

The Hummer Radio Hour

Adapted by Elisha Crisanto

Based on "Lead Rings on the Merry-Go-Round" By Edward F. Emanuel

CHARACTERS

LANCELOT T. TERRIERRE: The host of the radio show. Also plays the roles of NICK, FATS, O'MALLEY (after DIMAGGIO dies)

ELSINORE: The musician.

CLARK DIMAGGIO: The director of the radio show. Also plays the role of O'MALLEY.

CLARENCE RARESHOT: The head sound effects technician. Also plays the roles of CHIEF and DEAN.

PETE: Sound effects technician.

REPETE: Sound effects technician.

MILO MICHELLE: A radio actor. Also plays the role of MATTOX.

MICK MUSSO: A radio actor. Also plays the roles of PARK-A-PONY PETE, LEO, SNAKE EYES, BENNY, ELEVENTH VICTIM, KIPNOS, and DOC.

ORGANA CREOLE: A radio actress. Also plays the roles of ROSIE, WOMAN, and NURSE.

VIRGINIA FLOYDOY: A radio actress. Also plays the roles of BAR GIRL, LORETTA and ELVIRA.

XAVIER BUSHMAN: A crazy fan.

JAVA BOY/GIRL: Serves coffee to everybody.

PRODUCTION TECHNIQUE

When the radio show is being performed, the lines that are addressed to the radio audience are in italics. When the action is on mic, the lines are in a normal font. When the actors finish a page of the script they let it fall to the floor. Eventually the radio studio is covered in a sea of white script pages

This is a frame narrative. There is the radio drama mystery that is taking place on the air and another mystery that is taking place in the studio. As the play progresses, both dramas fuse into one plot. The set is a single unit, just an open space that serves as the studio. There are three RCA 45 microphones in the middle of the space. There is a sound effect space with a gravel pit, a desk with a starter's pistol on it and odds and ends to create the sound effects. There is an "On The Air" sign hanging over the set which goes on and off depending whether the action is on the radio or not.

There is an organ that plays live music. Stabs, runs, transition music. It is not necessary to have an experienced musician at the organ. All the performer has to do is play stab chords.

Note: Cultural references may be updated at the director's discretion.

The Hummer Radio Hour

(The studio is dark, except for an "On The Air" sign glowing in red. All of the actors and SE techs are onstage. ELSINORE starts the organ music. LANCELOT T. TERRIERRE walks to the C mic. He hums a strange and mournful song and then speaks.)

LANCE. *I am the Hummer, and I know many things for I walk by night. Look closely at every dark corner ... murder lurks in the shadows ... death is waiting for ... you!*

(There is an organ run to a climax. The lights in the studio come on and the "On The Air" sign goes off. Everybody breaks into chatter. CLARK DIMAGGIO comes running onstage.)

DIMAGGIO. Network news and NFL scores, kids. I'll give you two minutes when we're coming back on the air.

LANCE. Dimaggio, I want a word with you and I mean now!

DIMAGGIO. In the booth, Terrierre, I gotta cue up a Soupy Sudsy commercial.

(DIMAGGIO and LANCE exit.)

RARESHOT. Hey, java jerk! How about some joe?

(The JAVA BOY moves slowly toward CLARENCE RARESHOT, PETE and REPETE.

MILO MICHELLE and MICK MUSSO begin an impromptu song.)

MILO & MUSSO. I got it! I got it! I got it! I forgot it! He got it, he forgot it! We forgot it! Forget it! He said it, he said it, just forget it, forget it!

ORGANA. Man, does that suck or what.

VIRGINIA. Sounds like Milo and Musso are doing their imitation of a flushing toilet.

ORGANA. As soon as they found out that this crummy series was canceled they decided to work up a duet and tour the county fair circuit. They open in Bakersfield next October. They say they're going to audition for Name That Tune. Hah! Some joke.

VIRGINIA. Man, what a break, just when I was starting to make some do-re-me in this racket!

(LANCE and DIMAGGIO come racing back.)

LANCE. Makeup! Makeup! We've got five minutes!

RARESHOT. Hey, Lance in the pants! This is radio, you don't need to look pretty!

LANCE. Says you!

RARESHOT. Yeah, says me and says Pete and Repete!

PETE & REPETE. You know what ahm sayin'?

ORGANA. What a player!

RARESHOT. You know it, baby!

VIRGINIA. A player? Listen, Clarence Rareshot, you ain't got the talent to be a doorstep!

RARESHOT. Yeah and Madonna kisses women!

VIRGINIA. And that goes for you too, Terrierre!

LANCE. Me? I don't kiss women!

(Everybody is shocked.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. No, I mean, I got more talent than a doorstep! And I'm going to save this show!

ORGANA. And just when I was about to pay off my implants, Lance has to screw up!

LANCE. It's not my fault!

VIRGINIA. Not your fault? Yeah, and Hulk Hogan wears pink pantyhose. Your last five scripts were bombs!

MILO & MUSSO. Kaboom!

LANCE. But let me explain! I've got a plan to ...

RARESHOT. Representing Sound Effects Union 341, me, Pete and Repete want to express our distinct disappointment in this whole mess!

PETE & REPETE. What he said!

(All except LANCE and DIMAGGIO make sounds of agreement.)

DIMAGGIO. Look kids, hey! Quiet down! Listen! It doesn't make any difference whether this show gets wasted tomorrow or not! We got a show to do today! And in five minutes! So get your butts in gear! Come on!

(Everybody begins scurrying around, getting ready for the show. Suddenly there is a loud pounding on the door to the studio. Everybody freezes.)

LANCE. That's what I've been trying to tell you. We're going to be locked in the studio!

(Suddenly VIRGINIA and ORGANA let out loud screams in front of the mics.)

LANCE *(cont'd)* Hey! What are you doing? Stop that! Don't you know what that does to these RCA 45s. These are the best vibrating ribbon mics in the business! Don't you know that there's a poor little metal ribbon vibrating so hard in there that it's about to splinter.

(The JAVA BOY looks up and adjusts his surgical mask that has fallen below his chin. LANCE strokes the mic as if it's a pet dog.)

RARESHOT. Forget the BS about the mics, Terrierre, and tell us what this "locked in" crap means!

LANCE. I've hired workmen to install a time lock on the metal doors to the studio and the doors won't open again until after midnight!

MILO. Boy this script must really stink if he has to lock us in to perform it.

(All but LANCE makes sounds of agreement with MILO.)

LANCE. No, kids, you've got it wrong! I'm not locking us in ... I'm locking the police out!

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Thank you, Elsinore.

DIMAGGIO. Listen here, Lance in the pants. If you don't open that door right now I'm going to smack you from here to info commercials.

(All urge DIMAGGIO to hit LANCE.)

RARESHOT. Me and the boys will not put up with this kind of employee abuse! We're calling a strike!

PETE. Did you forget, Terrierre, that the john is outside the studio!? What if I get a call from nature?

REPETE. Then you better hang up your cellphone, leaky, because I ain't working with a guy who can't hold his beer!

(General murmurs from everybody.)

LANCE. Will you all just shut up! I'm trying to break some important news to you and I haven't got much time!

ORGANA. You are such an idiot! OK, mister network anchor, what's your breaking news? Did Brian Jennings get caught telling the truth?

LANCE. Tonight, I have a new script! Throw away your old ones!

(Everybody is confused! LANCE runs to a cabinet, pulls out copies of a new script and starts to pass them out.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. After tonight, MTV will be beating down our door to interview us! Rush Limbaugh will be making jokes about us on his show! Oprah will be telling the world that we're perverts! And why? Why will all of this happen?

DIMAGGIO. Terrierre, you're cracked!

LANCE. Yes, cracked! But not me! I, Lancelot Terrierre, the voice of the Hummer have cracked the most vicious serial murder case in the history of San Francisco!

VIRGINIA. You don't mean ... ?

RARESHOT. He couldn't mean ... ?

MILO & MUSSO. Do you mean ... ?

LANCE. Yes! I have solved the case of the Lead Rings Murders!

(ELSINORE plays a musical stab and run with great flourish.

Everybody stares at LANCE in shock. LANCE beams.)

DIMAGGIO. Terrierre, I'm only going to say this once; call the cops and then unlock that door, right now!

(Everybody screams.)

LANCE runs over and puts his hands over his RCA mic. The cast and crew grab LANCE and drag him to the door. He struggles out of their hands and jumps up on a desk.)

LANCE. No! No! Don't you see? Don't you get it? Where's your imagination? We're gonna crack the case right here on the air! Tonight! Right in front of the public! Right in front of the police ...

DIMAGGIO. And right in front of the murderer!

(Everybody pauses.)

LANCE. That's right, Clark. Right in front of the murderer, yes! We'll tell that creep that we know who he is! I, Lancelot Terrierre will reveal his name to two hundred fifty million listeners!

