

GOOSE HIGH SCHOOL'S
IKE RICHE PLAYERS
present
A WHODUNNIT FOR THE NINETIES

CAST

Fred Bisnette	Ed /Guy Smiley
Melissa Metcalfe	Victim
Thane Wiseman	Husband
Iona Strachan Morag Hart Janice Bailey Carrie Michelin	4 Forensics
Brian Hollett	Sherlock Holmes
Joey Flowers	Watson
Stephanie Flowers	Jessica Fletcher
Jay Legere	Agent 86
Tanya Holwell	Agent 99
Dwayne Hopkins	Rick

CREW

Cathy Bragg	Stage manager
Richie Crawford Dwayne Hopkins Sue Ann Decker Marjorie Gear Erin Udby	
Teacher Director	Dorrie Brown



Dwayne Hopkins
as Rick

WHODUNNIT: FOR THE NINETIES

Black light.

Six dancers in black: one is Victim. Five are Suspects/Forensics.
(clear masks)

CHOREOGRAPHED dance depicting tension and violence towards Victim: each Suspect, in turn struggles with Victim, and each freezes his sequence in a different ambiguous striking pose, which apparently causes the Victim's death. Victim will spring up again, to engage in another struggle/death with another Suspect. Suspects not engaged in principal struggle are still engaged in the ensemble dance throughout (either mirroring the struggle itself, in pairs; or puzzling and investigating the scene). In final sequence, one Suspect struggles with Victim, while other four Suspects leave stage and put on trench-coats & fedoras, to return as Forensics. They enter, just as final Suspect dashes from the scene. Forensics investigate the scene, and the now-dead Victim, solemnly, and move steadily out through aisles.

MUSIC.

LIGHTS UP. GAME SHOW THEME MUSIC. Peter Gunn Theme (?) [The Art of Noise] Lights reveal a large Jeopardy board, with the categories: ALIBIS, WEAPONS, MOTIVES, SUSPECTS, and ROCK. Risers are placed diagonally at RC. A game-show podium sits a little forward of LC, on a diagonal.

SMILEY walks briskly and theatrically from SL, around podium moving to DC, talking as he goes:

SMILEY. Thank you, thank you... (chuckles)... thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome, welcome to the game show, "Whodunnit"-- the game show that asks.... Who done it?

Now, the rules of the game are simple enough: you, the audience have just witnessed a real murder (gestures towards Victim who lies lifeless DC at SMILEY'S feet). Not a pleasant sight, is it? Oh, but nevermind -- she can't help how she looks, now can she? I mean, if you'd been through what she's just been through, well, you'd look a bit short of photo-quality yourself -- y'know what I mean? Ye-es! (nods largely).

(moving away from body, and closer towards audience):

Now, you, the audience, are going to help us solve this little mystery. You may volunteer your own theory about this murder, basing your explanation on one of our four --

OFFSTAGE. F-i-v-e!

SMILEY. Four categories...

OFFSTAGE. F-i-v-e!

SMILEY. (embarrassed) Excuse me, just one moment (he moves around to podium, bends down behind it and emerges with MR. ED puppet on his hand). (scolding, under his breath:) What do you mean, interrupting like this? This is a live show, here...

MR. ED. (gestures towards Victim). She ain't!

SMILEY. (exasperated) She's not supposed to be -- she's the Victim!

MR. ED. I know that.

SMILEY. Then why are you interrupting?

MR. ED. Because there are five categories. You said four.

SMILEY. There are only four categories that have anything to do with a murder: "Suspects, Alibis, Weapons, and Motives!"

MR. ED. What about "Rock"? I had that one put up there.

SMILEY. What about "Rock"?

MR. ED. Why is it there, if it's not a 'real' category?

SMILEY. Call it tokenism. (long hard look)

MR. ED. You really know how to hurt a guy, don't you?

SMILEY. And this, of course, ladies and gentlemen is my faithful companion, Mr. Ed., who will soon be out of a job if he doesn't keep his little horsey lips tightly shut so I can get on with the show... (another long, hard look) [FORENSICS BEGIN TO FILE IN & TAKE PLACES ON RISERS[

Yes, ladies and gentlemen of the studio audience, you may venture your own theory about the "who", "how", and "why" of this murder before you... AND, if your explanation is a reasonable one, we shall refer it to our esteemed panel of Forensics, here, who will verify that you are either ab-so-lute-ly right (!)...or, mis-er-ab-ly WRONG!

