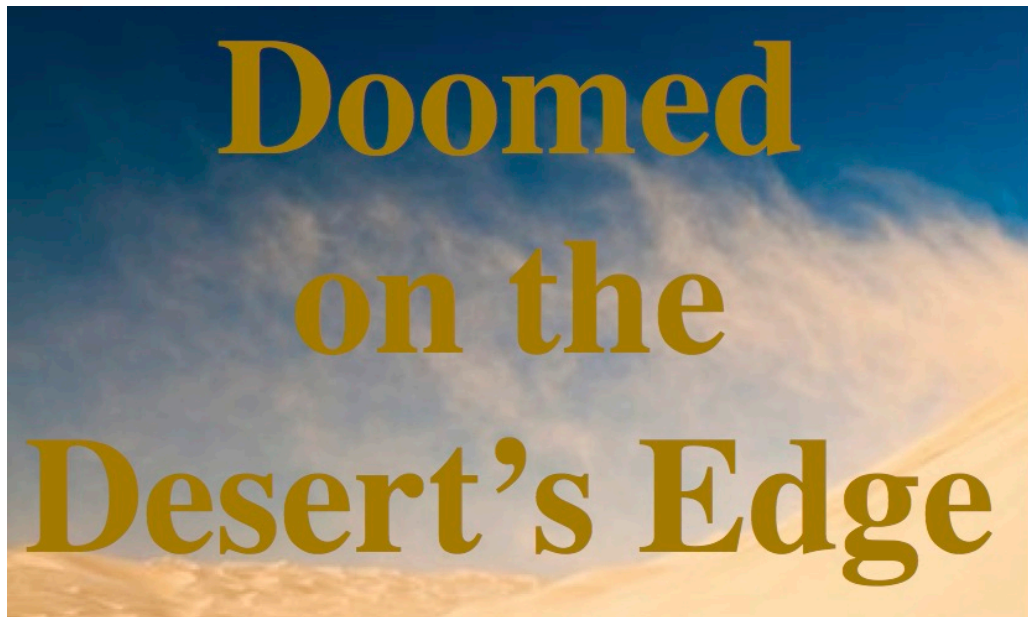


PERUSAL SCRIPT



Doomed on the Desert's Edge

A CHAMELEON'S MURDER MYSTERY

by
Jim Christian



Bucksport, Maine

© 2004 by Jim Christian
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

CAUTION:

Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that
DOOMED ON THE DESERT'S EDGE

being fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States Of America, the British Empire, including the Dominion Of Canada, and the other countries of the Copyright Union, is subject to royalty. Anyone presenting the play without the express written permission of the Copyright owners and/or their authorized agent will be liable to the penalties provided by law.

A requisite number of script and music copies must be purchased from the Publisher and Royalty must be paid to the publisher for each and every performance before an audience whether or not admission is charged. A performance license must first be obtained from the publisher prior to any performance(s).

Federal Copyright Law -- 17 U.S.C. section 504 -- allows for a recovery of a minimum of \$250 and a maximum of \$50,000 for each infringement, plus attorney fees.

The professional and amateur rights to the performance of this play along with the lecturing, recitation, and public reading rights, are administered exclusively through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be made. For all other rights inquiries may be made to the authors through LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS Any adaptation or arrangement of this work without the author's written permission is an infringement of copyright. **Unauthorized duplication by any means is also an infringement.**

FOR PUBLIC PERFORMANCE RIGHTS YOU MUST APPLY TO THE PUBLISHER OR YOU ARE BREAKING THE LAW!

The possession of this SCRIPT whether bought or rented, does not constitute permission to perform the work herein contained, in public or in private, for gain or charity. Proper prior application must be made and license granted before a performance may be given. Copies of this SCRIPT and all other rehearsal materials may be bought and/or rented from:

LEICESTER BAY THEATRICALS
3877 W. Leicester Bay South Jordan, UT 84095
www.leicesterbaytheatricals.com
Printed in the United States Of America

Whenever this play is produced the following notice should appear in the program and on all advertisements under the producer's control: "Produced by special arrangement with Leicester Bay Theatricals, South Jordan UT" In all programs and posters and in all advertisements under the producers control, the author's name shall be prominently featured under the title.

