CAESAR

Poor, ignorant fool. There's only one Big G I believe in...

BASIL

Y-Yeah?

CAESAR

Green. Money. The lifeblood of the world. And after I sacrifice your life to make this rebis whole, then all money and power will be mi-ours.

BASIL

Y-You're sick! You'll get yours!

CAESAR

Maybe.

Caesar leans in near Basil.

CAESAR

For now though, I'd pick a god and pray that this won't be too painful.

Caesar stands.

CAESAR

Then again...There are no gods here. These walls just make up an empty tomb.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

(Giddy)

I love it when he gets serious.

CAESAR

My friends! This is our moment! On this night, the planets align and the powers converge! We will take what is ours! In this rebis, I shall summon a powerful diety! A diety that can grant us what we're owed! And do you remember what it is we are owed?

MARIE ANTOINETTE & RASPUTIN

The World!

CAESAR

Exactly! The world!

BASIL

You rich asshole...You've got money already! How much more could you need!?

CAESAR

You naive idiot. When it comes to money, there's never truly enough. Remember that. Or don't. Wherever you end up, I doubt it will matter.

Caesar raises the blade high.

CAESAR

Now! Let us begin!

Caesar begins to recite a prepared set of words.

CAESAR

Oh great powers above! The ancient ones! I call upon you today! To allow us to bask in your immortal and mortal glory! I have created this body for you, that by the
(MORE)

CAESAR (cont'd)

spilling of innocent blood, shall become whole and full for you to inhabit!

BASIL

I swear! When I get out of this!

CAESAR

His body is full of wine that has been blessed and filled with the finest of spices! He has been fed the finest of foods!

BASIL

I'm gonna feed you my fist!

RASPUTIN

Silence lad! You're interrupting!

CAESAR

Magnam me audi! (Hear me o great one!)

Lights flicker.

CAESAR

Vos evoco! Ut sis mortalis et immortalis! (I summon you forth! So that you may be mortal and immortal!)

Lights flicker and wind picks up.

CAESAR

Hoc ense in innocentes demergam ut nos iungas! (I shall plunge this blade into the innocent so that you may join us!)

Lights flicker once more and wind gets louder.

BOUDICA

Holy-It might actually work this time!

BRUTUS

These are powers that should not be messed with...

MARIE ANTOINETTE

(Excited)

Come now, Brutus! Aren't you excited to see what god we trap!?

BASIL

Dammit, someone please untie me! I'm begging!

CAESAR

Quo facto aditum ad te his rebis concedo! (With this action, I grant you access to this rebis!)

Caesar goes to move and the lights cut and so does the wind.

Basil screams and quickly goes silent.

The lights remain off, there is a pause with no sound.

RASPUTIN

Did it work?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Caesar?

CLEOPATRA

Brutus, the lights?

BRUTUS

Working on it. This place is not exactly up to code.

BOUDICA

Five bucks says he stabbed himself trying to stab the idiot.

CLEOPATRA

Who would be the idiot in that case?

BASIL

1. Not dead. 2. Not an idiot.

BRUTUS

Ah! Got it!

The lights come back on. Caesar is dead on the floor, leaning against the chair Basil is strapped down to.

BASIL

Ah! What the!?! Is he dead!?!?

BRUTUS

Oh dear.

Boudica laughs.

Marie Antoinette screams.

RASPUTIN

Allow me to check.

Rasputin checks a pulse.

RASPUTIN

No pulse. And his mouth smells of...Some type of venom.

BASIL

W-Why would you know what that smells like...?

RASPUTIN

Pharmaceuticals can be a hands on experience at times, my boy. It's what I did before joining the tech sector.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

My dear Caesar!

She runs over and holds him in her arms.

CLEOPATRA

Venom? So someone poisoned him?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Who would poison my love!?

BOUDICA

Eugh.

BRUTUS

Well...You all would. Would you not?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Never! I would never harm the love of my life!

CLEOPATRA

Oh please! Out of us all, you'd have the most to gain! You'd be that much closer to a Forbes article with the only person richer than you in the room gone, which would certainly be great for your business!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

As if you wouldn't kill him! He's always pining after you and trying to kill your boyfriends!

BOUDICA

So you just added jealousy to your motives.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Please, jealous is not what I do. Plus, you're forced to be here! He knew who you were and how to get to you! I heard you all talking! You threatened him!

