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# Pencils, Paper & Poison

A One Act Culinary Mystery

by Sherrie Pesta

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# Pencils, Paper and Poison

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## **CHARACTERS**

**3W / 4M / 3 Either**

**JONAS NARCY** (M, 30's – 50's): *The principal; not a respected authority figure.*

**CONSTANCE GLIMMER** (F, mid 20's - early 40's): *The receptionist; smart, funny and socially adept.*

**JOY GREENE** (F, 20's): *Kindergarten Teacher; syrupy sweet.*

**ERNEST MEADOW** (M, late 20's to early 50's): *Girls' soccer team coach; questionably effective.*

**NOEL STILLE** (F, late 50's to late 60's): *Librarian; brilliant but sensitive.*

**MARK TRACE** (M, 30's to 50's): *Academic Dean of High School.; deserves his post.*

**SAMUEL (OR SAMMI)**, (E, any age): *A delivery person.*

**POLICE OFFICER 1/TRENT** (M, 20's): *Not entirely settled upon life choices.*

**POLICE OFFICER 2** (E, 30's – 40's): *Lead detective; smart but not infallible.*

**POLICE OFFICER 3** (E, 20's – 40's): *Dedicated to his work.*

## **TIME**

*Present day; two days before Thanksgiving.*

## **PLACE**

*The reception area & faculty lounge of a typical high school.*

## **ETC.**

*All recipes that appear in the play should be printed, as they would be in a culinary mystery. They might be collected within a program or projected on a screen.*

## Pencils, Paper & Poison

By Sherrie Pesta

### SCENE 1

SETTING:

*Present day, two days before Thanksgiving: The reception area and faculty lounge of a typical high school. While the day is listed on the school calendar as a holiday, all faculty and staff have suddenly been called in. Presumably there are no students on campus.*

*A large receptionist's counter dominates the majority of SR and SRC. A small desk and a chair sit behind the counter, elevated in a way that the audience can see the receptionist, CONSTANCE GLIMMER, when seated behind the counter.*

*A smaller table and a scattering of chairs dominate SL and SLC. This area is a small faculty lounge. Other items of use to include in this area are a coffee machine and either faculty mailboxes or a vending machine although the latter can be assumed to be offstage.*

*Ideally there are four entrance/exits; these do not require doors, but if doors are used they should have signs. UR exit leads to the Principal's office. DR is the entrance to the school from the parking lot. UL leads to faculty bathrooms. DL leads to the rest of the school and perhaps a larger part of the faculty lounge.*

AT RISE:

*CONSTANCE is alone on stage. She is sorting mail to put into the faculty boxes. CONSTANCE is generally good natured and bright; today, however, she is not a happy person. She barely looks up from her work when Coach ERNEST MEADOW enters from DL.*

ERNEST

Is he in his office?

CONSTANCE

Yes, but he's not alone.

ERNEST

What are you doing here, Constance? Thought you were going on a cruise for the holidays?

CONSTANCE

So did I. Got cornered after school yesterday and told the meetings today were mandatory, for all. I can't afford to lose this job. So ... I missed the boat.

ERNEST

I suppose you and John still have time to plan a traditional Thanksgiving here.

CONSTANCE

I wish. John went on the cruise! Said the tickets were nonrefundable so they shouldn't go to waste. Took another fool! They've been sending me snapchats all morning, the two of them sipping cocktails and lounging on the deck. I'm going to kill him.

ERNEST

Which him?

CONSTANCE

True. But you said it, not me. What do you need to see *this* him for, anyway? If it's an emergency I can try to interrupt his current meeting. I'm very curious and would love a reason to interrupt. He has been in there since before I arrived at 7! I only know someone else is with him because I can hear crying.

ERNEST

That sounds about right. I need to talk to him about a soccer player, a girl who did not try out for the team but mysteriously showed up on my roster.

CONSTANCE

Two left feet?

ERNEST

Try three or four.

CONSTANCE

And you figure Narcy pacified a parent at your expense. Compelling argument for a meeting, but ... an emergency?

ERNEST

Not to anyone but me, probably. (*Sighs and moves to faculty lounge area*) Is there coffee at least?

CONSTANCE

Always. But ran out of sugar, and only have powdered creamer. Help yourself.

ERNEST

Nasty. Thank you.

*ERNEST gets a Styrofoam cup and pours coffee from a pot then sits.*

*JOY GREENE runs in DL. She carries a large plastic bowl and a fist full of quarters and dollar bills. She sets the bowl on the table then moves to the vending machine. If the machine is placed offstage we should hear sounds of it working. If onstage, she can be upstage of it so we do not see it in action.*

ERNEST

Hi, Joy. What's up?