DIMAGGIO. You're demented! We don't have two hundred and fifty million people listening to this crappola! The last ratings gave us an audience of slightly larger than a Peewee Herman fan club!

LANCE. Maybe that's true for now ... but wait until after the first commercial break when the world knows that we know what only the Lead Rings killer knows! They'll be throwing their TVs into garbage cans tuning in to us ... to us!

RARESHOT. You're cracked! The cops aren't going to let us get away with that!

LANCE. How're they going to stop us? We're locked in, on the tenth floor! Kids, just think of it. We're inventing "reality radio!" We'll all be famous!

(Everybody starts to think about it except DIMAGGIO.)

DIMAGGIO. This is nuts! I don't know about all you guys, but I don't want to go to jail for withholding evidence and obstruction of justice! And I certainly don't want to draw a target on my back for some whacked out serial killer who wants to waste witnesses! I say we do the last show as planned, say aloha to this radio gig, and all get back to good jobs on TV! I hear The Dating Game is looking for anybody with a death wish.

(Everybody agrees with DIMAGGIO.)

LANCE. So it has come to this. Gratitude? This is the thanks I get for lifting this motley crew of no-talents out of the dregs of daytime soap operas into the brilliant spotlight of network fame?

ORGANA. Here it comes folks, the big “remember what I’ve done for you” pitch.

LANCE. Listen to her! Organa Creole, you were nothing but an Ozzy Osbourne groupie, biting the heads off pigeons when I found you.

ORGANA. The feathers gave me sneezing fits.

LANCE. And you, Milo Michelle, what were you before I turned you into a star?

MILO. Don’t say it, Terrierre!

LANCE. A pooper scooper at the zoo, dreaming of working for Wild Kingdom!

MILO. Damn you, Terrierre!

LANCE. You, Virginia Floydoy ... a professional loser on Wheel of Fortune) And you, Rareshot, nothing but a Muppet stand in!

DIMAGGIO. Can it, Terrierre!

LANCE. And you, Clark Dimaggio, the unkindest cut of all, what were you? —directing info-commercials for do-it-yourself hair implants!

DIMAGGIO. Hey, that was a good gig! Plenty of people talked about buying!

LANCE. And now when I need you the most, you freeze me out! I can’t believe it!

DIMAGGIO. Believe it, Terrierre! We’re doing the original show! Come on everybody! Hustle, hustle! I gotta do a mic check before air time.

RARESHOT. Sound effects is still on strike!

DIMAGGIO. Sweet. We’ll do the show without you. Trust me, Rareshot, fingernails scraping a blackboard would sound better than you guys!

(DIMAGGIO exits. The actors get in front of their mics.)

LANCE. Look, Rareshot. I don’t feel that way. I think your work is the soul of the show! Please, do our new script!

RARESHOT. On strike!

PETE. Check!

REPETE. Double check.

MILO & MUSSO. Triple check!

LANCE. Coffee!

(The JAVA BOY pours a cup of coffee for LANCE and moves toward him.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. All right! I've appealed to your sense of professionalism ...

(The JAVA BOY gives the coffee to LANCE, who drinks it.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. I've appealed to your sense of loyalty. I've appealed to your sense of professionalism! Now I lay it on the line. Cash. For everyone of you greedy-guts who will do my new script I'll give you ...

(LANCE checks his wallet. RARESHOT is suddenly interested.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Uh ... ten bucks! What do you say?

DIMAGGIO *(off)*. Fifteen seconds.

LANCE. Come on! All right! All right! Twenty bucks! What do you say?

DIMAGGIO *(off)*. Five seconds.

LANCE. Twenty-five bucks!!!

DIMAGGIO *(off)*. Three ... two ... one ... network!

LANCE. Thirty bucks!

NETWORK VOICE *(off)*. It is eight fifty-nine Rolex Watch Time. And now for a late-breaking news story.

LANCE. Gang! Please! Forty bucks!

NETWORK VOICE *(off)*. President Comcordia Bestaro, while attending a state dinner at the White House honoring the current Superbowl Champions, the Houston Texans, was quoted as saying, "I've always been a big fan of Texas," whereupon her nose grew three inches longer.

LANCE. Please! I can't afford to pay you any more! You gotta do it.

(All of the actors and techs look at LANCE and shake their heads "no." LANCE goes to his knees.)

NETWORK VOICE *(off)*. And now for a program reminder.

LANCE. I'm begging you!

NETWORK VOICE *(off)*. Tomorrow at six p.m, on this radio network, it's the Bill O'Reilly Show\ Bill will be discussing the shocking revelation that many of the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders are high-school dropouts.

ORGANA. Hey, Virginia, there's a job you qualify for.

LANCE. What can I do to make you read the new script?

(Everybody looks at LANCE and holds out their hands.)

NETWORK VOICE *(off)*. And now stay tuned. Coming up next, another mysterious adventure starring Lancelot Terrierre as ... The Hummer.

(The studio goes dark and the "On The Air" sign blinks on. ELSINORE begins playing the theme. As it reaches the climax, LANCE gets off his knees.)

LANCE. OK! My final offer, fifty bucks and I'll have to hock my Galaxy seven!

(As the music finishes with a stunning chord, all of the cast and crew give LANCE the "OK" sign. They pick up his new script. With relief, he stands up and goes to his mic.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen and welcome to the ... Hummer.

(Organ stab and run.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. I am the Hummer. I know many things for I walk by night ...be careful... murder lurks around every corner!

(SFX: Gunshot.

ORGANA screams. RARESHOT cues PETE, who falls to the floor with an audible thump.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Around every corner! Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, do not under any circumstance leave your radio set. This show will depart from its usual format to bring you the most startling true life adventure ever heard on radio! Tonight, the American Mystery Network, Signal Gasoline and I, Lancelot Terrierre, have conspired to bring to you the greatest radio spectacular ever aired!

(Organ stab.)

LANCE (*cont'd*). Tonight, in a special script prepared by yours truly, Lancelot Terrierre, the Hummer, we will reveal to you, the national radio audience, the solution to the most infamous chain of serial murders in the history of police annals: *The Lead Ring Murders*.

(*Organ stab and run.*)

LANCE (*cont'd*). Yes, ladies and gentlemen, at the conclusion of tonight's show, you, the police and the unfortunate murdered victims will know the name of the *Lead Rings Murderer!*

(*Organ stab.*)

LANCE (*cont'd*). So settle back, turn up your radio and prepare for murder ...

(*Organ stab and run. SFX: Rain.*)

LANCE (*cont'd*). A dark heavy rain settles over the city as Lt. Max Mattox walks slowly down Fillmore street.

(*SFX: Feet walking on sidewalk.*)

LANCE (*cont'd*). Your mind is racing, Mattox ...

(*SFX: Running feet on sidewalk.*)

LANCE gives a quick look at RARESHOT, who realizes his mistakes and starts walking slowly again.

(*SFX: Slow walking.*)

LANCE (*cont'd*). Your mind is racing, Lt. Mattox. Your body is weary—you've had no sleep for three days.

(*MATTOX yawns.*)

LANCE (*cont'd*). *The Lead Rings Murderer* has claimed his tenth victim at *Play Land By The Beach*.

(*Organ stab.*)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. For nearly a year you've searched the city for this homicidal maniac but each time, Mattox, like the ever-present fog, he has dissolved, vanished. You can't sleep, you can't eat and you can't bathe. You can't do your laundry, people can't stand to be around you. The nightmare follows you wherever you go. Who is the Lead Rings Murderer and where will he strike next?

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. From an alley, a sinister shadow steps out. You freeze.

(SFX: Feet stop walking. Rain fades out.)

PETE. Got a light, buddy?

LANCE. You reach into the left pocket of your trench coat and pull out a box of matches.

(SFX: Sound of matches rattling in a box.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. You strike the match with your thumbnail.

(SFX: Lighting a match.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. As the match blazes, you gaze into the scarred face of a tortured wino. He's fumbling with the cellophane on a pack of cheap cigarettes.

(SFX: Fumbling with the cellophane.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Finally, with a trembling hand, he guides the lighted match to the end of the tobacco and inhales deeply.

PETE. You Lt. Meat Ax?

MATTOX. Mattox! Park-a-pony Pete?

PETE. On the nose, copper.

MATTOX. *Park-a-pony Pete had once been one of the top jockeys in the business. But about ten years ago he got caught dopin 'up a nag at Bay Meadows. Ever since he got out of the joint he's been homeless ... and worse.*

PETE. I got it all set up for you, Meat Ax.

LANCE *(loud whisper off mic)*. Mattox! Mattox! His name is Mattox!

PETE. Mattox! Mattox, your name is Mattox!

MATTOX. I know what my name is, OK? Now, what's the scam?

PETE. First, the mazoola.

MATTOX. Fifty.

PETE. Make it a honeybee!