RASPUTIN

Now! Now! Let's all calm down!

Marie Antoinette stands, leaving Caesar's body limp against Basil.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

You! You knew it was venom of some kind that poisoned him!
How could you have known that!?

RASPUTIN

I told this buffoon already!

BASIL

Hey!

RASPUTIN

When I worked in pharmaceuticals, I had a very hands on approach! I'm aware of what a venom might smell like when mixed with certain chemicals!

CLEOPATRA

Alright Project Orange, we get it. You committed ethics violations, but you didn't kill Caesar. Supposedly.

RASPUTIN

I resent that!

BRUTUS

All of you, might I recommend we lower the collective blood pressure in the room. You all have reasons, that's clear.

BOUDICA

Oh please. This coming from the guy who named himself Brutus to be the assistant to someone going by Caesar.

BRUTUS

Well, if you must know, he gave me that moniker. After naming himself Caesar.

RASPUTIN

The boy was terribly stupid when it came to irony.

BASIL

C-Can someone get his body away from me at least...

Brutus makes way to door and locks it.

BRUTUS

We are going to figure this out. No one leaves until we do.

BOUDICA

This is idiotic. Who even cares that he's dead!?

CLEOPATRA

No offense, but I'm not taking the fall for whoever did it. It's not exactly like we're all unknowns. His death being tied to one of us could ruin whoever gets stuck with the blame.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Which means, we must figure out who did it! So, confess now before we figure it out!

RASPUTIN

Your tune certainly has changed, lass. First it was for love, now it's to save yourself.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Can't a gal be multifaceted?

BASIL

You make me sick.

Marie Antoinette backhands Basil.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Quiet! We'll deal with you later, got that?

CLEOPATRA

No need to manhandle the guy.

BOUDICA

Oh! Now she cares!?

CLEOPATRA

What's that supposed to mean?

RASPUTIN

You did serve poor Basil here on a silver plater for sacrifice. Unless...You poisoned Caesar to save your love here?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Oh! How romantic!

BOUDICA

It's totally plausible.

CLEOPATRA

Oh please! I've helped that idiot sacrifice dozens! Why would this be any different?

BASIL

Dozens!?

BRUTUS

Well, changes in character are not exactly out of the question if one is in love.

Cleopatra is clearly nervous.

CLEOPATRA

I-I...Whatever.

BOUDICA

Hold on...The blade is missing.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

It is!?

BOUDICA

Don't act so surprised! I bet you took it while cradling your dear departed lover in your arms!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Why would I do that!?

BRUTUS

As said before, him being out of your way would certainly help business.

CLEOPATRA

So stealing the blade and finishing the ritual? What's a little more blood and a little more power?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

I-I can't believe this!

BASIL

I can. You're all so disgustingly power hungry!

BOUDICA

Okay, I'm sick of you yapping! I wanna see your face!

Boudica rips off Basil's mask. There's a gasp among the group.

BOUDICA

Jason Hawthorne!? Cleopatra brought a goddamned reporter!

RASPUTIN

And one with a bone to pick against our dead friend to boot.

BASIL

Yeah! He got me fired from The Times! But doesn't mean I'd kill him! I didn't even know I'd be seeing him tonight!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Explain yourself, Cleo!

CLEOPATRA

So what if he's a reporter? We've been dating for over a month. And he was perfect for the sacrifice.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Yes! But he's still a reporter! He could ruin us!

BRUTUS

Let us search him for the poison!

BASIL

I told you! I didn't do it you maniacs!

BOUDICA

Then you won't mind us searching you.

Boudica searches Basil while he struggles.

She pulls out a pill bottle.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Ah-ha! See! The bottle of poison!

BASIL

Those aren't mine!

BOUDICA

Doesn't matter. Just anxiety meds.

Boudica tosses the bottle aside.

RASPUTIN

Plus, it was some type of venom. It'd have been liquid.

CLEOPATRA

Are we forgetting that the blade is still missing? Maybe Rasputin over there has it. Marie Antoinette was certain she doesn't have it, and he also was near the body.

RASPUTIN

Why you! I would never resort to such actions! I'm a man of honor! Plus, Boudica handed Caesar a glass of wine!

BOUDICA

So much for honor! Basil gave me the glass!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

So it was the peasant!

BASIL

How could I have known which glass Boudica would give Caesar!? Huh!?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Oh please! You're a reporter! A master manipulator!