NOTE: Your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals limits you to making copies of this document for persons directly connected with your production. Do not distribute outside of your cast and crew. Following your performance run you must destroy all photocopies, preferably by shredding them. If we sent you the document in printed format, you must return that document to us. If we provided you with an electronic PDF file, simply trash that on your computer so that it cannot be recovered. The electronic document may only be on ONE computer -- it may NOT be duplicated. This is also a part of your contract with Leicester Bay Theatricals.

Doomed On The Desert's Edge

CAST OF CHARACTERS (5M 3W)

- Dr. Kenneth Powers** - Professor of Botany at Intermountain State University - successful author/plagiarist - lazy, amoral and self-serving - uses everyone around him for his own personal benefit - makes enemies without even trying
- Dr. Gail Barkley** - Professor of Zoology at Intermountain State University - brilliant and hard-working - was denied tenure while serving on the faculty in the Department of Botany - was rehired in Zoology Department - demanding, but respectful
- Wally Burkis** - recently hired university staff member - guide for the field trip - self-styled adventurer - jack-of-all-trades master of none - assumes authority whether he knows what he is doing or not - generally disinterested in the opinions of others
- Cookie Preston Wentworth** - "non-traditional" student - she has returned to college to study for FUN - totally clueless about the rugged nature of the forthcoming trek - neat, clean and fussy - very chummy with the other students as well as the faculty
- Lester Preston** - Cookie's out-of-work brother - aspiring actor - dreams of becoming a soap opera star - not a member of the class - has been dragged along on the trip by Cookie to videotape the proceedings - expects the world to recognize him as "special"
- Jimmy Hosseppian** - student at ISU - graduate teaching assistant to both Kenneth and Gail - apple-polishing overachiever - lives and dies by his GPA - takes college "very" seriously - actually did the majority of the organization for the field trip
- Timmy Pallegriano** - student - science nerd - aspires to become some combination of Carl Sagan, Bill Nye and Ralph Nader - has no social life outside of the classroom - spends his days online, in the library and up to his ears in research - definitely low on social skills
- Heather Bliss** - student - GPA based on playing up to faculty members - never takes classes from women unless it can't be avoided - comes from a wealthy family of self-made millionaires - is being expected to do the same - sensual and aggressive

Time: present

Setting: Utah

Occasion: desert field trip to study toxins of desert flora and fauna

THE SECRET CLUE --

the initial "H" is engraved on the back of Kenneth's watch indicating "Hosseppian" (Jimmy) -- NOT Heather!

The DEATH OF KENNETH --

This is usually staged with the four people having small 'antidote' bottles filled with small amounts of water with food coloring AND Kenneth slipping part of an Alka-Seltzer tablet into his mouth while choking to provide a frothing effect

Doomed on the Desert's Edge *A CHAMELEON'S MURDER MYSTERY* by Jim Christian **Characters:**
5m 3w Synopsis: A university field trip to study toxins of desert flora and fauna turns into a one-way trip for its leader...and everyone has good cause to see that he doesn't return alive. **(ORDER #3084)**

Doomed On the Desert's Edge

1 -- COCKTAILS (APPETIZERS)

2 -- AFTER COCKTAILS (APPETIZERS) -- ACT ONE

(JIMMY and WALLY, both with whistles, are the first to arrive and begin checking equipment and paperwork in anticipation of the field trip. There is an assortment of camping gear for each of them as well as the entire group. They have rosters of names which they check with the guests. Eventually GAIL appears and action begins.)

GAIL: *(indignant)* Mr. Burkis! What in heaven's name is going on here?

WALLY: *(caught off guard)* Huh?

JIMMY: *(jumping into the middle of things)* Professor Barkley ... I've been trying to get things organized, but Mr. Burkis keeps insisting

WALLY: *(to Jimmy)* It's "Wally."

GAIL: *(cutting him off)* Mr. Burkis, where are Professor Powers and the rest of ...

WALLY: Call me "Wally," okay?

GAIL: *(trying to control her impatience)* ... and the rest of the students? We have a strict timetable to maintain, Mr. Burkis, and we can ill afford any delays

WALLY: *(more insistent)* The name's "Wally!"

GAIL: Mr. Burkis! There is no time

WALLY: Wally-Wally-Wally-Wally- WALLY!!!! I hate being called "Mr. Burkis!!!"

GAIL: *(after a dry beat, she proceeds methodically)* "Wally ... where - are - Professor Powers - and - the - remaining - students?"

JIMMY: I'm here, Professor Barkley!