MR. ED. (mimics SMILEY as he says and gestures "ab-so-lute-ly right... or, mis-er-ab-ly wrong". SMILEY catches him, at the end, and glares him down. ED smiles on, unperturbed, as SMILEY removes him and lays him on the podium).

SMILEY. (moving towards audience) And now, do we have our first contestant? (he looks out; SHERLOCK and WATSON are making their way to the stage)

Ah, yess! Someone's on their way, now. Come right on up here, gentlemen... (takes them by the shoulder, and mimes a mike) Would you tell us your names, please?

SHERLOCK. (deliberately) Holmes. Sherlock Holmes. And this is my assistant, Watson.

SMILEY. "Wot, son?" (he snorts and chuckles at his own wit; SHERLOCK cuts him down with an icy eye; SMILEY stops abruptly.)

(soberly; regaining composure) Name your category, Mr. Holmes.

SHERLOCK. I'll take Suspects, for \$100., Guy.

SMILEY. Suspects for \$100. Right-o. Tell us what you think happened on the night our Victim was murdered. (he moves to pick up Ed).

(SHERLOCK and WATSON walk together around the stage, "thinking", stopping, consulting. Finally, SHERLOCK begins:)

SHERLOCK. We know the Victim was an extremely fastidious---

ED. (to SMILEY) Huh??

SMILEY. (aside, hoarse whisper) Neat. Tidy. Clean. (ED nods: "O-oh!")

SHERLOCK. ----I say, an extremely fastidious person. We know this because even the brass hinges on the toilet seats in her house showed no signs of corrosion. It takes an obsessive, compulsive house-cleaner, to regularly polish the brass hinges on oak toilet seats.

(moves to another position) "Obsessive" is clearly the operative word, here.

ED. (to SMILEY) Huh???

SMILEY. Has to control everything; can't stop herself.

ED. O-oh.

SHERLOCK. This obsessiveness, being a critical part of her personality, obviously carried over into her relationship with her husband....

LIGHTS FADE ON SHERLOCK; SPOT ON VICTIM.

VICTIM. (jumps up from position, as HUSBAND joins her) ...But you know how I feel about you fishing on the weekends. You never spend any time helping me polish the brass hinges on our oak toilet seats... All week long, the creeping green corrosion spreads across the helpless, shining, golden metal surface. And all week long, that patient, shining golden metal surface waits for someone -- someone, like you, like me -- to lift and dissolve that ugly, smothering canker and let the metal breathe once more -- and, ... and....shine !

HUSBAND. (looking at her like she's flakey) Huh?

ED. (to SMILEY) Huh?

SMILEY. (to ED) Ecchhh!

HUSBAND. The week-end is the only time I get to spend time with the guys.

VICTIM. But this is something we could do together. A shared goal. A common interest.

ED. That is not a common interest! It's rather uncommon, if you ask me. Polishing brass toilet hinges??

SMILEY. Shush! Nobody did ask you!

HUSBAND. Sounds a little uncommon to me!

ED. (to SMILEY) Whadd' I tell ya? Whadd' I tell ya?

VICTIM. You just can't see it, can you? You don't spend any time with me at all? All I ever do is wash your dishes, clean your house, launder your clothes...

HUSBAND. Yeah? Well how can I spend any time with you? All you ever do is wash dishes, clean house, and launder clothes....

ED. (to SMILEY) This guy isn't very original, is he?

SMILEY. (claps his hand over Ed's mouth)

VICTIM. I want you to show me some respect. Some...consideration.

HUSBAND. Yeah? Well, I close the toilet, don't I? Do you know how much I hate that? But I do it anyway, because you want me to.....Come to think of it, I really hate that.....I REALLY hate that. I R-E-A-L-L-Y hate that!!! I REALLY, REALLY, REALLY, REALLY hate that! (he stabs her; she falls back to original position; HUSBAND stands still over her).

LIGHTS DOWN on murder scene; UP on CENTRE STAGE.