JOY

*(With panic in her voice)*

The elementary school teachers are having a party this morning. Everyone is contributing a dish made from a favorite holiday recipe.

CONSTANCE

Nice. What did you bring? What's in the bowl?

ERNEST

*(Flipping the bowl up into the air like a ball)*

Nothing.

JOY

BECAUSE I FORGOT!

*JOY finishes pumping money into the vending machine and collecting something we cannot see. She returns to the table with a handful of small bags.*

JOY, *Continued*

Please don't tell on me! I'm going to fix this.

ERNEST

With popcorn?

*ERNEST reaches for one of the bags; JOY grabs it back.*

JOY

With a spur-of-the-moment creation: **“Joy’s Thanksgiving Trail Mix”!** (*Begins emptying popcorn, small pretzels and candy into the bowl*) Is there a spoon around here?

CONSTANCE

Sorry. Just coffee stirrers. (*Hands JOY a tiny plastic straw*) I think there's a box of raisins in my desk though. Would those help?

ERNEST

Couldn't hurt. (*Takes a clean Styrofoam cup, scoops some of the concoction up to scrutinize*) You should add some nuts too.

JOY

I'm out of change.

ERNEST

Allow me.

*ERNEST crosses to the vending machine for more peanuts.*

JOY

I suppose the party will make today a bit more bearable. But I sure wish I was at home cleaning. My mother-in-law arrives tonight. I couldn't clean yesterday because I was here until nearly 10.

ERNEST

I thought I was the only one who got stuck here that late.

JOY

Recently it seems I am always here. Principle “Narcissistic” nitpicks my lesson plans to death. Like he’s ever spent a day in a classroom. (*Lowers voice remembering how close she is to his office*) Oh, dear. You don’t think he heard me, do you?

ERNEST

No. He only hears himself talk. (*Returns*) I think it’s a policy.

CONSTANCE

It’s probably on his office wall like an inspirational poster: “Listen only to Thine Self”.

*THE THREE laugh, until they hear voices getting closer from off UR.*

JOY

Gotta go. Whenever he sees me, I end up with more work. (*Starts out*) Thank you for the help!

*JOY exits DL as ALL shout ‘Happy Thanksgiving.’*

*The PRINCIPAL’S office door UR opens. NOEL STILLE, the librarian enters. She has obviously been crying. She forces a smile at CONSTANCE and COACH before running out UR, to bathroom. CONSTANCE follows her out. PRINCIPLE enters UR. He stops UCR near desk.*

ERNEST

Principle Narcy, I was wondering if I might have a moment ...

NARCY

NOT NOW, MEADOW! MS. GLIMMER? GET YOUR CALENDAR AND COME IN HERE!

*NARCY exits again UR, closing door behind him.*

CONSTANCE

(*Re-enters*) Mr. Charming bellows.

ERNEST

Is Noel alright?

CONSTANCE

I don't think so ... Perhaps you should come back later, Ernest.

ERNEST

It's hot outside for this time of year. Might as well wait in here long as I can.

CONSTANCE

Coach! You have girls outside practicing in this heat? On a holiday?

COACH

If I had to come to school today, why shouldn't they? Besides, soccer districts are in two weeks. *They're* young. Resilient.

CONSTANCE

*(As she gathers her calendar sees a plate)*

Oh! *(Picks up plate and moves it to the faculty table)* I made this last night, from a recipe my daughter sent me from college. "**ROLO Pretzel Delights.**" Kara found it online. *(Removes wrap from over plate)* Maybe you could offer Noel one when she comes out of the bathroom? Might cheer her a little.

ERNEST

Sure. Can do.

CONSTANCE

They're a bit silly but tasty. You have one too.

ERNEST

Thank you. At least I'm getting fed while I wait this morning.

CONSTANCE

*(Starts to exit)* Happy Thanksgiving.

ERNEST

Happy Thanksgiving to you, Constance. Be careful in there. It's a lion's den.

CONSTANCE

Hmm. Wonder if a touch of sugar might tame as well as comfort.

*CONSTANCE crosses to get a Rolo treat for NARCY.*

ERNEST

*(Handing her his cup of Trail Mix)*

Take this too. If I do gain entrance, *(Waves at the UR door)*, I would prefer a calmer battleground.

*CONSTANCE exits UR. COACH reaches for treat. NOEL enters UL.*

ERNEST

Noel, could I pour you a cup of coffee?