MATTOX. *The little creep was holding me up for a hundred bucks! I had an urge to crush his jaw with a well-placed uppercut, but time and experience have taught me a couple of things. Never sock a sucker until he's spilled his guts. I decided to slip him the cash. He grinned a rotten toothy smile ...*

(MATTOX groans after reading the last part and looks at LANCE, who is in love with his own words.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *And shuffled out into the rain. I followed.*

(Organ stab and run.)

LANCE. *And so, Lt. Mattox, perhaps a lead, perhaps a clue that will break the case wide open. And while you are following this outcast of society down a lonely street through the city's canyons of stone and concrete, across town, in a dingy apartment, a crouching figure sits and stares out at the rain through a greasy smudged kitchen window. In his right hand, a round hard object is squeezed over and over. The round hard lead ring from a ... merry-go-round!*

(Musical stab.)

MATTOX. *We turned down a sleazy alley off Eddy Street. From somewhere, a garbage can fell to the slime covered sidewalk ...*

(SFX: Can falling on concrete.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *A mangy tomcat screamed his challenge to the concrete jungle.*

(SFX: Screaming cat [sounding more like meow].)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *At last, Pete approached a door at the end of the alley. A dim flickering light proclaimed in a muted sign, "Louie's Lowball Parlor." Pete shoved the door open.*

(SFX: Door opening. Immediately the sound of a Frank Sinatra song is heard.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *A blaze of yellowish light, clouds of stale smoke and the smell of cheap booze rushed out at us. From a tinny stereo the lonely wail of a Frank Sinatra love song slopped over pairs of slowly belly-rubbing dancing bar girls and sailors on leave ... America's finest looking for trouble at twenty bucks a dance. As I stepped into the dive I could see that the place was packed with a variety of citizens.*

(The entire cast mumbles away from their mics to give the impression of a crowd.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *They were lined up at the bar, seated at lowball poker tables or talking quietly in the dark musty comers of this refuge for the scum of the city. Pete immediately rushed to the bar and bought a bottle of cheap booze; poor lonely soul seeking salvation at the bottom of a bottle.*

BAR GIRL. Hey toots, wanna have a good time?

MATTOX. *A seedy woman, reeking of cheap booze and lilac powder, sidled up next to me and slipped her bony fingers inside my breast pocket in an effort to seem friendly but what I needed now was info ... and plenty of it.*

BAR GIRL. Got enough for a good time? I can sure show you a good time, honey.

MATTOX. Get lost!

BAR GIRL. Come on, sweetie, let a gal earn a living!

(SFX: Punch in the face. BAR GIRL screams. SFX: Body hitting the floor.)

MATTOX. *With a good right cross, I put her down like like a baby after a long day. Suddenly I noticed I was the center of attention. And somehow, I didn't think these citizens were concerned social workers.*

PETE. Come on, stupid! You want to start a riot in here?

MATTOX. *I reached behind my hip and fingered my eight-shot enforcer ... just in case. I always come prepared. Pete hustled me over to a door behind the bar. He knocked twice, which loosened large scab like pieces of paint that slid lazily to the floor.*

PETE. Hey, Rosie, open the door.

MATTOX. *The door opened a crack.*

ROSIE. Make tracks, stinky.

PETE. I got a pal here who needs to talk to Nick.

MATTOX. *A hard looking broad with bleached blond hair gave me the once over..*

ROSIE. Hey, Nick you expecting trouble?

NICK *(off mic)*. Yeah, show the jerks in ...

MATTOX. *The broad opened the door wider ...*

(SFX: Door opening.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *And I muscled my way into a dark room only lit by a naked bulb hanging from an exposed power cord. It gave off a kind of a yellowish glow illuminating five notorious citizens crouched around a green felt card table. As soon as I walked into the room one of the thugs fingered his phone and was about to punch a button ...*

(SFX: Door slamming.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. Hold it, slime ball. Punch that number and you'll have more trouble than a bull in a china shop!

NICK. Hey, what ya talking? Snake Eyes here was just probably puttin' in a call to his dearly beloved mama, right, Snake?

SNAKE EYES. Huh?

NICK. We's just havin' a friendly little game of lowball.

(SFX: Shuffling cards.)

NICK (*cont'd*). There ain't no need for rough stuff, right?

MATTOX. *Through Pete, I had arranged to meet with a citizen named Nickthe Pick—a former orthodontist ... gone bad.*

ROSIE. Boy, some Miss Manners you've got, Nickie. Why don't you introduce me. He's got a fascinating ... trench coat. (*Giggles.*)

MATTOX. *The sleazy broad giggled and three cockroaches came out of the trash looking for mama.*

Mattox, Max Mattox, SFPD.

ROSIE. Gosh, that's a funny way to spell Mattox.

NICK. Sit down, Meat Ax.

LANCE (*off mic*). What? Why do you keep calling him Meat Ax?

NICK (*off mic*). 'Cause that's the way you typed it, Terrierre! Look!

(*ROSIE and MATTOX are confused by what's going on off mic. Finally ROSIE jumps in.*)

ROSIE. Let me introduce you to the boys, uh Fats Goldberg from Cleveland.

(*FATS grunts.*)

ROSIE (*cont'd*). Snake Eyes Willie from Detroit.

(*SNAKE EYES grunts.*)

ROSIE (*cont'd*). Benny the Embalmer from Atlanta.

BENNY. Keep me in mind if you get wasted.

ROSIE. And Leo the Limey from Boston.

LEO. Right mate.

MATTOX. *Five of the most notorious felons in the country. Putting these thugs on ice would lower the national crime rate enough to get me elected president... but I had bigger fish to fry.*

NICK. OK, OK, so we're all nice and friendly. What's on your mind, fuzz? And by the way, you got nice teeth.

MATTOX. Thanks. I try to floss after every meal.

NICK. It shows.

MATTOX. The Lead Rings Murderer, I want him.

NICK. So go ask Santa.

(All of the thugs chuckle.)

MATTOX. Look, Nick, I ain't fooling around. I want the creep.

NICK. So, what makes you think I'm gonna help you?

MATTOX. *I was beginning to get mad. Pretty soon Mr. Brain Dead here was gonna get in big trouble and that's spelled M-a-t-t-o-x and that spells Meat Ax ... uh, Mattox!*

NICK. And besides, his MO ain't professional. You know? Planting them stupid merry-go-round rings on all of the stiffs. I mean it ain't classy.

MATTOX. Nick! You know every hit that goes down on the west coast Now, I want to know about the Lead Rings Murderer!

NICK. You deaf? I just told you, I know nuttin'!

MATTOX. *All of a sudden, I lost my temper, big time! I reached down, grabbed the table and flipped it over.*

(SFX: Table crashing down and poker chips hitting the floor.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *Quick as a snake's tongue I pulled out my heater, cocked it and shoved it right into Nick's face!*

(Organ stab.)

NICK. Hey, ya creep. Dis is police brutality. I'm gonna sue!

MATTOX. Sing! Sing like a birdie you rat!

NICK. It's gotta be some independent! I don't know! Some loony!

MATTOX. You could be the killer, Nick. You could be the killer!

NICK. What??? Me??? All of them murders took place at Play Land At The Beach! Do I look like the kinda guy who would snuff hard targets at Play Land?

MATTOX. Ten murders, Nick. One choked to death in the video arcade. One stabbed to death in the guts and found strapped to the last seat in the roller coaster. One gunned down in the passport photo booth. One found with his wrists slashed in the skee-ball alley! One drowned in the pink lemonade concession stand. One clubbed to death with a stuffed doll in the image of Simon Cowell. One squashed to death by a bumper car. One goosed to death on an electric pogo stick. And one found with his mouth strapped to the cotton candy machine. I tell you it was an ugly and sticky sight! Ten murders, Nick, who did them?!

NICK. Excuse me, Einstein, but that was only nine murders!

MATTOX. *I stared at Nick, the fingers tightening around the trigger of my thirty-eight caliber persuader ... I pulled back the hammer and started to ...*

(Organ stab.)

LANCE. *But you won't kill him, Lt. Mattox. That won't solve your problem. These gangsters are just as dumb as you are,*

(MATTOX looks at LANCE and rolls his eyes then gets back into character.)

MATTOX. *I relaxed my grip and let the creep up.*

NICK. Thanks for the fun and games, big shot. Drop in any time and don't forget to rinse with Plax.

MATTOX. *Nick got up and began shuffling the cards again.*

(SFX: Cards shuffling.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I started to vacate the premises.*

PETE. Hey, Mattox! What about a tip. Didn't I set you up, right?

MATTOX. *I looked hard at Pete. He smiled at me ... a broken tooth, nicotine stained, whiskey soaked smile.* A tip, OK loser, here's my tip. Quit smoking; it's ruining your good looks.

PETE. That's the tip? You're a cheap SOB, Mattox, and one day you'll get yours. That's right, Mattox! And I'll be prayin' for it! Yaw hear me, Mattox! And its gonna come sooner than you ...

MATTOX. I left Pete squawking like a crazed parrot. I made my way back into the bar.