RASPUTIN

Give it up lad, you're caught!

BASIL

Suck an egg, old man!

RASPUTIN

Why you-!

Rasputin attacks Basil.

Brutus steps in.

A small struggle ensues and the blade drops from Rasputin's pocket.

BOUDICA

Honor my ass! He's got the blade!

BASIL

Ha! You're in for it now!

RASPUTIN

I-Uh...I took it before the killer could take it!

BRUTUS

Lying does not suit you, Sir Rasputin.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Fess up now, and maybe we'll make your obituary a nice one!

RASPUTIN

I didn't kill him! I swear!

CLEOPATRA

Then why do you have the blade!?

RASPUTIN

I wanted to finish the ritual! That's why!

BASIL

Oh you son of a...

RASPUTIN

I'm sick of you young ones doing damage and tearing down what my generation built! With a god at my fingertips, I could bring back how it was!

BASIL

You don't have to murder me to bust unions you war-born doofus!

RASPUTIN

One more word!

BRUTUS

Again! I ask we all lower the collective blood pressure!
We're just throwing out accusations with no form of actual
cohesion or thought!

BASIL

I for one hope you all rot.

RASPUTIN

That's it!

*Rasputin goes to attack Basil, but is stopped by
Cleopatra.*

CLEOPATRA

Killing him just adds another body to the room. Quit acting
like a child and give the blade to Brutus.

RASPUTIN

You care too much.

CLEOPATRA

Maybe you care too little.

*Rasputin hands the blade to Brutus, who returns it to
its box.*

BRUTUS

So, shall we discuss this like adults?

BOUDICA

Better than yelling at each other.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

I need a drink.

*Marie Antoinette pours herself a drink, pushes the
rebus body aside and sits where it sat.*

BASIL

You're gonna sit where that thing was?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

I'm tired and stressed. Shut up. You have the only other
chair, and I refuse to untie you.

BASIL

I ask again, could someone please move the body off of me?

RASPUTIN

Alright Brutus, you have the blade and you have us all calm.
What now?

BRUTUS

Now, we consult our friend tied to the chair.

BASIL

Wha-? Don't involve me!

BOUDICA

He is a reporter...Putting together facts and connecting
clues is what he does.

BASIL

I'm not an investigative reporter!

RASPUTIN

You wrote a take down piece on poor dead Caesar there.
Clearly you can compile facts at the very least, right lad?

BASIL

Maybe you should've stabbed me...You're all nuts. I want
out.

CLEOPATRA

Just play along. Don't be so difficult.

BASIL

You're the reason I almost got killed!

CLEOPATRA

Yeah, almost. You're still alive, aintcha?

There's a pause.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

That's cold, Cleo.

CLEOPATRA

Oh shut up! Let's just run through this!

BRUTUS

Basil?

BASIL

Fine! Alright, motives. Let's list 'em. Brutus, write em
down, yeah?

BRUTUS

Can do.

BASIL

Marie Antoinette, supposed lover to Caesar here.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Nothing supposed about it! I'd have married him!

BASIL

Yeah. Yeah. *Supposed Definite* lover of Caesar whose wealth was the only that outshined hers. His death would knock another big wig out of the billionaires club, making her spot on the leaderboard easy pickings. Which in turn would drive her business and wealth upwards on the charts.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

I've done a lot of things, but killing to get ahead isn't one.

BASIL

Based on your comment to me earlier, I doubt that.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Hey!

BASIL

Next up is Boudica.

BOUDICA

Lovely.

BASIL

She's been forced to be here against her own will. And it's clear Caesar knows how to get at her, considering the barely veiled threats the two exchanged earlier according to Marie.

BOUDICA

And you believe her?

BASIL

You ghouls just wanted me to compile what we know. So that's what I'm doing. Let's move on to Rasputin.

RASPUTIN

If we must.

BASIL

You know that venom killed Caesar. Experience with the type of poison just makes you all the more capable. Plus you stole the blade. You want power for yourself, just as Caesar did. Also, you tried to kill me. So my ballot is in your box, buddy.

RASPUTIN

And I can still kill you!

BASIL

Moving on! We have the help. Caesar's second. Brutus.

BRUTUS

Oh? I'm a suspect?

BASIL

Of course you are. You had access to all the wine.

BRUTUS

How would I have known which glass he would take? I simply place them. I do not distribute.