SHERLOCK. This woman's well-meaning cleaning eventually caused her demise....(begins to build a rhythmic beat, and WATSON joins in:)... "her well-meaning cleaning...caused her demise"...."her well-meaning cleaning...caused her demise", etc. (they boogie around the stage, turning short to face FORENSICS, who stare at them, unmoved)

FORENSICS give a rhythmic 'raspberry', in response.

SHERLOCK and WATSON shake heads from side-to-side in a "I guess not?" gesture and FREEZE, backs to audience.

SMILEY. (starting to move from podium) Ye-ess, well, that's one theory. And do we have any other contestants?

ED. Yessir, Mr. Smiley, sir -- I'll take "Rock" for \$300.

SMILEY. (snapping back to Ed impatiently). You can't do that!

ED. Why not?

SMILEY. Because you're not a real contestant.

ED. I could be, if you'd give me a chance.

SMILEY. No. You have to have a serious theory about the murder.

ED. How do you know I don't?

SMILEY. That's easy: look at the category you chose: "Rock"! What does that have to do with a murder?

ED. Well, you never know till you give it a try.

SMILEY. (exasperated; now having been manipulated into playing Ed's silly little game) Oh, all right, then, smarty pants. Let's have the questions for "Rock" for \$300. (rummages at the podium) Oh, I don't believe this: "What style of music is said to have been introduced by Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly?"

ED. ROCK AND ROLL-L-L!!

SMILEY. Right.

ED. Now I get another question.

SMILEY. Ed, we have a show to do, here.

ED. But if I'm right - and I was! - I get another question.

SMILEY. Ed --

ED. If you can't abide by the game rules, perhaps I shall have to report you to the union...

SMILEY. "Rock" for 500: Fill in the word that is missing from this song title: "(Blank) _____ Around the Clock".

ED. R-O-C-K !!

SMILEY. O.K. That's enough --

ED. I was right, wasn't I?

SMILEY. Ed ---

ED. (singing) "Solidarity forever, the UNION MAKES US STRONG !!"

SMILEY. I will get even with you for this, Ed. All right. "Rock" for \$200: What natural landform could be used as a murder weapon?"

ED. Er-rrr....Mountain!

SMILEY. M-O-U-N-T-A-I-N ??????

ED. Sure. If someone dropped a mountain on you, you wouldn't have a hope. Squash City. Slimey mass. That's all. And now that I've worked through my category, I'll tell you my theory...

SMILEY. I can't wait!

ED. ... I'd say that that Victim over there was NOT killed by a mountain, 'cos she's still too lumpy (SMILEY throws an exasperated look, casting eyes upward and shaking head) ...unless it was a particularly inefficient mountain -- some mountains, I've heard, -- the poorer quality ones -- just sort of bounce off, sometimes, and just don't do the j - o - (b) -----

SMILEY. (abruptly removing puppet from hand, to end his speech, and moving from podium towards audience) We must have a more plausible idea than that, out there somewhere? Where is our next contestant?

(JESSICA FLETCHER is making her way down the aisle)

SMILEY. Yes, yes! Come right on up here, young lady. (gestures "mike" in hand). And would you give us your name and your category, please?

JESSICA. Jessica Fletcher. Extremely astute and clever female detective from Agatha Christie novels.

SMILEY. No - I meant the category from the game board.

JESSICA. I'm getting to that, Mr. Wiley.

SMILEY. (correcting her) Smiley, → JESSICA. Smiley. I'll take Motives for

SMILEY. Fine. An excellent choice. Why, I think if I were in your place, I'd probably choose that one, myself...I rather like dealing with motives -- definitely, definitely easier than coming at these things from, oh, let's say, "weapons". "Weapons is so pedestrian, don't you think?" \$10

JESSICA. (stares at him silently, shutting him down. He crawls back to podium, while J. walks around, musing, preparing her discourse)

LIGHTS DOWN ON STAGE CENTER. SPOT on DC. (Jessica + Victim)

For this situation to make any sense at all, one must first investigate the murder scene. (she moves over to Victim, gesturing) If one notices the position in which the body was found, one would have to conclude that the victim was struck from behind...unless, of course, she simply fell forward, for some reason -- which would make her seem a bit clumsy, to say the least...