(SFX: Bar music, chatter, feet and then yelling)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *Suddenly the broad I had decked earlier came running up to me followed by three goons.*

BAR GIRL. That's the bum, Artie! He clipped me right here on the beezzer for no good reason at all.

MATTOX. *And before I knew what hit me, three guys began beating the crap out of me!*

(SFX: Somebody getting beat up.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I looked up just as the broad was swinging a glass bottle at my head!*

(SFX: Bottle smashing.

Organ stab turns into confused and dizzy sounds.)

MATTOX. *When I came to, I was lying in the gutter on Eddy Street. A trickle of sewer water was flowing into the cuts on my bruised and bleeding face. In the gutter. If I didn't get the Lead Rings Murderer soon, I'd be watching my career run down that same gutter.*

(Organ stab and run.)

LANCE. *Three a.m. in the city. The fog is starting to roll in off the bay. The city is quiet. Play Land At The Beach is empty ... almost.*

(Organ stab.)

ELEVENTH VICTIM. *No, stay away! What's the matter with you? Put down that crowbar! Put it down!*

Listen, I'll give you anything! Anything! No! No! I'm just the night watchman, that's all! No! No!

LANCE. *It will do him no good to beg, the Lead Rings Murderer is a relentless avenger.*

ELEVENTH VICTIM. *Put down that knife! Noooooooooooo!*

(The ELEVENTH VICTIM'S scream fades into a woman's scream. Lots of low voices off mic.)

MATTOX. *Hold those meatballs back! Keep 'em back, they're messing up the crime scene.*

WOMAN. *It was awful! Terrible! I think I'm going to get sick to my stomach!*

(SFX: Gagging.)

LANCE (*off mic*). Hey! What's going on? That's not in the script!

(*RARESHOT shrugs.*)

MATTOX. Take it easy lady, I just had these shoes shined.

WOMAN. Does he have to lie there with that bloody sheet over him?

MATTOX. We've got the meat wagon coming.

WOMAN. What???

MATTOX. I mean the ambulance, we've got the ambulance coming. *The skirt was hysterical. She couldn't stop crying.* Come on lady, get a hold of yourself.

WOMAN. I just want to take my little girl home, that's all! All those people are making me nervous!

MATTOX. *The eleventh murder had drawn a good size crowd. The usual group of vampires getting their lacks by feeding off the misery of others: news hounds, rubberneckers, high-school math teachers.*

Come on, lady, I ain't got all day.

WOMAN. Well, it was early, maybe ten o'clock and me and my little Loretta started to get on the ferris wheel.

MATTOX. *The lady's brat was sitting on an orange crate cracking her knuckles.*

(*PETE tries to crack his knuckles on mic but can't do it. LANCE is having a fit, MATTOX and other actors are starting to panic. Finally, REPETE goes into the fruit and nut bowl, takes out a walnut and crunches it with a nutcracker. MATTOX is in shock, but finally recovers.*)

MATTOX (*cont'd*). Uh ... she had big knuckles. Go on, lady.

WOMAN. Well, we decided to ride in a blue car so we bought the tickets. It cost five dollars a ride, don't you think that is really expensive just to go

MATTOX. Yeah, yeah, yeah, expensive then what happened?

WOMAN. We climbed into the blue car ...

LORETTA. I want a hot dog! Mommy! I'm hungry!

WOMAN. In a minute, sweetheart.

LORETTA. No not in a minute, now!!!

WOMAN. Keep your trap shut, Loretta sweetie, mommy's talking to the nice policeman.

LORETTA. He looks like a bum!

WOMAN. And we started to go around and 'round and all of a sudden I felt something wet on the top of my head!

(LORETTA giggles.)

MATTOX. What?

WOMAN. Wet! You know, like spit. I thought it was some rude boys being nasty. Sometimes Loretta brings that out in them. So I yelled up to somebody in a yellow car, "Hey, you kids, stop being rude!" And then it happened! It was awful! Terrible! I think I'm gonna be sick again!

LORETTA. When mommy turned her face up to cuss out the nasty boys they spit again. Only it wasn't spit, it was a big red drop of blood and it hit mommy right in the face!!

WOMAN. Oh no!

(SFX: Body falling.)

LORETTA. And that's not all but I ain't talking until I get a hot dog!

(Murmurs and general noise.)

MATTOX. *The dame passed out on cue as the little brat was spilling her guts to reporters for a com dog!*

(Organ stab and run.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *We took the stiff down to the county morgue where ol' Doc Guilespe started giving the dearly departed a workup. I was praying as hard as I could that the old butcher would come up with some answers.*

DOC. Hmm, let me see ... a male? ... yes male ... about thirty-five years of age ... suffering from an advanced case of... death OK. Let's get started.

MATTOX. *The doc grabbed a mean looking saw and got to work.*

(SFX: PETE picks up an electric shaver and begins running it next to the mic.)

DOC. Oh yeah ... hm. Hm. Interesting. Oh my.

MATTOX. *The doc turned off his saw and began rummaging around the guy's throat.*

(PETE is busy miming a saw cutting through a body with the electric razor and doesn't notice MATTOX's instructions.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I said, "The doc turned off his saw." (Off mic, to PETE.)* Turn it off!

(PETE realizes his mistake and turns it off.)

DOC. Look! A lead ring. You got a Lead Ring Murder here, Mattox, that's for sure. Say, could you hand me that?

MATTOX. What do you want, doc? The knife, the microscope?

DOC. No, the mayonnaise. And give me that sack too, it's my lunch. I like to eat when I work. Murders always give me an urge for bologna sandwiches. Suicides provoke a yen for chocolate kisses.

MATTOX. Doc! How did the stiff buy it?

DOC. Well look for yourself. It's pretty obvious.

MATTOX. *The doc rolled the chump over. There in the back of his head was a crowbar sticking out of the back of his ear. Any clues who might have done it?*

DOC *(chewing)*. Nope. Just a lead ring and a crowbar. You can check them for fingerprints but it's my guess you won't find a thing ... oops ... except for a little bologna ... sorry about that.

MATTOX. *I stood there in the dark, cold morgue. There was the smell of formaldehyde mixed with mayonnaise. A shaft of gray light filtered its way through the dusty bottles of chemicals lining the walls. I watched the doc continue the autopsy and his sandwich. Sometimes I wonder why I'm a cop!*

(Organ stab and run.)

LANCE. *Slowly, Lt. Mattox, you reach over to the operating table and pick up the the small round symbol of death ... the lead ring, the valueless reward for going 'round and 'round on the merry-go-round. Where will the murderer strike next... and more importantly ... who will be his next victim! Maybe you!*

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Stay tuned to your radios, ladies and gentlemen. We remind you that at the end of tonight's broadcast, the name of the infamous Lead Rings Murderer will be revealed. And now a word from our sponsor, Signal Gasoline.

(Organ music plays then goes out. The "On The Air" sign turns off.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. That was terrible! You call yourself radio actors? You can't read black and white! What's this Meat Ax stuff? And you, Rareshot, can't you control these sound techies? Organa, why are you ad-libbing all of that stuff about not feeling well? Just stick to the script!

VIRGINIA. Damn! If I have to play another bimbo on the radio I'm going to start playing them on the street!

ORGANA. God, I feel rotten. I can't seem to catch my breath, I gotta get some coffee!

(The JAVA BOY immediately hands her a cup, which she drinks.)

(DIMAGGIO comes running into the studio.)

DIMAGGIO. This is great! It's genius! Terrierre, I gotta hand it to you, this is the greatest gimmick for keeping a show on the air I've ever heard! The phone's ringing off the hook in there! The police have called six times! *The National Inquirer* has called ten times! CNN wants to hire you! The Civil Liberties Union wants to represent you!

(DIMAGGIO'S cellphone rings. He answers it.)

DIMAGGIO *(cont'd)*. Yeah what? Who? Lance, I got Howard Stem on the cell! He wants to do a live feed from the studio!

(Everybody starts talking at once. LANCE grabs the cellphone and disconnects the call.)

DIMAGGIO *(cont'd)*. What're you doing? Are you nuts?

LANCE. Everybody shut up! Shut up! The show's not over yet!!! Trust me! After the next segment you can all write your weight in option contracts! But we can't keep making stupid mistakes. Hey, Rareshot! What happened to Pete? He's lying on the floor while I'm screaming at him!

RARESHOT, What's the matter with him? What's the matter with you? If Pete wants to take his commercial break on the floor he can! He's union! Hey, Pete, get off the floor or else somebody's going to hand you a script and make you an actor. Pete? Hey, Pete? *(Leans over PETE and examines him.)* Hey, Dimaggio! I think Pete's dead!

(Everybody freezes and then panics. They all run to look at PETE. DIMAGGIO leans over PETE's body and feels his pulse.)

DIMAGGIO. Stone dead.

(Everybody freezes and then run for the door screaming. LANCE stares at PETE then tries to get everybody & attention.)