NOEL

No, thanks. I better get back to the library.

ERNEST

Chocolate? It's a stress reliever!

NOEL

*(Smiling wanly)* Alright. I'll take one with me. But I do need to go. I cannot stay in this office another moment.

*NOEL begins to wrap a Rolo treat into a paper towel.*

ERNEST

Sounds like you need a holiday.

NOEL

Like the one scheduled for today? Humph. Actually...it appears I will have plenty of time away.

ERNEST

You haven't been suspended?

NOEL

No.

ERNEST

That's a relief. Half the athletic department needs your tutoring. If you disappear we might as well cancel the rest of the season.

NOEL

I've been retired.

ERNEST

WHAT?

NOEL

Principle Narcy claims the school can no longer afford me. I have two weeks. He has already hired some twenty-some-year-old straight out of college. She takes my place before Christmas.

*NOEL sits and starts to cry again.*

ERNEST

*(Helping her up and towards the DL exit)*

Come on. I'm taking you out of this sanitarium. Leave the junk. We need something harder.

NOEL

It's not even 10 A.M.

ERNEST

Bagels. And coffee that doesn't burn through a cup.

NOEL

Why not. I can't exactly get fired.

*THEY exit DR. LIGHTS OUT.*

## SCENE 2

SETTING:

*Same; thirty minutes later. Lobby is still empty.*

AT RISE:

*SAMUEL, a delivery person, enters DR. He waits. Door UR opens. CONSTANCE reenters.*

CONSTANCE

Principle Narcy can see you now, Ernest.

SAMUEL

*(Looks around)*

I'm not Ernest.

CONSTANCE

No. He must have given up. How are you, Samuel? Can I help you?

SAMUEL

I hope so. This is my last delivery of the week. I just need a signature.

CONSTANCE

*(Signs a clipboard and takes a box)*

Sorry you must work today. Do you have Turkey Day plans?

SAMUEL

If you consider standing in security lines at the airport, then yes. Hey, I thought the school would be closed today? I was shocked to find the doors open when I arrived.

CONSTANCE

No more shocked than any of us were to be rounded up. Mandatory professional development day, or so I'm told. I just answer the phones and police *his* door.

SAMUEL

Getting overtime anyway?

CONSTANCE

Don't make me laugh. Who's the box from?

SAMUEL

I don't read 'em, just deliver 'em. The box is warm though, and it smells like cinnamon.

CONSTANCE

If this is a pumpkin pie, it might just end up misdirected, straight into my car.

SAMUEL

Sounds like a plan. I'll happily disappear before anyone else knows I was ever here. Then you do whatever you wish with that box. You deserve a bonus!

CONSTANCE

Amen to that.

SAMUEL

*(On his way out)*

See you Monday, Constance.

CONSTANCE

Unless one of us wins the lottery!

*SAMUEL exits DR.  
CONSTANCE stares at box,  
smells. She decides, picks up her  
car keys. She is stopped by a  
shout off UR.*

NARCY

GLIMMER! I'M EXPECTING A DELIVERY. WHEN IT ARRIVES, BRING IT STRAIGHT IN!

*CONSTANCE sighs, puts down her keys, exits UR with box. Dean MARK TRACE enters DL. He carries a load of academic folders, and a large aluminum pan covered in foil. He stops at the desk and looks for a pen. CONSTANCE reenters.*

CONSTANCE

Hello, Dean Trace. Looking for something?

MARK

I apologize, Ms. Glimmer. I did not mean to be snooping around your desk. I simply need an ink pen. Can I bother you for one?

CONSTANCE

No bother. *(Hands him a pen)* How are the meetings going?

MARK

Pointless endeavors. No one planned on physically being here. Thus, no one is mentally here. Compound that with my not knowing what I am doing ....

CONSTANCE

Now, I admire modesty, Dean Trace, but you have been the Academic Dean for this High School for over twelve years. If anyone knows what he is doing...

MARK

Ah! You have not heard. ... *(Pause)* ... My title has changed. I am now Dean of Activities and Building Supervisor.

CONSTANCE

What does that mean?

MARK

It means that Principle Narcy would prefer to act as Academic Dean himself. ... *(Pause)* ... My duties have shifted to chaperoning extracurricular activities and setting up microphones in the Cafetorium. I'm here to hand over the last of the academic files.

CONSTANCE

Oh, dear. I am sorry.

MARK

Me too. I have loved serving as Academic Dean. ... *(Pause)* ... I suppose I will need to start job searching. Do you know how difficult it is to compose a vitae after all these years?