(continuing to walk around the body, demonstrating) Now anyone who has worked in Theatre at all knows that when staging a "collapse" on stage, the head must be the very last thing that touches down. That cushions the blow, avoiding injury....

(reaching down beside body, and holding up a piece of paper)...Now, before I continue with this line of thinking, one must consider additional evidence (a category, I might add, which you could do well to include on your game board, Mr. Slyly --

SMILEY. (correcting her, sheepishly) Smiley.

JESSICA. (drily) Smiley. -- This note! This note, found next to the body, reads: "I just can't go on anymore without you, Poopsie!" This note would indicate that what we see here is not the result of a murder, but of a suicide.

(she moves to stand in front of SHERLOCK and WATSON, offering the finale of her speech over her shoulder, to "rub it in" - i.e., that they could have missed so obvious a conclusion)

On further investigation, we find that "Poopsie" was, in fact, the victim's prized pet Venetian hamster, with whom she was absolutely obsessed. This hamster had gone missing some 4 days before the

victim died, causing her such stress, that she decided to take her own life. Being a somewhat fanciful person, with a dramatic flair, she was, in fact, practicing different ways to "die", for the greatest theatrical effect.

Having not paid close attention to her Theatre Arts instructor, however, she inadvertently struck her head on floor ahead (no pun intended!) of this fleshy part of the arm (she demonstrates) which would have cushioned the blow, and allowed her to try out a few more styles before settling on this rather tacky one, here.

SPOT OFF. LIGHTS UP ON DRC/RC, FOLLOWING JESSICA.

(JESSICA ends with a flourish of her hands, palms upturned towards FORENSICS, but she remains facing audience, as if her argument is flawless, and she is simply awaiting the judges' approval. FORENSICS, however, mime a synchronized sequence of (a) rubbing the "fleshy" part of their arms; (b) collapsing in slow motion (c) exaggerating keeping the head up till the very last. The heads touch down; then up. FORENSICS slowly, and in sync, shake heads decidedly from side to side in a grand "no". JESSICA shrugs and moves off to her FREEZE at ULC, as FORENSICS return to standing position (4 moves).)

SHERLOCK watches her, head turned over his shoulder with a look of "See? Your theory wasn't so hot, either!". WATSON, however, turns around to face audience, and mimes, giving JESSICA's explanation some thought (gestures handling the note, mourning the lost hamster, practicing collapses, "the head", etc.), and finally decides it makes good enough sense. He starts after her. SHERLOCK, surprised and disgusted, see him begin to move, and swipes him back to his place with a back-armed sweep.

SHERLOCK. (turning head to face WATSON, now standing again beside him) Where do you think you're going?

WATSON. (sheepishly) It seemed like it could have happened....

SHERLOCK. What do you know?

(They FREEZE, facing each other, backs still to audience)

(RICK makes his way up the steps, on-stage. SMILEY scrambles to intercept him, so as to be able to introduce him as the next contestant).

RICK. (in "Rain Man" voice) I...I...I... think...I have to....clearthis...all..up.....for ev..ry..one.

SMILEY. We-ell-l, YE-ESS! I certainly hope you can! Remember, there are bi-i-g prizes to be won, ----

RICK. Where? I....don't....see any....

SMILEY. Well-l, no - I mean, they're not right here, right now -- we just tell you about them, and ---

RICK. Yeah? How big?

SMILEY. Oh-h, let's see. There's a "diamond cluster ring fashioned by the master craftsmen at Birks' Fine Jewelry, with 25 0.75-carat diamonds set in a 14K gold band and valued at seventeen-----

RICK. (cutting him off) --That's....not..."b-i-g".

SMILEY. Well, no, I guess it's not "big", exactly -- I mean it's kind of small, really, but it's big in value -- I mean, look, man, this thing costs a lot of money!

RICK. I could...have....had...a...lot....of money. SNAP, CRACKLE, POP -- they ...got...lots of money. But...not...me....

I...am....also a....son...of The...Great...Krispy...him-...self. But, ... just...because....those...damn...engin-eers...at...KELLOGG'Scouldn't...make...their...stupid...cereal...go..."R-R-ICK"... ---- Those...other...guys...are...famous....but...I'm...a...no-bod-y... They just....could-n't...make...it...go...SNAP...CRACKLE...POP... R-R-RICK!.... (he starts to wander off; SMILEY stares after him, bewildered)...just couldn't...make...it...go "R-R-ICK" (repeats, until he's offstage).