GAIL: *(cutting him no slack)* I can see that, Jimmy. However, we are obviously four people short and we're burning precious daylight. Are you certain none of the other participants have arrived?

JIMMY: *(whipping out his clipboard)* Well, let's just do a quick check, shall we?

WALLY: THAT would be my job!

(He also pulls out his clipboard.)

JIMMY: Don't worry, I've got it!

WALLY: No way! I'm the guide for this trip

JIMMY: And I did all the planning!!!

(Calling out)

Professor Gail Barkley?

GAIL: I'm here.

WALLY: *(to JIMMY)* Shut up, wimp!

(Calling out)

Professor Gail Barkley?

GAIL: I said I was here!

JIMMY: She said she was here! Professor Kenneth Powers?

WALLY: *(catching up quickly)* Professor Kenneth Powers?

(To Jimmy)

Just let me do my job, okay?

JIMMY: I didn't see anything indicating that it was specifically your job to call the

WALLY: *(grabbing him by his shirtfront aggressively)* LOOK! I, Wally Burkis, was assigned by the administration of Intermountain State University to be the guide for this entire expedition and that makes everyone MY personal responsibility so THAT'S how we're gonna do it, okay?

JIMMY: *(condescendingly)* Oh...you bet!

(JIMMY flips WALLY's hands away and takes a step back gesturing for WALLY to take the floor)

WALLY: Hmmph!

(WALLY resumes the roll call)

Professor Kenneth Powers?

JIMMY: He's not here.

WALLY: *(shooting him a look)* Cookie Preston Wentworth?

JIMMY: *(knowing it all)* She's not here either --

WALLY: Okay ... how about Heather Bliss.

JIMMY: Not ... here.

WALLY: Jimmy Hosseppian?

(Jimmy doesn't respond)

JIMMY HOSSEPIAN?

(JIMMY mouths "here" as WALLY glares at him.)

WALLY: Jerk! Timmy Pallegriano?

TIMMY: *(stumbling and crashing into the space as he noisily drops his mess kit)* HERE! I'm here! Don't leave without me! I've got all my stuff! The transit bus had a flat and I didn't want to take a chance on being left behind so I ran the last 6.7 miles here.

(He comes to a grinding halt.)

Have you left?

GAIL: No, Timmy ... I think we're still here.

JIMMY: Actually, we're waiting for some other people who are even LATER than you!

TIMMY: Great!

GAIL: No, NOT great!

TIMMY: Okay ... NOT great ... but I'm certainly glad that there are those who are more chronometrically impeded than I am.

WALLY: Just put your gear over there for now!

TIMMY: Yes, sir!

(TIMMY obliges)

JIMMY: So, Professor Barkley, that makes four present and three unaccounted for.

GAIL: *(heaves a heavy sigh and checks her watch)* Well ... we may as well eat while we're waiting. We still

have a major drive before we start the hike into our encampment area. It's going to be after midnight before we even ...

COOKIE: (*calling from offstage*) Hell-o-o-o-o-o-o!!!!!!! Yooooooo-hooooooo!!!!!!! We're here! Hi, hi, hi!
(*COOKIE enters, inappropriately dressed with the worst possible choice of shoes - LESTER in tow is lugging all of her equipment*)

We are so sorry to be late. You know how it is ... last minute ironing ... a quick trip to the store for all of those things you always forget ... and Niko took FOREVER with my hair today so I didn't get out of the salon until after three. So where's Professor Powers?

TIMMY: He's not here yet.

GAIL: Like I'm surprised.

COOKIE: Where do you want Lester ...

LES: Preston!

COOKIE: ... Preston to put our things?

WALLY: (*indicating the pile of gear*) Just over there. And you are?

JIMMY: "OUR" things?

COOKIE: (*helping WALLY find her name on the roster*) Cookie Preston Wentworth.

JIMMY: What do you mean "our" things? Who is this? He's not coming with us.

GAIL: Cookie ... I told you that no spouses would be allowed on the field trip.

COOKIE: Oh, I know that! This is my brother, Lester Preston ...

LES: Cookie!

COOKIE: Oh, I know, I know ... he suddenly wants me to start calling him "Preston Lester".

TIMMY: Why?

COOKIE: He says it sounds better "professionally." Personally, I think it sounds ridiculous.

LES: Sis! Can you name a single, solitary actor who made it big with the name "Lester?"

TIMMY: Well, Lester Flatt of Flatt & Scruggs comes to mind. They really made a splash when they recorded the theme to "The Beverly Hillbillies."