CONSTANCE

There has to be something we can do. *(Epiphany)* The students could write a petition!

MARK

No. It's time to move on, when an opportunity arrives. Keep me in mind, will you? I can't cut off building alarms forever.

CONSTANCE

*(Nodding)* Whatever you're holding in that pan smells good at least.

MARK

Leftovers from a Teacher Appreciation luncheon. The twins' mom made it. "**Gigi's Gluten-Free Pasta Salad.**" I was going to take it home, but decided a bribe could never hurt. I assume Nancy is in; is he available?

CONSTANCE

Yes. He's not in a generous mood though. If you would rather, I can hand things over.

MARK

Would you? I would be in your debt. The high school faculty are about to stage a riot. I should return before they run something inappropriate up the flag pole. Happy Thanksgiving, Constance.

CONSTANCE

Happy Thanksgiving, Mark.

*As MARK exits DL, CONSTANCE takes the pasta and flies off UR. COACH ERNEST appears DR alone. He carries a bagel bag. CONSTANCE reenters.*

CONSTANCE

Hello again. Principle Nancy is available now.

ERNEST

OK. *(Pause)* I took Noel home. We were ordering bagels when she broke down. *(Pause)* How can anyone be so heartless?

CONSTANCE

Egocentric. His universe has only one planet.

ERNEST

Perhaps entering his alien atmosphere will be safer if laden with a gift? I did purchase an extra bagel. (*Shows bag*) **Seasonal Turkey with Cranberry Sauce on a Potato Bread Bagel.** Could break the ice?

CONSTANCE

Could. Or you could go down in flames. "*Warning!*"

*They laugh. NARCY enters UR.*

NARCY

MEADOWS. GOOD. WE HAVE SOMETHING TO DISCUSS. MY OFFICE. NOW.  
(*Exits*)

ERNEST

Going in for a landing. (*Shakes the bagel bag*) Wish me luck.

*ERNEST exits UR. CONSTANCE begins to clean the area. NOEL enters DR quietly. When CONSTANCE sees her, she is surprised.*

CONSTANCE

OH! NOEL! Ernest said he dropped you at your house. Are you alright?

NOEL

Honestly? No. But I did send a package to Principle Narcy, which I forgot about, and I wondered if it was delivered.

CONSTANCE

Should it smell like warm cinnamon buns?

NOEL

Probably. Did it arrive?

CONSTANCE

I believe it did, yes. Though I truthfully almost stole it.

NOEL

You are welcome to it. I returned thinking I might do the same. Where is it?

CONSTANCE

In his office. He shouted that he was expecting a package. I assumed ...

NOEL

Fair enough. Maybe he will choke on it.

CONSTANCE

What is it?

NOEL

A family recipe: “**Peachy Pumpkin Pecan Pie.**”

CONSTANCE

Yum. A little bourbon and who cares what else is on the table!

NOEL

Amen. If you could sneak that pie back out here, I would gladly go for the Bourbon.

CONSTANCE

Tempting. But he tore into the box before it hit his desk. Can I do anything else for you, Noel?

NOEL

Not unless you want to join me elsewhere for that bourbon. Ernest’s idea of ‘hard’ was bagels.

CONSTANCE

It’s not even 11A.M. ... (*Her phone chirps and she looks at a picture.*) ... BUT ... if John and Troy can enjoy Daiquiris in the Palm Tree Lounge then why shouldn’t I sip one in the .... What’s open?

NOEL

The lobby bar in Hotel Idyllic is open 24 hours?

CONSTANCE

Done. Gladly. Just let me leave a note.

*CONSTANCE scribbles a note as we hear NARCY yell from offstage.*

*NARCY, Offstage*

GLIMMER! BRING A PEN AND PAPER. I HAVE SOMETHING TO DICTATE!

*CONSTANCE hears NARCY and the girls run off DR.*

*LIGHTS OUT.*

### SCENE 3

SETTING: *Same; the following day, one day before Thanksgiving.*

ST RISE: *A BODY lies on the floor behind the Receptionist's desk. All the AUDIENCE can see are the legs and feet protruding out towards CS. POLICEMAN 1 sits DR. There are TWO MORE POLICEMEN offstage UR. In the faculty lounge area are NOEL, MARK, ERNEST, JOY and CONSTANCE.*

ERNEST

Even dead he has managed to inconvenience us all.

MARK

I don't know why I'm here. They said he was poisoned, right?

CONSTANCE

Yes. And you gave him that pan full of pasta salad.

MARK

NO! YOU gave him the pan. Remember? I turned it over to YOU, and I left! How do I know what you did with it after I left?