BASIL

True. But you're his confidant. You could've gotten to him at anytime before we all got here and none of us would know. And while your lovely Cleopatra might have said it earlier, she's wrong. Names aren't just names. They carry meaning. So, maybe you decided to live up to yours?

BRUTUS

And what if I did? You all drank the wine. Certainly you'd all be dead by now.

BOUDICA

What does that have to do with anything? Just a second ago you claimed you wouldn't know which glass he'd take?

BRUTUS

I didn't know. But if you weren't sure, wouldn't you just poison everyone?

RASPUTIN

You sly devil.

BRUTUS

Considering you're all still alive, not including Caesar of course, it means the wine clearly wasn't poisoned.

BASIL

Maybe. Or maybe we all drank different doses. But we still have one more of you left. Cleopatra.

CLEOPATRA

Oh?

BASIL

Maybe the others are right. Maybe you got sick of Caesar constantly sacrificing your boyfriends while also trying to romance you. Maybe I was the breaking point.

CLEOPATRA

You're certainly full of yourself.

BASIL

Simply stating what the others did. Or are you that much of a monster?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Oooo! That was venomous!

BOUDICA

Poor choice of words.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Perfect choice, actually.

BRUTUS

Yes, well, maybe Cleopatra here did have a change of heart. But you were wrong about there still being one more. Cause you yourself are also a suspect. Or did you forget?

BASIL

Please! You're just shifting blame!

RASPUTIN

The man did get you blackballed from all major publications. Men have killed for less.

BASIL

Men have killed for more.

There's a tenuous pause.

CLEOPATRA

We're getting nowhere with this.

BRUTUS

How about we all disperse and take a few moments to collect ourselves?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

What for?

BRUTUS

Calm minds might be what we need to solve this.

RASPUTIN

I...Could use a moment to collect myself. All this back and forth isn't good for my blood pressure.

BASIL

Someone care to untie me before you leave me sitting here with the body?

BRUTUS

When that clock there strikes the hour, we shall reconvene and discuss! To whoever did it, I'd recommend figuring out your last words before getting thrown behind bars. Or get a solid excuse together.

CLEOPATRA

This should be good.

The actors disperse among the audience.

The clock strikes the hour and the actors come back together.

BRUTUS

Now, how do we all feel? Calmer now?

BASIL

I'm still tied to this damned chair!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Oh quit whining writer boy. You'll be free of it soon.

RASPUTIN

He will?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Yes. Cause it's clear he's the culprit. Duh.

BOUDICA

I'm with Antoinette on this one. We all have motives, yeah. But he's the one who had his life ruined by Caesar.

Cleopatra walks over and picks the medicine bottle up off the ground and tosses it to Rasputin.

CLEOPATRA

Give em a look. Any chance they could've been used?

MARIE ANTOINETTE

So heartless. Throwing your own love into the fire like that.

CLEOPATRA

Bite me.

RASPUTIN

Hmmm. Let me see.

He opens the bottle and pours some pills into his hand.

RASPUTIN

Oh he most certainly could've used these. They're gels!
Simply fill em with a different liquid, crack it open and
put it in a drink. Boom. You've got your poison right there!
I think we've caught our culprit.

BRUTUS

Your luck just isn't good today, is it?

BASIL

I didn't do it! I told you before, the pills aren't mine!

BOUDICA

I say we untie him from the chair and string him up by his
feet.

RASPUTIN

That's rather dark. But it does sound fun.

MARIE ANTOINETTE

He'll pay for killing my Caesar! My love!

CLEOPATRA

Tough break, bud.

*Boudica, Marie and Rasputin approach Basil. Boudica
unties Basil, who manages to slip past Rasputin.*

*Basil grabs Marie, holding her close and approaching
the table. She is struggling.*

RASPUTIN

Let her go, lad.

BASIL

Yeah! Like I'd do that!

*Basil gets to the table with Marie and retrieves the
blade from the box.*

He holds it to her throat.

BASIL

I may not have killed Caesar, but hell, I'm willing to get
blood on my hands to get myself out of here!

BOUDICA

You're bluffing!

CLEOPATRA

This has taken a turn.

BRUTUS

Come now, let's not do anything rash.

BASIL

Like your pal Caesar said before, there's nothing rash about it. I've thought this through!

MARIE ANTOINETTE

Let me go! If you kill me, I'll haunt you forever! I swear!

BASIL

Too late to beg for your life.