LES: Hillbillies? Uggghhh!

WALLY: Hold it!

(*With rising alarm*)

Do you mean this guy isn't part of the head count?

GAIL: Exactly.

JIMMY: NO! This excursion was planned for EXACTLY seven people

WALLY: Yeah! An extra body is gonna screw up everything!!

JIMMY: Yes! We won't have sufficient food, water, medical supplies, emergency materials ...

WALLY: And ... and ... other stuff

JIMMY: What about release forms? He can't go without release forms!

COOKIE: Oh, all of you fussbudgets can just relax I've got everything that Lester ...

LES: Preston ...

COOKIE: PRESTON will need for the trip ... extra food, supplies, bedding ... I even Xeroxed an extra copy of the release form so everything's in order.

WALLY: (*with forced patience*) Ma'am...

COOKIE: Besides, if there are any additional costs incurred, I'll be glad to...

WALLY: Ma'am! Everything is NOT in order...if this loser comes with us...

LES: Hey!

WALLY: ...the results could be fatal! This a survival hike, lady! Not some picnic in the park!

JIMMY: He's right, you know! Do you think I've spent the last twelve months agonizing over every little detail just to let you blow in here with this...parasite...and ruin everything?!!! I'm sorry, Mrs. Wentworth, but this is one time when you can't just whip open your checkbook and have anything you want!

GAIL: Wait a minute! Gentlemen...I know that you're both very concerned about the success of this project, but I'm certain that we can accommodate one more person, can't we?

WALLY: No way in hell!

GAIL: Good. Jimmy, why don't you help "Preston" put their things with all the rest?

JIMMY: Yes, professor. I

(aside to LES)

Now you're ruined everything and made it all ugly!

COOKIE: Preston...get the camera...I don't want you to miss a thing!

LES: *(shoving everything but the camera bag onto Jimmy)* Here.

(LES takes out the camera and begins roaming around filming everything)

GAIL: *(pulling Cookie aside, arm-in-arm)* Now, Mrs. Wentworth...I want to tell you about my latest research project with black scorpions...

COOKIE: *(delightedly)* Oooh!!! Are you still planning to show us that Australian Paralysis Tick?

KENNETH: *(offstage)* Hey!

(Appearing with a backpack and duffel)

What does a guy have to do to get some help with his equipment? Timmy!

TIMMY: *(rushing to his side)* Yes, Professor Powers?

KEN: *(hurling one of his bags into Timmy's chest with a blow that knocks him over)* Take care of that, would you? Jimmy?

JIMMY: Professor! I'm so glad to see you. We have a problem. There's an extra...

KENNETH: *(cutting him off by flinging his other bag into his face)* Thanks. Wally!

WALLY: Coming!

GAIL: It's about time you got here.

COOKIE: We've been holding dinner...

KENNETH: Yeah, yeah, yeah...sorry I'm late. I couldn't find my freakin' watch.

GAIL: Like THAT would have made any difference...

WALLY: Hey, professor!

KENNETH: Wally...everything all gassed up and set to go?

WALLY: Yeah...the van's ready and...

KENNETH: Great...let's roll.

GAIL: Excuse me?!!!

KENNETH: What?

GAIL: Where is your brain? We're supposed to have dinner before we leave. We have to get some solid nutrition into these people AND review the itinerary for the trip. We can't just go off half-cocked into the desert.

KENNETH: *(after a beat)* Whatever...

GAIL: Look, if you'd rather stay home, I'd be more than happy to...

KENNETH: Hey! I said "whatever," okay? Eat your lousy dinner. I brought my own stuff anyway. None of that institutional campus slop for me.

WALLY: No problemo, El Professor! I've arranged to have everything specially catered because I heard you didn't dare for the university's food service.

(WALLY returns to the equipment pile where GAIL has begun to busy herself)

JIMMY: *(following Wally to the pile of gear)* That's beside the point. Professor Powers has very special dietary needs.

KENNETH: Timmy!

TIMMY: Yes, Professor?

KENNETH: I want the Tupperware outta my backpack.

TIMMY: Right away, professor!

(He heads for the pile of gear)

HEATHER: *(rushing in...dressed to thrill)* Hi! Am I late?

(GAIL and COOKIE exchange glances of disgust)

WALLY: *(choking with lust)* No...

KENNETH: I thought you were already here.