SMILEY. (brightening; to cover) We-elll! Ev-ryone is welcome to our show. This is a show for everyone! Everyone's ideas are important to us --- Ah! (spying Agents 86 and 99 coming up the steps) -- Our next contestants. (to them) You are contestants, are you not? Your ideas are -- (questioning) -- in some way -- related to what we're doing here --??? You will 'fit in' ????

RICK. (beginning to wander backwards, "re-winding" his earlier appearance) "R-R-ICK"...go...it...make...couldn't...just...R-R-ICK ...POP...CRACKLE...SNAP...go...it...make...couldn't...just...They...no-bod-y...a...I'm...but...famous...are...guys...other...Those...damn...engin-eers.....

SMILEY. Wha-at???

VOICE OFF: TECHNICAL ENGINEER. We're editing him out! He didn't fit!

SMILEY. You can't do that! This is a live show!

VOICE OFF. Virtual Reality! It'll only seem like he was here. Technology will take care of it. Just bear with us!

(SMILEY and Agents 86 and 99 watch, helplessly, while RICK moves off-stage backwards.)

VOICE OFF. O.K. ! Go ahead.

SMILEY. (shakes his head, sighs; bored and frustrated) O.K., what're your names?

AGENT 86: Ah, I'm Agent 86, and this is my partner, Agent 99, and we're, ah, virtually real. Ah, I think.

AGENT 99: That's right, 86. Beamed down from another era, but we're real enough for this show.

SMILEY. (recovering) Oh, well, that's go-od! Maybe now we can get on with things: name your categories, 86 and 99.

86: We'll take (turning to 99) --- what do you think, 99?

99: Oh, you choose, Max.

86: Gee, I don't know, 99. They all look so good! I kinda like that "ROCK" one, over there.

99: No, Max.

86: Whaddya mean, "No, Max"? You told me to choose.

99: But you can't choose one that has nothing to do with a murder. That's why we're here, Max. To help solve a murder.

86: You're right, 99. You're ab-so-lute-ly right! And we will, too! Uh, which one shall I choose?

99: Max!

86: O.K...We'll take "Murder Weapons" for \$300.

SMILEY. What murder weapon would you put forward as the instrument of death? (he moves back to place Ed on his hand once more)

99: Well, we think she wasn't killed by a knife, nor by striking her head, unexpectedly, against the floor (due to inattention during her Theatre Arts class!).

LIGHTS DOWN at C; SPOT on DC, as 86 and 99 move towards body.

86: It was the apple pie she ate last night!

ED. (to SMILEY) Oh, sure. Why didn't I think of that?

SMILEY. Be quiet, Ed.

86: (getting right into it) You see, an apple pie was mysteriously delivered by an anonymous donor to the doorstep of the Victim's home at around 8:00 p.m. on Friday night -- the night of the death. (99 will mime the events, as 86 speaks)

On further investigation, we have learned that the pie was part of a fund-raising scheme for Johnny Appleseed Awareness Week. The idea was that apple pies would be delivered around the city. A note inside the pie explained that when the pie had been eaten, patrons should phone a printed number and a member of the Johnny Appleseed Memorial Society would return to pick up the pie-plate, in which it would be expected that a donation would be happily jingling away.

(SHERLOCK, WATSON and JESSICA now begin to move towards DC to observe the explanation)

99: (taking over; 86 now mimes the events) Unfortunately, our victim, here never got as far as the note - and certainly not as far as the donation, well-meaning as it was.

...And it was a good pie! ---

86: (interjecting) Oh, it was! It Was! A ver-ry good pie! Cinnamon, just the right touch of ---

99: Max! (glaring at him)

86: Oh, sorry, 99. I just --- (resumes mime)

99: ---a deadly pie, you could say. Remember the hamster?

86: (breaking out of mime again) I thought it was a pie!

99: I'm getting to that, Max!