LANCE. Let's not panic! Listen, people! Somebody dies all the time in this business! I mean pressure, yes, pressure on the heart! Simple clear-cut case of heart attack, that's all.

DIMAGGIO. This sucks! We have to be on the air in one minute! I vote we put an end to this thing right now!

(There is general agreement.)

LANCE. No, we can't! Please! We've got the audience eating out of the palm of our hand! We can't quit now! When we finish this you'll all be famous! Dimaggio, you'll be on Dancing With the Stars'. Just stick with me!

RARESHOT. This is stupid! Terrierre, there's a stiff in the studio! We can't work with a corpse in here! It ain't sanitary!

LANCE. OK, a deal, a deal! Let's just move the body into the back room and as soon as the show is over I'll explain everything to the police, OK?

(LANCE picks up PETE's arms and RARESHOT grabs his legs.)

RARESHOT. OK, Terrierre, the union will play ball, but if we do the show, the sound crew gets more money!

LANCE. More money? Why ?

RARESHOT. The union contract calls for a minimum of three sound techs on every show and we're one short! Now I want pay for four to split with two! Deal? You better say yes or I drop my end right now!

LANCE. OK, sure, OK. But you only get part of the raise because Pete lived through the first commercial break ... come on, Rareshot, cut me some slack!

RARESHOT. Full pay or the only sound effect you're going to get is the sound of this show going down the drain!

LANCE. OK, OK, full pay. Come on.

(RARESHOT and LANCE drag the body upstage.)

DIMAGGIO. Ten seconds to air!

(Everybody runs to his or her spot. Suddenly MILO spots something on the floor where PETE was lying. He walks over to it and picks it up. It is a lead ring.

Organ stab.

MILO holds up the lead ring. Everybody sees it and is in shock. LANCE comes down to his mic and looks at MILO's lead ring. The "On The Air" sign glows red. And the lights onstage fade to the radio performance levels.

Organ music.

LANCE looks at ELSINORE and then turns to the mic.)

LANCE. *Welcome back, ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the reality performance of The Lead Ring Murders.*

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *Remember, at the conclusion of tonight's broadcast I, Lancelot Terrierre, the Hummer, will reveal the name of the real Lead Rings Murderer ...*

(LANCE looks around at the actors, who in turn look at each other.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *Whoever that may be.*

(MILO takes the lead ring and tosses it at LANCE's feet. It makes a hollow ring. LANCE stares at the lead ring and then back at MILO, who is pointing his finger at him.

Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *So, Lt. Mattox, all the city waits for you to do your job. A hunter who hunts a savage murderer on the lonely jungle streets of the city!*

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *As you wait patiently in your downtown office at police headquarters for some small clue that will break the case, far across the city an ominous figure strides across the beach toward Play Land. Suddenly he comes to a stop. His brown hair swirling gently in the wind. He stares at the mass of buildings that make up the once joyous playpen for the suave San Francisco urbanites. The figure stares with soft brown eyes that suddenly narrow into a frown. His left hand slides gently into his overall pockets and slips around tiny hoops of lead, tiny hoops of death.*

(Organ stab and run.)

MATTOX. *It was three in the a.m. It was raining in the city. Drops were coming down like bombs going off in Baghdad. Over on Market Street I could see the lights blinking on at the Curran announcing yet another production of Oklahoma. I snapped on the radio and settled back in my leather swivel chair. Slowly the voice of Dr. Phil filled the room. Some broad was crying her eyes out because she didn't have an organdy dress for a Lion's Club dance. Suddenly the phone rang.*

(RARESHOT and REPETE are lost in the script. MATTOX gives them a dirty look.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I answered the phone. Yeah? Lt. Mattox here.*

(RARESHOT and REPETE finally figure out where they are.

SFX: Phone ringing.

LANCE and MATTOX give RARESHOT a dirty look. RARESHOT looks back as if to say, "What's the matter?")

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *Uh ... I was on the wrong phone so I reached ...for another one. Yeah? This is Mattox.*
KIPNOS. *Meat Ax?*

(LANCE groans.)

MATTOX. *Yeah, what do you want?*

KIPNOS. *Listen, police boy, I gotta talk fast, get me?*

MATTOX. *Spill your guts, motor mouth.*

KIPNOS. *I got important info on the Lead Rings Murderer!*

(Organ stab.)

MATTOX. *The voice on the other end was harsh, scared and foreign. What's your handle, fink?*

KIPNOS. *Never mind that, Meat Ax. Look, I'm in the fun house out at Play Land. How fast can you hustle down here and I mean put the pedal to the metal!*

MATTOX. *Twenty minutes if there's no traffic. If there's traffic then maybe twenty-five but maybe I can cut over to Sloat off Nineteenth, then maybe I can make it in fifteen but...*

KIPNOS. *Can it! Just get your keester out here now!*

(LANCE tries to cue RARESHOT to hang up the phone, but RARESHOT and REPETE are lost again.)

MATTOX. *Hello? Hello! Aw nuts. The creep hung up on me.*

(RARESHOT finds his place.

SFX: Hanging up the phone.

LANCE has a fit.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. Again! He hung up ... again. I grabbed my hat and checked my heater. A pound and a half of steel persuasion. I felt its weight; it felt good. I slipped my little pal into my shoulder holster. For all I know, I had just been talking to the Lead Rings Murderer himself!

(Musical stab and run.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. Geary was jammed but I managed to merge my black classic '67 Mustang that I had bought for practically nothing from Smiling Jack Chan, San Francisco's own Ford man,...

(MATTOX gives LANCE a dirty look at the shameless commercial plug right in the middle of the radio play. LANCE just shrugs his shoulders.)

MATTOX *(cont'd, ad-libbing)*. Was still a big waste of money. Next time I'd buy a Toyota!

(MATTOX turns to LANCE and flips him off. LANCE looks like he's going to cry.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. In a few minutes, I was pulling up to the entrance of Play Land By The Beach. I got out of the car.

(SFX: Car door slamming.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. The wind was blowing hard.

(SFX: RARESHOT blows across his mic as if he is trying to imitate the wind. It doesn't work well.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. I could see the waves of the ocean smashing against the rocks on Seal Rock, white capped breakers trying to crush this little animal island to powder. The lights of the Cliff House were shining through torrents of rain. I turned and started walking towards Play Land. I flashed my ID to the cop at the gate and made my way down the deserted avenues of what once was filled with crowded video arcades, cotton candy booths, skeeball alleys ... all waiting, waiting for ... murder.

(Organ stab.)

LANCE. *And so, Lt. Mattox. You're walking on the very spot where bloody murder has held sway and maybe you, yourself will be the next victim.*

(MILO looks around nervously as LANCE stares at him.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *Several blocks away, in a dingy apartment on Euclid Street, a figure forces a rusty key into a twisted lock and steps into a dusty, stale smelling rain stained room. The figure removes a yellow slicker and drops it carelessly to the floor. Trickle of rain roll down from the greasy hair and pour over the patched and faded carpet. The figure is revealed in a tattered gray shirt, dark gray pants held up by a dirty pair of red suspenders. Curiously, there is a dying pink rose stuck carefully into the first buttonhole of his shirt. Slowly the figure reaches into the frayed pockets of the dirty gray pants. His hand withdraws a handful of lead rings. Gently he fondles them and then slips them into a desk drawer.*

(SFX: Drawer opening and closing.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *Then he picks up a copy of Martha Stewart on the cover of Twenty Ways to Baste Your Holiday Bird and disappears into the bathroom.*

(Organ stab and run.)

MATTOX. *It was easy to spot the fun house; a huge mannequin which bore a frightening resemblance to Cher was twirling and laughing at the entrance. I made my way through the doors of the fun house arcade. At one end of the gallery, I could see a shaft of light coming from beneath the door. Slowly, I walked toward it.*

(SFX: Feet walking in a hall.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I could hear voices. Mean, angry voices.*

(KIPNOS and his NURSE are talking off mic.)

MATTOX (*cont'd*). *Slowly I drew my little cold steel mini-me. Then I kicked open the door!* This is the police, hold everything!

(*SFX: Door crashing open.*)

KIPNOS. Leave me alone! I know what I'm doing!

NURSE. We've got to get out of this place, Kipnos! People have been murdered here!

MATTOX. I said hold it, I'm Lt. Mattox, SFPD.

KIPNOS. That is exactly why I've got to spill my guts to that copper, Mallox!

MATTOX. Excuse me, folks. I'm Meat Ax, uh, Mattox!

NURSE. Oh great, you're going to trust the cops? Have you noticed that there are eleven dead bodies floating around? Duh?

MATTOX. *I saw an old man in a wheelchair arguing with a skinny broad who kind of looked like a nurse. They didn't even know I had just busted down the door.*

KIPNOS. Hey! Who busted down the door? Are you the cop?

MATTOX. Mattox, SFPD. What's your info?

NURSE. Listen mister, this is an old man and he don't know nothing. Get me? He's as loony as a tune.