NOEL

He's right! You gave him my pie too! I certainly didn't poison it. Maybe you did?!

CONSTANCE

Really? Are you all going to gang up on me? And after I embarrassed myself at a hotel bar for you, Noel! Shame!

JOY

Well, it couldn't have been me. I took my bowl of trail mix out with me.

ERNEST

Actually.... I gave a cup of it to Constance to take in to Narcy....

CONSTANCE

I DID NOT POISON ANYONE!

*EVERYONE starts talking to her at once. ERNEST intervenes.*

ERNEST

Leave her alone. We all have motives for poisoning His Loathsomeness. Turning on each other will not help our situation. And I, for one, would like to go home before Thanksgiving is over.

CONSTANCE

Ernest.... I hate to ask, but.... Did you give him your Turkey and Cranberry Bagel?

ERNEST

Hacky sack! Yes, I handed him the bag. But he just sat it down on his desk. I have no idea if he ate any of it. *(All eyes on him)* And, NO! I did not poison the bagel!

MARK

Alright. Maybe we should leave this to the authorities.

*NOEL points to POLICEMAN 1 at CONSTANCE'S desk who is now watching YouTube videos on his phone and laughing out loud.*

NOEL

You mean Colombo over there?

*MARK has wandered over to the body.*

MARK

*(Looks down at the dead Principal)*

I wonder who will take over as Interim Principal.

JOY

*(Rushing over)*

Ah! Motive!

MARK

Me? Isn't that one of your lesson plans he's clutching?

*ALL OTHERS rush over. They circle the body, facing DS but standing largely behind the desk. They crane to see what he holds.*

ERNEST

It looks like an employment contract.

CONSTANCE

Probably. He had me in his office several times yesterday typing contracts for new hires.

JOY

In the middle of the year? Who did he plan to replace?

NOEL

Me, for one. *(Returns to a chair DL)*

ERNEST

*(Walking towards her)*

We're all sorry, Noel.

CONSTANCE

I typed a contract for a new Coach ...

ERNEST

What?

CONSTANCE

... a third-grade teacher, a building security officer, and ... a receptionist.

ERNEST

*(As ALL move away from body)*

That scheming....

MARK

... power-hungry...

JOY

... ego-deflating ...

CONSTANCE

... task master!

NOEL

Amen. I bet he's not even a reader.

CONSTANCE

He has had me to do that for him. My replacement will probably be more experienced with text.

MARK

Wait a minute. Constance, after typing these contracts, did you file them?

CONSTANCE

Not yet. Why?

MARK

He's gone! And the persons in this room are the only persons who know what he had planned. (*OTHERS make sounds of understanding*) If we can just get those contracts and tear them up before anyone else sees them....

CONSTANCE

Easy! They're in a folder there on my desk. I was supposed to call the new employees, even my own replacement!

*She moves towards the desk but  
POLICEMAN 1 looks up.*

POLICEMAN 1

Hey! You're not to touch anything. It's evidence.

*As CONSTANCE joins others DL,  
POLICEMEN 2 & 3 enter from UR.*

POLICEMAN 2

Alright. We need to interview each of you individually. We have cordoned off the ... food ... in the other room. Just don't touch anything but the chair you sit in. Who's first, Sergeant?

POLICEMAN 3

*(Reading from a list)* Noel Stille.

CONSTANCE

*(Reacting to NOEL'S apparent fear)* Do want someone to go with you?

POLICEMAN 2

That won't be necessary. She will be handled with care. The rest of you sit tight.

*As NOEL exits UR with POLICEMAN 2, JOY runs to POLICEMAN 3.*

JOY

How long is this going to take, sir? My mother-in-law is in town and she is probably searching in closets and behind the couch right now. The woman never liked me.

POLICEMAN 3

There's been a murder, ma'am. This will take as long as it takes. *(Pause)* Is there a reason your mother-in-law does not like you?

JOY

Umm...

CONSTANCE

*(Rescuing her friend and guiding her away)*

Not at all, officer. She's a joy. Like her name! Joy!

*POLICEMAN 3 exits UR slowly, staring at JOY oddly.*

ERNEST

Now what? We can't reach the contracts, which will probably be taken into evidence.

JOY

We can't escape this horrid place.

MARK

I still wonder who will be interim principal.

CONSTANCE

No one if we all go to prison. We need a confession.

*CONSTANCE stares at MARK, causing THE OTHERS to do the same.*

MARK

I AM NOT A KILLER!