HEATHER: *(coming in and removing her backpack)* Sorry. I just had a go-round with Daddy about which car I could bring. He wouldn't let me drive the Miata because of the grade I got on my Zoology midterm.

(She glares at Gail who smiles warmly)

JIMMY: *(rushing back in at the sound of Heather's voice, he addresses her curtly)* Are you aware that we were supposed to be here no later than 7pm?

HEATHER: *(with feigned respect)* Oh? Was I? *(she advances on him)* I guess I've been a very naughty girl and ought to be punished...

JIMMY: *(scrambling away nervously and returning to the pile of gear)* I...don't think that will be necessary...

KENNETH: Hey! *(with innuendo)* I'm in charge of discipline around here...

(HEATHER shoots him a wicked glance)

TIMMY: *(with KENNETH's Tupperware under his arm)* Oh, look!

(Retrieving something from the back of HEATHER's hair)

Isn't this your watch, Professor Powers?

KENNETH: *(waving it away in embarrassment)* No, I don't think so.

TIMMY: Gosh it looks just like the one you've been wearing to class all quarter...

KENNETH: It's not mine.

TIMMY: See? It's even inscribed..."To Kenneth, who means more to me..."...

KENNETH: *(snatching it away)* Well, even if it's not mine, I need one for the trip. Thanks, Timmy.

(KENNETH pats him on the head, shoves him aside and straps the watch to his wrist)

WALLY: *(who has been staring at HEATHER this whole time)* You...you...

(WALLY dumbly points to HEATHER and to his clipboard)

HEATHER: *(moving to him and finding her name on the clipboard)* That's me...Heather Bliss.

(HEATHER takes the pen from his hand, checks her name off of the list, opens his mouth, puts the pen between his teeth and snaps his jaw shut)

Touch me...and I'll kill you.

(HEATHER turns and walks away)

WALLY: *(still holding the pen in his mouth)* Okay.

JIMMY: *(popping in)* People...dinner!

(JIMMY pops out again)

GAIL: Exactly. Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin eating, I think it's important to start things officially and reiterate the purpose of our field trip...

COOKIE: Preston...be sure to get this!

LES: *(who has been shooting footage of HEATHER ever since she came in)* Huh?

COOKIE: It's the important stuff. In fact...

(dragging KENNETH up front)

...why don't we let Professor Powers tell us about the trip? After all, he's the one who's really in charge.

(LES grabs TIMMY, passes the camera off to him, and soon insinuates his way into the frame and starts posturing)

GAIL: What?!!!

COOKIE: *(positioning KENNETH)* Come on, Professor...

KENNETH: Well...

GAIL: This is an outrage!

KENNETH: If you really want me to...

GAIL: I don't!

KENNETH: Stuff it, Gail.

(GAIL clams up)

Okay...this trip...is because...uh...

TIMMY: *(prompting)* We are taking this excursion into the desert to explore the local surroundings and their various toxic flora and fauna.

KENNETH: What?

TIMMY: Poisonous plants and animals of the region!

KENNETH: What he said.

(Sees LES at his side)

Can I help you?

LES: No thanks.

(LES continues preening and posing for the camera)

KENNETH: *(rolls his eyes and resumes addressing the crowd)* So...have a good time and...don't get bit.

HEATHER: *(meaningfully)* Mmmmmmm...

KENNETH: Timmy!

(TIMMY looks up from the camera)

Salad!

TIMMY: Right away!

(TIMMY passes the camera off to LES, opens the Tupperware and begins tossing KENNETH's salad with his back turned to the crowd)

LES: Hey!

JIMMY: *(returning)* Now, Professor...I don't want you to worry about anything! I picked up your campus mail today, the itinerary has been modified according to the revisions we worked out last night and copies have been placed in each student's packet, and I have made a diagram of the campsite to be laid out as per your request.

(JIMMY produces a copy of the diagram)

KENNETH: Yeah, Jimmy...whatever. Don't bother me with that crap right now.

HEATHER: *(looping her arm through Kenneth's and snatching the diagram out of Jimmy's hands before he goes)* So, Kenny...

(Realizing that she is within earshot of the others)

...Professor Powers...while we're discussing the layout of the campsite, I'm assuming that since this is a university function, the sleeping arrangements are going to be coed, aren't they?

KENNETH: Miss Bliss...

HEATHER: After all, I did lose that fifteen pounds you wanted me to...