KIPNOS. Shut your mouth, you boney freak! My name is Miklos Kipnos!

MATTOX. *Kipnos, Kipnos! Where have I heard that name before?*

KIPNOS. Hey, ugly boy, you're probably thinking, "Where have I heard that name before?" Well I'll tell you. I'm a rich Greek fella who owns all the land around here.

MATTOX. *Bingo! Kipnos, the rich Greek geek who owns all of the land around here.*

KIPNOS. I had these bunch of rundown apartments. So, these gangsters come to Kipnos and say, "Kipnos, we give you plenty of bucks if you tear down these rotten apartments and build a happy play land for everybody, okey dokey? Make us all rich!" So, I do it. I said, "Sweet." So everything is going honky dory. We're evicting right and left. We're throwing everybody out on their booties but there was this one family, from Cuba I think. I told these Cuban commies to get out and take all their commie things with them! All their commie shrines and commie papers and especially their commie books. Only they don't go.

NURSE. The man's wife was sick and couldn't be moved.

KIPNOS. But I had to get her out! I had two million bucks tied up in this deal, you betcha!

NURSE. So Miklos, the big shot, hired some muscle to kick them out.

KIPNOS. And somehow the woman, she gets thrown out of an open window. And the husband goes kooky-fruity and kills himself. Very messy, Meat Ax!

MATTOX. Yeah, yeah. I've heard this sob story a million times. So what?

KIPNOS. There's a beebee! Abeebee boy!

MATTOX. A beebee?

NURSE. He means "baby",

KIPNOS. Don't tell Kipnos what he means to say! I took care of this beebee, Meat Ax. I sent the brat to the best orphanage in San Francisco! That was in 1965. Get me, Mattox? 1965! Now the kid is big and I think he's taking revenge on everybody connected to Play Land! Don't you see, Maxtax? This kid is the Lead Rings Murderer!

(Organ stab.)

MATTOX. It hit me like a musical stab from an organ! Kipnos, what's his name!

KIPNOS. His name, Mosttoxic, is

MATTOX. Mattox! Mattox! My name is Mattox, M-a-t-t-t-t-t-o-x! Why can't you can't read it the way it's written?!

(MATTOX is screaming into KIPNOS' and the NURSE's mic. Suddenly the NURSE and KIPNOS begin to choke.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. A name! I need a name!

KIPNOS *(choking)*. His name is ... is ...

(Suddenly the lights go out. Everybody is screaming in the studio. MATTOX lights his lighter and holds it up to read his script.)

MATTOX. *Suddenly the lights went out! I turned down the hall as the sound of something big and heavy was rolling toward us. I pulled out my enforcer and started pumping lead!*

(SFX: Gunshots.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *And then I saw it! It was the head of the Cher mannequin rolling down on us like a huge bowling ball with its mouth wide open! It smashed into the room, and I saw Kipnos thrown out of his chair, the nurse was blasted against the wall and the Goddess of Pop's head burst into a thousand pieces. Her tongue caught me in the forehead! I hit the floor in a wave of nausea.*

(Organ music communicates nausea.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I started to blackout. Before my eyes closed I heard the sound of metal rings hitting the cement floor.*

(SFX: Metal rings hitting the floor.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *Lead rings!*

(Musical stab and run.)

LANCE. *We will return to our drama after this important message from the friendly people at Signal Gasoline.*

(The "On The Air" sign goes off and the lights return to normal.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *Magnificent! Wonderful, ladies and gentlemen! Organa, that was the best performance of your career!*

VIRGINIA. *And her last... she's dead!*

LANCE. *No, this can't be happening! It's a joke!*

MILO. *Then the joke's on Musso too. He's history.*

(Everybody stares at the bodies as DIMAGGIO enters.)

DIMAGGIO. *Great news, everybody! The network just renewed our contracts for another season! Lance, you're a stupid lucky loser and you did it! Hey, what's wrong?*

LANCE. *Organa Creole and Mick Musso are dead.*

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Poor taste, Elsinore.

VIRGINIA. Lance! Cut us some slack, please! I want to get out of here!

(Everybody agrees.)

LANCE. Not yet!

RARESHOT. Terri erre! Three people have died! We want out!

LANCE. Not possible!

DIMAGGIO. Soon it's going to be four bodies, Terrierre! Get us out!

LANCE. There's no way! It's a time lock!

DIMAGGIO. He's lying! He's got a key to the emergency door at the back of the control room! It leads to the fire escape!

(REPETE falls to the floor. Everybody focuses on him.)

MILO. I don't think we can wait for midnight to arrive 'cause the number of stiffs has just reached five!

(LANCE runs to REPETE.)

LANCE. Repete! Get up! Stop fooling around! Get up!

VIRGINIA. Now he thinks he's God.

LANCE. I get it! I get it! A smart bomb doesn't have to land on my head! I get it! This is all a plot to bring me down! Well it won't work! It won't work because I'm the Hummer!

DIMAGGIO. He's gone nuts.

VIRGINIA. Cracked like cheap china.

DIMAGGIO. Come on, gang. Let's get him. We'll grab the key and get out of here.

(Everybody starts to move on LANCE, who backs away.)

LANCE. Stay away! Get back! I, Lancelot Terrierre, the Hummer, know many things because I walk by night... I say, "I walk by night." Damn you, Elsinore, give me an organ stab!

(Organ stab.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Murder lurks behind every comer, every comer! And here is the key to the back of the control room but nobody's gonna get it from the Hummer!

DIMAGGIO. Let's rush him and get the key! Come on!

(They all rush LANCE. LANCE dances out of the way.)

LANCE. Can't have it, can't have it!

(LANCE picks up a chair and threatens everybody.)

VIRGINIA. Please! Lance, give us the key! Give it to mama.

LANCE. No! And you're not my mama, she had a mustache!

(LANCE stands on the chair and seems totally crazy.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. I walk by night... and I know many things.

(DIMAGGIO signals ELSINORE to start the Hummer theme. Organ music.)

DIMAGGIO. Yes, you know many things because you ... are ... the Hummer.

LANCE. I am.

DIMAGGIO. And you have the "key" to the mystery, don't you.

LANCE. Yes, I do.

DIMAGGIO. Where is it?

LANCE. Right here.

(LANCE takes out a key and holds it up.)

DIMAGGIO. Get him!

(Everybody rushes LANCE, who struggles out of their hands, holds up the key and swallows it.)

RARESHOT. Nuts.

VIRGINIA. Crap.

MILO. Stuck in a studio with a bunch of corpses!

DIMAGGIO. What could be worse?

LANCE. Stuck in a studio with the Lead Rings Murderer.

(Organ stab. Everybody looks at LANCE.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Hey, wait a minute! I'm not a murderer! Not me!

DIMAGGIO. Spill your guts, Terrierre! Confess!

RARESHOT. We know you're the murderer!

VIRGINIA. We've got to waste him before he wastes us!

(VIRGINIA looks around for something to kill LANCE with. She grabs a prop gun.)

LANCE. I'm innocent!

RARESHOT. We know you're the killer!

DIMAGGIO. We know the truth!

VIRGINIA. You wanted to save the show, save your reputation!

LANCE. No!

RARESHOT. So you killed! You killed Pete! Musso! Organa!

LANCE. I didn't do it!

DIMAGGIO. Come clean!

LANCE. I didn't do it!

MILO. We know you're the killer!

LANCE. I'm not!

VIRGINIA. You wanted to save the show, save your reputation!

LANCE. That's all wrong!

RARESHOT. You killed fifteen people!

LANCE. Not me!

DIMAGGIO. Confess!

LANCE. To what?

MILO. To murder!

LANCE. Never!

RARESHOT. Murderer!

VIRGINIA. Murderer!

DIMAGGIO. Murderer!

MILO. Murderer!

MILO, DIMAGGIO, RARESHOT & VIRGINIA. Murderer!

(LANCE screams and falls to the floor sobbing. The JAVA BOY slowly goes to him and hands him a cup of coffee that he gulps down.)

DIMAGGIO. We're on the air in one minute. What'll we do?

LANCE. Finish the show!

MILO. No way!

VIRGINIA. Not a chance.

RARESHOT. I'm on strike.

DIMAGGIO. What's the point?

LANCE. Because you'll never know who the murderer is until we perform it! So pick up your scripts and be the professionals that I know you are!

(The JAVA BOY hands a cup of coffee to DIMAGGIO, who takes it and drinks. DIMAGGIO looks at MILO, who looks at VIRGINIA, who looks at RARESHOT. RARESHOT looks at ELSINORE, who hits an organ chord.

Organ stab.

MILO picks up his script and takes his place at the mic. VIRGINIA does the same.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Clark, get back into the control room. We're coming back on the air.

(DIMAGGIO does.)

LANCE (*cont'd*). Rareshot, pick up an acting script.

RARESHOT. Hell no.