*POLICEMAN 1 looks up at MARK'S shouting.*

ERNEST

We don't know that it was any of us. Maybe someone else poisoned him.

CONSTANCE

The only food he ingested was the food that WE gave him.

JOY

And you know that how? Because YOU are the only person always here! YOU could have slipped something into any of OUR dishes!

MARK

*(Shrugging)*  
Joy's not wrong.

*Now they are ALL staring at  
CONSTANCE.*

CONSTANCE

Turning against me again? Fine. I'll hand over the file of contracts to those police officers as soon as it's my turn to be interviewed!

MARK

NO! *(Facing others)* We must work together. Let's sit down and do our own investigation. Any objections? *(They mumble but move to table.)* Constance, will you take notes?

CONSTANCE

Really?

MARK

Never mind. I'll do it myself.

*LIGHTS OUT.*

#### SCENE 4

SETTING: Same; *several hours later.*

AT RISE: *The body has been removed.  
There's tape on the floor.  
Everyone on stage is tired. MARK  
has pages of notes. There are  
soda cans, chip bags and other  
remnants of snacks from the  
vending machine on the table.  
ERNEST enters UR with  
Policemen 2 & 3.*

POLICEMAN 2

You are all free to go.

JOY

Free? We're no longer suspects?

POLICEMAN 3

Oh, you're all suspects still. We just don't have enough to hold any of you.

POLICEMAN 2

*(To POLICEMAN 3)*

Too much information, Sergeant. *(To OTHERS)* Don't leave town. I will have more questions.

MARK

*(OTHERS start moving)*

Perhaps we can still help today. *(THEY groan; MARK talks to them.)* You want to be off the hook for good, right? *(THEY agree; He talks to THE POLICEMEN.)* We have thought back over yesterday's events, and we have some questions of our own. *(Shows them his notes)* Can we see the food?

POLICEMAN 2

The food has all been taken to the lab. It was removed with the body.

MARK

Oh, yes. Then can we see where the food was?

POLICEMAN 2

Fine. But just you.

*POLICEMAN 2 guides MARK out of room. POLICEMAN 3 follows. CONSTANCE waves NOEL ahead. They have a plan. NOEL crosses to POLICEMAN 1 who now has a magazine.*

NOEL

Officer, I must take my heart medicine. It's in my car. Could you please walk with me to get it?

POLICEMAN 1

Well.... as you HAVE been officially released, I suppose it won't matter. Sure. Let's go, ma'am.

*As soon as POLICEMAN 1 and NOEL exit, CONSTANCE and the others run to the desk. She grabs up the file of contracts and flips through them.*

ERNEST

Score! Just hand me the entire file. I'll shred it in the supply room.

CONSTANCE

They know this file was sitting here. We need to find our specific contracts and leave the rest.

JOY

How many are there?

CONSTANCE

Twenty-three.

ERNEST

My god. The whole campus will be new.

CONSTANCE

Not if Dean Trace becomes the interim and voids the rest.

JOY

Just get ours out of there. The others can fend for themselves.

ERNEST

There's the old team spirit.

JOY

Bah.

*CONSTANCE hands ERNEST a pile of papers, then returns the file to the desk. ERNEST exits SL quickly. CONSTANCE and JOY pose as if not guilty. We hear a very loud sound of shredding offstage. POLICEMAN 3 enters UR.*

POLICEMAN 3

What's that noise? And where is everyone?

*POLICEMAN 1 and NOEL enter DR.*

NOEL

I'm so sorry, sir. I must have left my pills at home.

POLICEMAN 1

Where's the other one? The coach?

POLICEMAN 3

Where have *you* been?

POLICEMAN 1

Helping this sweet old lady.

*ERNEST returns, holding a bag of something from the vending machine.*

POLICEMAN 3

What was that noise?

ERNEST

The vending machine. My candy got stuck and the metal rings started grinding together. God awful, huh?

POLICEMAN 3

How can you eat?

POLICEMAN 1

I could eat.

*ERNEST offers him some.  
POLICEMAN 1 and NOEL cross SL.*

POLICEMAN 3

A man was poisoned here.

ERNEST

*(Stuffing something into his mouth)*

Life goes on.

NOEL

*(Quietly)*

Hopefully better than before.

POLICEMAN 3

Captain wants to know if you keep salt anywhere.

CONSTANCE

No. Principle Narcy had high blood pressure. He didn't want to be tempted to use salt on his food.

POLICEMAN 2

*(Entering again with MARK)*

Explain again why we are looking for salt?

MARK

If none of us poisoned him, maybe someone else did. Maybe someone sprinkled poisoning on one of our dishes, after the fact.