TIMMY: *(popping in between them with the salad)* Here you go, Professor! Crisp and tasty!

KENNETH: *(seizing the opportunity to break free from HEATHER)* Attaboy, Timmy.

(KENNETH takes the salad and begins eating)

TIMMY: Did you make this yourself?

KENNETH: Nope. Just snagged it outta my fridge on the way out the door.

(Takes a mouthful)

Not too bad...

TIMMY: *(admiringly)* That Professor Powers...what a guy! Someday, I'm gonna be just like that.

HEATHER: It'll never happen.

TIMMY: Why?

HEATHER: Genetics, baby. Genetics.

TIMMY: Hey! My gene pool may prove to be just as fertile as his.

HEATHER: Don't count on it.

LES: *(who has sidled up beside Heather undetected)* Hello!

HEATHER: What?

LES: What's a hot lady like you doing hangin' around a bunch of eggheads like these?

HEATHER: Excuse me?

LES: Come on, baby. Let fate take a hand.

TIMMY: I believe I was talking to Heather before you...

LES: Heather? Mmmmm...

TIMMY: Before you so rudely...

LES: *(singing)* "So take my hand and let's go roaming..."

HEATHER: Don't say it!

LES: "...through the 'heather'...on the hill."

HEATHER: Yuck!

(HEATHER storms off, folding the camp diagram and tucking it into her clothing)

TIMMY: I think you're wasting your time.

LES: Beat it, squirt! Go help your brother sort luggage.

TIMMY: He is not my brother!

LES: Chicks dig me and you are definitely cramping my style, junior.

(LES flips the bill of TIMMY's cap and heads off in HEATHER's direction, filming her as he goes)

COOKIE: *(approaching KENNETH who is halfway through his salad)* Professor...I can't tell you how excited I am to be heading off on this little weekend with everyone.

KENNETH: Then don't try.

COOKIE: A lot of people think that I have this spectacularly interesting life, but I don't.

(KENNETH nods disinterestedly)

It isn't often that I get to have time away from my husband...

(KENNETH chokes slightly on his salad)

...we're always so busy running here and there. His business takes up a lot of time and I seem to be dragged this way and that...thither and yon...and that's one of the reasons I came back to school, you know?

(KENNETH is now thrashing about in seizures as LES notices and begins filming instinctively)

I said, "Cookie...isn't it high time that you did something for yourself? REALLY for you? And I said, "Cookie...you're right!

(KENNETH contracts with abdominal pains)

Well, I tried lots of things that didn't work out the way I planned...pottery, martial arts, writing haiku, international business law...finally I said, "What about poisons?"

(KENNETH gasps for breath and clutches at his throat)

I mean, they are rather fascinating...and I've always been a bit of a tomboy so playing with spiders and snakes has never really bothered me...are you feeling okay?

KENNETH: *(emitting a guttural earth yell)* UNNNNNNNHHHHHH!!!!!!!!!!!!

WALLY: Professor!!!

GAIL: Kenneth???

TIMMY: Aaaaaaaaaa!!!

JIMMY: Noooooooooooo!!!

HEATHER: Kenny!!!

(KENNETH collapses in a heap)

WALLY/GAIL/TIMMY/JIMMY: *(as one)* ANTIDOTE!!!!

(They ALL reach into their pouches and pockets producing assorted vials of liquid, speaking variously)

Okay...I've got him...this should do it...let me get in there...open his mouth...easy...induce vomiting...

DON'T induce vomiting...be careful...hurry!!!

(THEY prop KENNETH up and simultaneously pour multi-colored liquids into KENNETH's listless mouth...they pull back and wait for results...KENNETH does not move)

COOKIE: *(after a moment of motionless silence)* Was it something I said?

WALLY: (*seeing LES*) Turn that thing off!

(*LES obliges.*)

HEATHER: Is Kenny dead?

(*GAIL, WALLY, JIMMY and TIM all check KENNETH's pulse points simultaneously.*)

ALL FOUR: Yes.

LES: Sis?

COOKIE: Yes, Les ...

(*Correcting herself*)

Pres?

LES: Can I skip the salad course?

COOKIE: (*setting the tupperware down briskly with a gasp*) Oooh!

TIMMY: (*quickly snatching up the tupperware*) I wonder what was in it?

WALLY: I'm going out on a limb and guessing salad.

JIMMY: Don't touch it!

GAIL: Let's get that stuff outta here!