86: Oh, sorry, 99. (resumes mime)

99: You will remember that it has already been established that the victim was obsessively fond of her pet Venetian hamster, who had gone missing four days earlier. When she heard the door-bell, signalling the delivery of the pie, she leapt to the door. (mime)

Of course, she hoped, that it might be someone returning her precious pet. Instead, she found a pie sitting on her step. She hurriedly brought it inside, and sat down to immediately devour it in one sitting. This was, naturally, a response to her acute depression. (It was also going to lead to a decided impact upon her hips, but that's another story!)

What the victim did not realize was that her pet hamster, had, in fact been attempting to return home, and had, seconds before, marched across the top of the pie, searching for the door. The footprints were indiscernable, but were very real.

86: (breaking out of mime) Virtual Reality!

99: Max!

ED.: Hamster foot-prints?

86: Sorry, 99. (resumes mime)

99: ...and very deadly !

ED: Deadly hamster foot-prints?

(JESSICA, WATSON and SHERLOCK are now consulting about the plausibility of this argument)

99: You know the old saying: "Never mix ---

(SMILEY, 86, ED, SHERLOCK, WATSON, and the FORENSICS all join in to finish the well-known addage:)

ALL: ...hamster foot-prints/droppings with apple pie !"

ad lib: ⁸⁶ WATSON, ED, 2 FORENSICS: I thought is was droppings!

⁸⁶ SHERLOCK, JESSICA, SMILEY, 2 FORENSICS: It's foot-prints!

⁸⁶ W, E, 2 F's: I'm sure it's droppings! My mother always said 'droppings'!

^{S, J, Sm} 2 F's: Foot-prints. Always has been. Where'd you hear 'droppings' ???

(general melee and discussion)

99: Please! Let me finish! (the others FREEZE) Whether it was the droppings or the foot-prints, the combination of hamster plus apple pie proved to be fatal, for the victim fell desperately ill about half-way through the pie, slumped forward unconscious as the chemical reactions continued their fateful damage inside her body.

(Victim slumps over to original position)

86: And, to add a touch of irony, her little pet Venetian hamster did find its way home through the very door our victim had left open in her hurry to partake of the pie (he voice builds with emotion)...

...and left its tiny little foot-prints...(99 now joins him in a sniffle all over her body....not knowing that she was already....DEAD! (they break down together). (99. C'mon, Max. You can't get emotionally involved like this. Pull yourself together. We're investigators....)

(Everyone on stage begins to sniffle and sniff...as they turn their heads expectantly towards FORENSICS. They, in turn, together take out large white handkerchiefs with a flourish, and begin to wipe their eyes in sympathy, but end up blowing their noses, in a loud, disapproving "raspberry"). Agents 99 and 86 shrug, facing each other ("You win some, you lose some") and all take their places on stage in a FREEZE.

LIGHTS UP, LC.

SMILEY. (sighs; to ED). Well, Ed, What do you think?

ED. I think it's aotough one, but I think I know whodunnit.

SMILEY. (ignoring him; continuing, to contestants, who move out of their FREEZE, as they speak) It's time to close in on this one, now. Jessica, would you try another category, please?

LIGHTS UP, C. I'll take "alibis" for \$100.

SMILEY. Where was the victim's husband on the night of the murder?

Victim is caught with a piece of pie on the way to her mouth, but is unsure whether or not to continue. So she looks first to one group, then to the other, waiting for the matter to be settled.

*LIGHTS UP, C
SPOT OFF*

JESSICA. Well, he could argue that he had already gone fishing, and wasn't even present at the time of death.

FORENSICS. (hands over ears: "Hear No Evil...")

SMILEY. Mr. Holmes?

SHERLOCK. I'll take "Weapons" for \$200, please.

SMILEY. Was the Victim struck on the head by an instrument. If so, what type?

SHERLOCK. You have to look at the evidence. In all three of the explanations offered, the Victim could quite conceivably died as a result of head injuries. I find it a bit far-fetched to suggest that these head injuries were caused either by an ill-practiced suicidal collapse, or^{for} rapid, out-of-control spasms resulting from bad gas pain. No, I hold to the notion that the Victim was bludgeoned, in some way...

SMILEY. With what?

WATSON. (quietly venturing) ...he doesn't know. (SHERLOCK glares at him)

FORENSICS. (hands over eyes: "Speak No Evil...")