LANCE. I'm an actor short and I need you. •

RARESHOT. You can't have me!

LANCE. I will have you!

(The lights go down in the studio. The "On The Air" sign flashes red.

Organ music.

LANCE glares at RARESHOT, who quietly walks to a mic.)

LANCE (cont'd). Ladies and gentlemen. This is Lancelot Terrierre speaking to you from high atop the Farquahr Communications Building in downtown San Francisco. We are presenting to you a special reality edition of The Hummer.

(Organ music finds its theme then fades under LANCE.)

LANCE (cont'd). And so, Lt. Mattox, you have seen the murderer. You have seen his dark form looming over you at the fun house ... delivering his message of death, a lead ring.

(Musical stab.)

LANCE (cont'd). But you're not dead, are you, Lt. Mattox. You are not a victim ... yet.

(MILO looks nervously at LANCE. There is silence for a moment.)

LANCE (cont'd, off mic). What's the matter, Milo? No guts?

MILO (off mic). What? Me? Guts? Yeah, I've got guts, Terrierre!

(MILO looks at the mic and then begins.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. My head felt like the cast of RiverDance had just done an encore on my temples. My eyes started to flutter open. I rubbed the back of my neck.

(LANCE signals RARESHOT to go to the mic. RARESHOT is scared, but he tries to read anyway. At first he is very stiff, but soon he falls into a kind of NYPD persona.)

CHIEF. Well, look ... uh ... well look who's joining the world of the ... living. Our own one hundred percent flop, Lt. Max Maytox.

(MILO rolls his eyes but goes on.)

MATTOX. I opened my eyes and came face to face with one of the ugliest mugs I had ever seen, Chief Guidio Gorousky. A man with all of the charm of a bull gorilla with hemorrhoids.

CHIEF. Come on, mister wise guy. Come to papa.

(SFX: Face slapping. LANCE slaps his own face but at the SFX mic, not his own.)

ELVIRA. Keep slapping him that way and he ought to come around in about three weeks.

MATTOX. The skirt was a hank of hair named Elvira Thistle, the chief's personal secretary. This kid was so built that she put the "s" in silicone.

CHIEF. Come on, Botox, flap those baby blues. You got a report cornin' my way and I want to know the skinny.

MATTOX. What's to report? I met a couple of jokers, an old Greek geek and his nurds ... uh nurse.

ELVIRA. They were crushed flatter than a couple of Krispy Kremes sitting on a bus seat. Like dead, Mattox! Wasted.

CHIEF. So, did you get any info before they cashed in?

MATTOX. The Greek was about to spill his guts when we were ambushed.

(RARESHOT is in true form now. He really likes acting. He does a very bad John Wayne imitation.)

CHIEF. Took you by surprise, pilgrim?

(LANCE slaps his forehead in disgust. MILO is stunned at the bad imitation.)

MATTOX. Sure, uh, I was a little careless.

ELVIRA. You'll have to fill out a homicide report and I'll need five copies on my desk by tomorrow morning.

CHIEF. And you'll also have to report the loss of your heater!

(Musical stab.)

MATTOX. I reached for my roscoe. Nuts! It was gone.

CHIEF. Good work, Mattox. How many cops could actually help set up two victims, get himself conked on the bean and then lose his pistol all in the same afternoon??? Meat Ax, you're off the case.

ELVIRA. And the lost gun will cost you three hundred bucks!

CHIEF. You know what, Botox, you bungled this thing so bad that you're not only off the case, you're off the force! Turn in your badge! You're through ... pilgrim.

(Musical stab.)

LANCE. And so, Lt. Mattox, you've failed. The murderer has won, or has he? You still have one important lead; the murderer was an orphan, an orphan who amuses himself with murder!

(Musical climax and stab.)

(From the back of the studio we hear a voice.)

BUSHMAN. Help!

(REARSHOT and VIRGINIA immediately run to the window.)

LANCE. *Ladies and gentlemen! Another startling event has just taken place! Startling as this may sound, a man, yes a man, has just entered the studio through the tenth story studio window. This is too startling for words!*

(XAVIER BUSHMAN is pulled through a window upstage by RARESHOT and VIRGINIA. BUSHMAN is dressed in a raincoat and tennis shoes.)

BUSHMAN. Hey, you're breaking my arm!

RARESHOT. Who the hell are you?

BUSHMAN. Who the hell wants to know?

(DIMAGGIO enters from the control room.)

DIMAGGIO. I the hell wants to know! Who are you?

VIRGINIA. Are you kidding me? Let's throw him back out the window.

LANCE. What's the meaning of this? We're doing a live show here!

BUSHMAN. Yes, you, you're the Hummer, I'd recognize that voice anywhere. Many's the night I'd lie in my bed, clutching my pillow to my panting breast, listening, enraptured by your hypnotic resonance. How often I wanted to reach out and take the radio into my arms and smother it in my pillow!

(Organ stab.)

LANCE. Thank you, Elsinore.

VIRGINIA. God, I hope the Lead Rings Murderer gets me before I have to hear any more of this crap!

LANCE. Look, its always nice to hear from a fan but we're in the ...

BUSHMAN. When I heard that you were doing a show about me I just had to come down here.

DIMAGGIO. What do you mean a show about you?

BUSHMAN. I'm the Lead Rings Murderer!

(Organ stab)

BUSHMAN *(cont'd)*. What the hell was that?

MILO. He's the Lead Rings Murderer?

LANCE. No, of course not.

BUSHMAN. I am, I am! And I'm here to confess!

RARESHOT. Let's throw him back out the window!

(BUSHMAN pulls out a gun and everybody hits the floor.)

VIRGINIA. Blast Lance first, killer, go on!

BUSHMAN. Shut up, lady! This is my show!

(BUSHMAN, holding his gun on everybody, goes to LANCE's mic. LANCE backs off. BUSHMAN turns and looks at the mic like a hungry man looking at a steak.)

BUSHMAN. I did them all. I, Xavier Bushman.

MILO. Xavier?

BUSHMAN. Shutup, M-i-l-o! At the age of six years I confessed to the murder of Ronald C. Hampster, my next door neighbor. He said something unkind about the position of my eyes, and I let him have it in the back of his head with a Barbie Doll. The police said it was self defense ... but it wasn't. I planned it and I enjoyed it.

VIRGINIA. Oh God, why didn't I listen to my mother! She wanted me to be a dental assistant!

MILO. Really? So did mine?

VIRGINIA. Really? I didn't know that, Milo. Tell me ...

BUSHMAN. Will you two kindly shut up!! I did it! I killed everybody on a bus once after eating three pounds of pinto beans and six cloves of garlic! It only took one ...

RARESHOT. Don't you dare do it, Bushman! The air conditioning is off line!

BUSHMAN. And now I'm going to kill everybody in this studio in one flash!

(BUSHMAN turns his back to the audience and opens his trench coat, flashing the cast and crew.)

VIRGINIA. Oh no! Hey, Xavier. You're wearing long johns. Doesn't that kind of defeat the purpose of flashing us?

(Organ stab.)

BUSHMAN *(back on mic)*. And now! I'm going to make the biggest mess ever seen in San Francisco because I'm going to kill myself!

(BUSHMAN runs upstage and throws himself out of the window in the back of the studio. MILO, DIMAGGIO, RARESHOT and LANCE all run to the window.)

DIMAGGIO. Oh no. Too bad.

LANCE. Did he make a mess when he landed?

DIMAGGIO, Nope. He landed in a garbage track. I think he's complaining to a head of lettuce right now.

MILO. Gosh. Do you think he was crazy?

(DIMAGGIO and LANCE both look at MILO and shake their heads. LANCE goes to the mic.)

LANCE. And there you have it, ladies and gentlemen, the confessed murderer Just committed suicide before your very ears. And all of this brought to you by the friendly folks at Signal Gasoline, who always say, "If you're out of gas take that as a signal that you need to fill 'er up!" And now we'll take a commercial break while we clean up the studio.

(DIMAGGIO races into the control room. The lights come back to normal and the "On The Air" sign goes off.

RARESHOT notices that VIRGINIA hasn't moved. He leans down and looks at her. DIMAGGIO runs back into the studio.)

DIMAGGIO. I need a cup of coffee!

MILO. Me too.

(The JAVA BOY hands two cups to DIMAGGIO and MILO.)

RARESHOT. Virginia is dead.

LANCE. What? No!

RARESHOT. Cold as last week's show.

(The JAVA BOY gives RARESHOT a cup of coffee. He drinks it.)

DIMAGGIO. Well, you're progressing nicely, Lance.

LANCE. How many times do I have to tell you ...

RARESHOT. How're you killing us off, Terrierre? What's the secret?

LANCE. It's not me!

DIMAGGIO. Guys, look. He's picking us off like sitting ducks! There's only one thing we can do!

MILO. Get him before he gets us!

LANCE. Not in front of a hundred million people, you won't!

DIMAGGIO. I can fix that.