Basil raises the blade, but before he can strike, Marie goes limp in his arms.

He looks shocked.

BASIL

W-What...?

BOUDICA

Is...Is she dead?

Basil feels for a pulse.

He drops her and leans back against the table.

Brutus takes the blade from his hand.

BASIL

You all saw! I didn't do it!

RASPUTIN

This night continues to get interesting. Either way, you're not leaving here tonight.

BRUTUS

Yes, well. Neither are you.

RASPUTIN

Hmm?

They all look to Brutus.

BRUTUS

Tick, tock. Tick, tock.

BOUDICA

I don't...

Boudica crumples to the floor.

RASPUTIN

What is going on!?

CLEOPATRA

What is, indeed?

BRUTUS

You see, Rasputin. Or, is it Earl? Which would you prefer? Either way, doesn't matter.

RASPUTIN

Call me by my name again...I dare you.

BRUTUS

Anyways, as I was saying. This was all planned. For months.

RASPUTIN

W-What?

BRUTUS

Unlike you, I'm not doing this for money or power. I found some semblance of humanity. Something you fools lost somewhere along the way. Yes, I have all the deaths of those poor innocents on my hands too. The difference is, I finally realized how far I'd fallen. And I refuse to fall any farther.

RASPUTIN

You're dead. You hear me? Dead!

BRUTUS

Maybe. Probably not.

RASPUTIN

Most definitely!

Rasputin attacks Brutus.

They struggle for a moment.

Brutus stabs Rasputin with the blade.

Rasputin falls to his knees.

BRUTUS

Like Cleopatra said earlier, maybe you care too little. And after all, I couldn't have done it without her help.

CLEOPATRA

Acting was always something I wanted to try. But I had a great coach to help me.

RASPUTIN

W-What?

BASIL

I did a lot of theatre when I was younger. And a chance to get the story of a lifetime and see the man who ruined me pay? Oh, I couldn't pass it up! Plus, she asked so nicely and I can't say no to my lovely wife.

CLEOPATRA

Married for over a year now. The revelation that I was helping sacrifice people put a bit of a strain on the marriage for a bit, but well, here we are!

RASPUTIN

So...You three did all this...? You killed them...?

BRUTUS

Oh, no. Killing them was me. You all drank poisoned wine. Though, I suspected you would be a little harder to poison cause what pharmaceutical maniac doesn't foster immunity for venoms? That's why you got the more hands on approach. Just to be sure.

RASPUTIN

B-But those two...

CLEOPATRA

The lovely Brutus here gave us some lovely anti-venom after you all had already taken your drinks. We'll probably be a bit sick in the bathroom later, but otherwise? Well, I see a bright future ahead!

BASIL

We've got a vacation booked for next week.

RASPUTIN

I hope you all burn...

BRUTUS

Oh, we probably will. But you maniacs won't take any more lives.

Rasputin slumps over.

There's silence for a moment.

BASIL

So, what's the plan now?

BRUTUS

You two leave. I'll deal with the mess.

CLEOPATRA

You sure?

BRUTUS

Yeah. It's what I do after all. Clean up messes.

Brutus leads Cleopatra and Basil to the door, unlocking it and letting them out.

BRUTUS

Sun is coming up. Lovely day.

BASIL

It is.

Basil exits.

CLEOPATRA

We did the right thing.

BRUTUS

But it took so many wrongs to do it.

CLEOPATRA

Maybe. Goodbye, Brutus.

Cleopatra exits after giving Brutus a kiss on the cheek.

BRUTUS

Yes. Goodbye.

Brutus shuts the door.

BRUTUS

Now, first thing's first.

Brutus makes his way to the table and places the blade inside the box. Closing it.

CAESAR

Are they gone?

BRUTUS

Would seem so.

Caesar rises to his feet, dusting himself off.

CAESAR

Good job playing the part of my murderer!

BRUTUS

Thank you, sir.

CAESAR

Let us clear the bodies and begin recruitment, yes?

BRUTUS

Are you sure we should continue, sir?

CAESAR

I wanted a new group Brutus. A new inner circle. But I could not see my beloved Cleo die. But I know she also would not approve. So we had to convince her that this was all done with.

BRUTUS

I suppose you're right about that, sir.

CAESAR

So, we shall continue our work anew. The world is a changing place Brutus, and who better to lead the change than I?

BRUTUS

No one, sir.

CAESAR

Exactly.

END