COOKIE: Be careful, Timmy.

TIMMY: It's okay ... I've got it under control. I'm gonna check this out!

(*TIMMY snaps the lid back onto the tupperware and holds it guardedly to his chest.*)

COOKIE: I thought he brought that salad himself.

TIMMY: He did

HEATHER: I can't believe he's gone.

GAIL: I can't either ... but I'm willing to try. Wally ... Jimmy ... after seeing what Kenneth was experiencing prior to his death, it might be wise to get the body out of here

(*They stare at GAIL dumbly*)

... before it explodes?!

COOKIE: Explodes!?!

GAIL: Yes. Something pretty violent was going on inside of Kenneth ... there might be ruptured organs, volatile chemical reactions, malfunction of bodily systems ...

LES: Is this going to be like "Alien?"

GAIL: Tough call.

LES: (*to WALLY and JIMMY*) Get him outta here ...

(*WALLY and JIMMY quickly but gingerly scoop him up and rush him out of the room.*)

GAIL: Ladies and gentlemen ... I don't think I'm speaking out of turn when I say that ... in the cause of science ... Dr. Kenneth Powers would have wanted us to continue with this anticipated journey into the desert.

HEATHER: Are you nuts?

GAIL: Not at all. If Kenneth was indeed poisoned, that's all the more reason for us to continue. There may be important research to be done in the field of toxicology this weekend ... research which we can and must do ... the very research which will allow us to save lives ... lives like that of Dr. Kenneth Powers.

HEATHER: When did you write that?

GAIL: (*icily*) Some people happen to have a natural command of the English language.

HEATHER: Command this!

(HEATHER begins raising an inappropriate gesture which GAIL snaps her fingers and quells.)

WALLY: *(returning with JIMMY)* Well ... that's done!

(JIMMY expediences a full-body shudder.)

TIMMY: Yeah?

WALLY: Uh-huh.

(To TIMMY)

And that, my friend, is just one of the reasons you always bring an oilskin tarp along on such occasions.

(JIMMY has another shudder)

So...

(Checking his roster)

... oh, yeah ... dinner!

(Calling off to the kitchen)

Hey ... we're ready to eat. What's the first course?

ALL STAFF: Salad.

WALLY: Oh, yeah?

(To the wary audience)

Oh, come on ... different kitchen, different salad ... I'll bet it's not even the same dressing.

LES: It better not be.

WALLY: *(to LES)* And YOU ... you should just be grateful there's an extra one now to go around.

JIMMY: Thank heaven for small favors.

WALLY: *(to the crowd)* Chow time!

3 -- DINNER

(The death of KENNETH has obviously left everyone shaken. During the meal, TIMMY examines the salad from time to time and makes copious notes in his journal. WALLY busies himself with the gear [and at some point removes the videocassette from the camera]. Speculations run rampant, especially regarding the following topics:

- 1. who handed the salad besides Kenneth?*
 - 2. what was Kenneth's watch doing caught in Heather's hair?*
 - 3. why is Wally so sensitive about his name?*
 - 4. what is Les's real reason for tagging along on the field trip?*
 - 5. why were Jimmy and Wally both so upset about Les's appearance?*
 - 6. why does Cookie want the trip videotaped?*
 - 7. why did Timmy grab the salad and protect it so vehemently?*
 - 8. what are Gail's personal and professional feelings for Kenneth?*
- After a cautious meal, the action resumes.)*

4 -- AFTER DINNER (ACT TWO)

8 pages

4 -- RAMBLES

5 -- RESOLUTION (ACT THREE)

5 pages

6 -- CURTAIN CALL

7 -- ANNOUNCEMENT OF MASTER DETECTIVE

NAME _____

SLEUTHING SHEET -- DOOMED ON THE DESERT'S EDGE

1. WHO KILLED DR. KENNETH POWERS?

2. WHY?

3. IF EVERYTHING HAD GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN, WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD BEFORE THE TRIP INTO THE DESERT BEGAN?

4. WHO HAD BEEN PLANNING TO KILL THEM?

5. WHY?

6. WHOSE DEATH WAS PLANNED TO OCCUR DURING THE TRIP?

7. BY WHOM WERE THEY GOING TO BE KILLED?

8. WHY?

9. WHOSE DEATH WAS PLANNED TO OCCUR AFTER THE TRIP?

10. WHAT PIECE OF EVIDENCE WAS THE SECRET CLUE?