(DIMAGGIO begins to run to the control room.)

LANCE. And after you kill me, what if you find out that I'm not the Lead Rings Murderer?

(DIMAGGIO stops and looks at RARESHOT, then at MILO and ELSINORE.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Exactly. So pick up your scripts and let's go.

(Suddenly MILO collapses to the floor, shaking like a bowl of Jell-O. LANCE goes to him and leans down.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. What's the matter, Milo ... no guts?

(MILO looks at LANCE. Then he straightens himself up and goes to his mic.

DIMAGGIO goes into the control room. The lights change in the studio. The "On The Air" sign comes on. LANCE goes to his mic.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. Ladies and gentlemen. The last act of... the Lead Rings Murders.

(Organ stab and run.)

LANCE. So Lt. Mattox, an orphanage. You flip on your computer and begin to search the lists of county homes that took boys in 2005. O'Brian, Goldberg, Ching Lee ...

MATTOX. *Wasolusky, Gregoff Wasolusky. Orphan, parents George Wasolusky. Died the same year. Suicide.*

(Organ stab.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *This had to be it! In fifteen minutes I was cruising up to a dark brick, ivy covered building on Masonic. County home for lost souls.*

(SFX: Walking down a hall.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *I walked down the hall until I found Father O'Malley's office. A small but pleasant room. The walls were covered with pictures of old time football players, scribbled signatures, hair styles that went out with The Beatles. Laughing faces. Good times long gone.*

(DIMAGGIO comes out of the control room and looks around. LANCE goes up to him and sticks a script in his hand and leads him to a mic.)

MATTOX *(cont'd)*. *Behind a large oak desk sat a small, wizened man wearing metal-rimmed bifocals and a black caftan. He flashed me a carefully measured smile.*

(LANCE points to the script and DIMAGGIO shakes his head. LANCE stares at him.

Finally, DIMAGGIO gives up and begins to read. He tries to effect an Irish accent but it ends up sounding more like he's doing Count Dracula. LANCE shakes his head and drinks another cup of coffee.)

O'MALLEY. *Sit down m'boy. (Sips a cup of coffee.)*

MATTOX. *I eased myself into an old velvet chair. A small cloud of dust gently floated up as my weight settled into the pillows.*

O'MALLEY. *So, you want to know about... about...*

(DIMAGGIO starts to choke then falls to the floor, dead. LANCE jumps in and takes his role.)

O'MALLEY *(cont'd)*. *Excuse me. I must have dozed off there for a moment. So you want to know about Gregoff. Poor boy. When he came to the shelter he was a frightened little tyke, having seen some terrible*

things, poor S.O.B. He never talked. He liked to play let's pretend with some of the children. And sometimes he'd play doctor with them but we put a stop to that after he started curing some of them.

MATTOX. I get the picture.

O'MALLEY. Oh yes. He definitely wanted to be a cutter. Some of his impromptu operations were quite messy. But other than that he was just like any other little boy. And he was a joker. Yes, yes, yes. He liked to put worms in the spaghetti. What a little scamp. Oh yes.

MATTOX. Do you know where he is today? Got an address, anything?

O'MALLEY. Maybe. Years ago I got a Christmas card from him. Let me see. I've got it my desk drawer.

(SFX: Opening a desk drawer and then rummaging around in it.)

O'MALLEY *(cont'd)*. Here it is. Pretty unusual. It's a picture of Santa Claus sitting around a campfire on a snowy evening roasting one of the little reindeer. Donner, I think. Amusing, don't you think?

MATTOX. *I grabbed the envelope and examined the return address. University Hospital. University Hospital? Of course! The little freak wanted to be a doctor.*

(Organ stab and run.)

LANCE. *And so, Lt. Mattox, the search is coming to a swift conclusion.*

MATTOX. *I made my way across town. In twenty minutes I was standing in the office of the Dean of Men at the University.*

(LANCE cues RARESHOT. He cautiously comes to the mic.)

DEAN. Yeah, I remember Gregoff. How could I forget him. He was the only student I ever took into the operating theatre to view a colonoscopy operation while eating Oreo cookies and milk. Sometimes I would find him in the chapel playing the organ!

(RARESHOT, LANCE and MILO all turn and stare at ELSINORE. ELSINORE shakes his head "no.")

DEAN *(cont'd)*. And then suddenly he dropped out of school.

MATTOX. Tell me, doc, do you have an address on him?

DEAN. Maybe. The only thing we have is this. Here. I don't know if he's still living there. It was a long time ago.

MATTOX. *Slowly I took the folder from the dean. I read the address. Twenty-five Euclid Avenue, number C.*

(Suddenly there is a crash as the JAVA BOY dies. LANCE, MILO and RARESHOT look at ELSINORE.)

LANCE. *So, Lt. Mattox, the search has ended. You have found the infamous Lead Rings Murderer.*

(RARESHOT and MILO advance on ELSINORE. ELSINORE stands up and then suddenly falls on this organ, making a strange and macabre sound. A note beats, beats, beats, and then there is a sustained sound as if a life monitor in a hospital flattened out. Then nothing. RARESHOT looks at MILO. MILO goes back to his mic.)

LANCE. *Euclid Street. Only a short distance from Play Land. You find yourself standing in front of a run down apartment. Yellowed paint peeling from termite-ridden boards. The mailboxes ... A, B ... C!*

(MILO is now standing between RARESHOT and LANCE. He keeps looking back and forth at them.)

LANCE *(cont'd)*. *There on mailbox C, scribbled in a red crayon are the words: Dr. Albert Schweitzer. A smile creeps over your face. For the first time in ten months, you smile.*

MATTOX. *I turned the handle of the door. I stepped into the darkness of the hallway. A small red bulb gave the corridor an unreal feeling. A rubber tree plant, crawling with ants, stared at me from a musty comer. Slowly I walked to the end of the hall. A,B ... C. I reached out for the doorknob. I could feel the presence of the killer on the other side of the door. He was waiting, waiting, for me. Waiting for me to turn the handle. Waiting, the murderer, waiting for me! I pushed open the door slowly, slowly and there standing in front of me was*

(RARESHOT has picked up a script to read the Lead Rings Murderer role. He takes a big breath to give his first line and then he chokes and dies. MILO turns around to see RARESHOT fall in front of the JAVA

BOY. But as soon as he does the JAVA BOY gets up. He stares at MILO. He holds out a cup of coffee to him. He removes his work coat as MILO describes what the JAVA BOY is wearing.)

MATTOX (cont'd). Sloppy gray pants, a gray shirt, held up by red suspenders!

(The JAVA BOY tosses a lead ring at MILO's feet.)

MATTOX (cont'd). A faded pink rose placed at the first button hole ... in his hand ...a crumpled picture of Martha ...

(MILO begins to choke and dies.)

LANCE. Ladies and gentlemen. The murderer, the lead rings killer is standing right in front of me. But he's trapped! He can't get out of the studio. Listen carefully! His name is ...

(LANCE pretends to choke.)

LANCE (cont'd). His name ... is ... is ...

(LANCE pulls the cord out of the mic then begins to laugh.)

LANCE (cont'd). You did a wonderful job, my boy! You're worth every buck I paid you. Nice clean simple work. I don't know how you did it, but you have my congratulations!

(LANCE toasts the JAVA BOY with a cup of coffee.)

LANCE (cont'd). You just made me the hottest thing in reality entertainment!

(LANCE begins to choke. The JAVA BOY takes a lead ring and tosses it at LANCE.)

LANCE (cont'd). What? ... Me? A lead ring? No, not me! We ... had ... a deal!

(Suddenly LANCE looks at the coffee.)

LANCE (*cont'd*). The coffee ... the coffee!

(LANCE falls to the floor, dead. The JAVA BOY looks at him and then he looks at the audience. He takes down his surgical mask.)

JAVA BOY. Coffee? How stupid. Only a no-talent like Terrierre would think that. No, not the coffee. Lance and all of these selfish self-righteous punks killed themselves with every word they spoke. Look at this.

(The JAVA BOY takes out a screwdriver and pries apart the RCA 45 mic. He shows it to the audience.)

JAVA BOY (*cont'd*). Hanging from the ribbon, a small plastic bag of cyanide poison. Every time one of these useless drones bellowed into a mic he inhaled a little of my poison as the little metal ribbon vibrated back and forth until it ripped the bag! They killed themselves with every word they spoke ... unless they had the good sense to wear a mask. Oh yes. These no-talents literally talked themselves to death!

(The JAVA BOY walks over to LANCE. He punches him in the stomach and the key to the back door pops out of LANCE's mouth. The JAVA BOY picks it up. Wipes it off on LANCE's coat and then holds it up to the light. Then he looks at the audience.)

JAVA BOY (*cont'd*). Good night, sleep tight and maybe it would be healthier to keep your mouths shut!

(The JAVA BOY laughs and exits upstage. The lights come down leaving only the "On The Air" sign on. It goes out.)

END