POLICEMAN 1

Cool. Who did it?

*After silencing POLICEMAN 1 with a look, POLICEMAN 2 turns to MARK.*

POLICEMAN 2

Go ahead. Let's hear your theories.

MARK

OK. Well... *(Looking through his notes)* Here! Ernest and Noel were grumbling about Narcy at the bagel shop, for instance. Maybe a disgruntled bagel boy heard and took initiative?

POLICEMAN 3

Talk about a stretch.

JOY

Or maybe someone poisoned the raisins that went into my Trail Mix. They had been sitting in Constance's desk. Anyone could have tampered with them.

POLICEMAN 3

Like Constance?

POLICEMAN 2

Quiet, Sergeant. *(To MARK)* Go on.

MARK

*(Flipping through notes again)*

A delivery person brought the pumpkin pie.

NOEL

That's right!

POLICEMAN 2

*(To CANDACE)*

I suppose a Keebler Elf baked your Rolo drops?

CONSTANCE

No, I did. *(Stops for a second)* But I kinda stole the candy.

POLICEMAN 3

Stole?

CONSTANCE

Devon, this cute kindergartner, brought it in. It was supposed to be a gift for Principle Narcy. I figured he would never know if....

POLICEMAN 3

*(Has been scribbling notes)*

Kindergartner Devon.... How many more suspects is that?!

*POLICEMAN 2 looks at  
POLICEMAN 3 with a tired  
expression.*

POLICEMAN 1

*(SL, eating and sitting with Noel)*

Sounds like you should have been interviewing them out here, Captain. They seem closer to solving this crime than....

POLICEMAN 2

Quiet! *(Gets his thoughts together)* So. Who do YOU five think killed your boss?

MARK

*(Finally)*

We don't know.

POLICEMAN 2

Uh, huh.

MARK

But I have a theory.

POLICEMAN 2

*(After a long pause)*

Which has something to do with salt? We have already concluded that there is no salt on the premises.

CONSTANCE

*(Lighting up)*

Oh! But there is an herbal seasoning! *(Starts to exit UR; remembers she needs permission)*  
May I?

POLICEMAN 2

Sergeant.

*POLICEMAN 3 exits, putting on gloves. CONSTANCE shouts.*

CONSTANCE

LOOK IN HIS TOP RIGHT HAND DRAWER! *(To POLICEMAN 2)* Nancy's wife, Marcie, brought it in. *(Gasps with realization)* She told me it was expensive and made me promise that I would not "steal" any of it. *(To OTHERS)* She's a bitter woman.

*POLICEMAN 3 returns holding a bottle in an evidence bag. He hands it to POLICEMAN 2 who holds it up.*

POLICEMAN 2

This must be what was sprinkled on everything!

POLICEMAN 3

*(Incredulous)*

It was even on the pie!

POLICEMAN 2

Do you have an address for the wife?

CONSTANCE

I know it by heart.

*POLICEMAN 2 writes on a notepad.*

*LIGHTS OUT.*

## SCENE 5

SETTING: *Same; a week later.*

AT RISE: *POLICEMAN 1, now wearing street clothes, sits at CONSTANCE'S desk. SAMUEL Enters DR with a box. He stops in confusion.*

SAMUEL

Where's the Receptionist?

POLICEMAN 1

I'm Trent, the *new* Receptionist.

SAMUEL

Aren't you the policeman who came to check my alibi?

TRENT

Ah! Yes. I didn't even recognize you! Sorry. I'm ... terrible at remembering faces, *or names!* In fact, I was a *terrible* Policeman. Checking your alibi was my last official duty. I resigned.

SAMUEL

And came to work here?

TRENT

They had an opening! I like the people.

SAMUEL

Ok... Well, if you could just sign for this package....

TRENT

*(Taking the box and smelling it broadly)*

Is it food? I'm not supposed to accept anything edible.

*CONSTANCE runs in from UR.*

SAMUEL

Oh, hi!

CONSTANCE

Hi, Sam! Just in time. I have some deliveries for you. Trent, could you please get those from my office?

*TRENT exits UR.*

SAMUEL

*YOUR* office?

CONSTANCE

Temporarily. As soon as a new Principal is hired, I will be the Administrative Assistant. Meanwhile, the board decided I knew more about the workings of this office than anyone else! *(Smiles)*

SAMUEL

Congratulations?

*TRENT brings packages.  
Constance signs for box, which  
she sniffs then drops in trash.  
SAMUEL shrugs and exits DR as  
JOY runs in DL. She wears  
athletic attire.*

CONSTANCE

Joy! How's it going?

JOY

Second grade is still the germ-infested zoo it has always been. My afternoons, however, now brighten my day! I LOVE coaching girls' soccer!

CONSTANCE

Yea! Is Coach Meadow holding up? I hope he's not insulted with the changes I have made?

JOY

Are you kidding? His new regimen suits him. He polishes the "Academic Director" plaque on his door every other hour! Then he spends half hour increments circling the field on the golf cart you bought him, shouting commands at athletes and coaches as he drives by, followed by half hour breaks in the air-conditioned stadium checking scoreboards, ball supplies and weight equipment. Repeat all day. He is in gym heaven!

CONSTANCE

That's a relief.

JOY

I came to see if a package was delivered.

CONSTANCE

*(Lifting the box from the trash)*

This is yours? It smelled like food.

JOY

Noel's. She asked me to bring it the library. I think it's scented erasers, prizes for the book fair winners.

CONSTANCE

That's right! The Book Fair opens today. I am glad to see Noel back in full force.

JOY

*(Taking box)*

Me too. I need to rush this back, though, as soccer practice is also in full force.

TRENT

I can take the box over.

CONSTANCE

You just want an eraser. *(Smiles)* Go ahead!

*JOY and TRENT exit SL as  
MARK enters.*

MARK

*(Genuinely happy)*

Afternoon, boss!

CONSTANCE

Please don't call me that. It should be *you* dealing with this interim nightmare!

MARK

The board wanted you.

CONSTANCE

I fought for you, Mark. I never wanted this.

MARK

You're doing great. And I'm glad to be back as Academic Dean.

CONSTANCE

I'm sorry that you are stuck managing the Cafetorium, too. It's only until a replacement can be found.

MARK

Temporary madness. You'll hire someone soon.

CONSTANCE

I just want the board to hire the *Principal*. I need a vacation.

MARK

Spring time cruise, maybe?

CONSTANCE

No way. It would remind me of ex-John. And I couldn't face those open buffets. I don't want anyone around my meals.

MARK

Marcie confessed.

TRENT

Actually, that's just a rumor. Yes, she has been arrested. And, yes, she does confess to lacing the herbal seasoning she left in his office with poison. BUT, she denies actually putting any of the poison on any food, so a jury must decide.....

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**

*Continue to Next Page for Recipes*

RECIPES

*NOTE: All Recipes should be printed in the program, left on a refreshment table, or projected onto a screen at opportune moments. The **Rolo Pretzel Delight** recipe is available on the candy bag. All others could be improvised. Below are a few mock recipes available for use.*

**Joy's Thanksgiving Trail Mix**

- 3-4 Snack Bags of Popcorn
- 1-2 Snack Bags of Mixed Nuts
- 1-2 Snack Bags of Pretzels
- 1 Snack Bag of Chocolate Candy
- 1 Small Box of Raisins

Stir together in a large bowl.

### **Seasonal Turkey with Cranberry Sauce on a Potato Bread Bagel**

- 1 Potato Bread Bagel, toasted and sliced
- Several slices of roast turkey
- Dollops of Cranberry Sauce

Assemble generously.

### **Peachy Pumpkin Pecan Pie**

- 1 store-bought pie crust
- 2 tablespoons Butter
- 1/2 cups Sugar
- 3 Eggs
- 1/2 teaspoon Salt
- 1 teaspoon Vanilla Extract
- 1 cup Corn Syrup
- 1 cup Pecans (chopped)
- 1/2 cup Pumpkin filling
- 3 Ripe Peaches, Sliced

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Blend butter, sugar, eggs, vanilla and corn syrup in a bowl.

Stir in pecans and pumpkin. Pour all into ready-made crust.

Bake for 40 minutes. Remove from oven. Arrange sliced peaches on top of pie.

Bake for 10-15 more minutes. Let cool.

### **“Gigi’s Gluten-Free Pasta Salad.”**

- 1 Bag / Box of Gluten-Free Rotini
- Olive Oil
- 1 bunch, Green Onion
- 1 cup of Navy Beans
- 1 cup of Black Olives
- 1-2 Ripe tomatoes, sliced
- 1/2 cup of fresh Feta cheese
- 1/2 cup of Italian dressing
- Parmesan to taste

Cook Pasta as directed. Sautee green onion and black olives, lightly, in olive oil. Blend pasta, onion and olives in a large bowl with the navy beans, feta cheese and Italian dressing. Top with sliced tomato and parmesan. Serve chilled.