ED. Smiley, I --

SMILEY. Not now, Ed. I have to bring this together now...

ED. But Smiley ---

SMILEY. Not now ! (carrying on) Agents 86 and 99: would you name your next category, please?

99: We'll take "Motives" for \$300.

86: Gee, thanks, 99. I hate making decisions.

99: I know, Max.

SMILEY. Why was the victim killed?

99: Clearly, the victim's husband may have been upset by her control over him -- and his personal habits...

86: Yeah, 99. I don't always like it when you tell me what to do all the time, either!

99: I have to, Max.

86: You're right, 99. No -- you are - you are right. I mean there are times when I just can't---

99: Max!

86: Sorry, 99.

99: ...and it seems a bit too easy to just dismiss this as a case of suicide brought on by grief over a missing hamster....

86: That's right, 99.

99: Thank you, Max. No, we think ---

ED. "We" (?) think ??? Who's "we"?? He (indicating Max) doesn't think!

SMILEY. Hush up yo' mouth, honey chil'!

99: We think that the apple pie was planted and poisoned --

ED. You plant apple seeds, dear heart, not pies! I'm not sure either one of them think! Smiley ---

SMILEY. Ed! It's a term; it's jargon. Nevermind!

99: ...by the Johnny Appleseed Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Hamsters, who had learned the victim's missing pet, and had concluded that it was due to her neglect that the helpless creature had gone missing...

FORENSICS. (hands over mouths: "Speak No Evil...").

LIGHTS DOWN. SPOT ON PODIUM.

ED. Smiley, I want a turn.

SMILEY. No, Ed. I've been through that with you already tonight.

ED. No, but Smiley, I really do think I have the answer! I know who did it.

SMILEY. No, you don't Ed. You're just looking for attention. You're just a puppet! So, if you know, it isn't really you who does know -- it's me! And I don't know, so you can't know, either. Do you understand?

ED. That's what I'm trying to tell you -- I do understand more than you seem to know!

SMILEY. Oh! A little gestalt thrown in from a Horse With No Brain! Suddenly, the whole is greater than the parts ?? Where are you getting this stuff?

ED. I read books.

SMILEY. You what?

ED. I read books. They make me think. I take the time to think....

SMILEY. I haven't got time for this, right now, Ed. We can talk about ideas when we're off the air. Right now, we have a television show to finish up -- and in a hurry, too (glancing up at "clock") --

VOICE OFF. "Thirty seconds to credits."

FORENSICS. (drop one arm and raise the other, to stare down at wrist-watch)

SMILEY. (plastic, once more) Well, ladies and gentlemen, every once in awhile there comes a case that we just can't seem to solve -- at least not in the thirty minutes paid for by our sponsors ---

FORENSICS. (in 3-part harmony:) "Snap, Crackle, Pop: RICE Krispies!"
(Then, abruptly resume stance, arms at sides)

(RICK begins to slowly amble back in, wandering around all the characters on stage, and mumbling very quietly to himself: "...Just...could-n't... make...it....say....R-R-RICK!...")

SMILEY. So, it looks like --

ED. Smiley, I can help you solve the case, right now.

SMILEY. Later, Ed. No time to think now.

ED. Smiley, I have an idea --

SMILEY. Ideas take time. And thought. This is television, Ed.

ED. SMILEY! I KNOW THE ANSWER !

VOICE OFF. "Fifteen seconds...."

SMILEY. Join us next week, again, Ladies and gentlemen ---

ED. SMILEY! ^{WILL YOU LISTEN??} (in exasperation, he bites off SMILEY'S head. SMILEY ducks down behind podium, so that only his arm, supporting MR.ED remains visible, above.

(ED realizes that he has now lost his voice -- even if he does have the ideas that SMILEY lacked, and, worriedly sags down to rest on podium top. Meanwhile, RICK has continued to draw attention as he wanders about, muttering. He stops at the podium.

FORENSICS. (snap heads, left, to watch RICK. They smile)

(RICK slowly puts MR. ED. puppet on his own hand. They "smile" at one another...RICK turns and shuffles off, stage right:

LIGHTS ARE COMING DOWN SLOWLY.

ED/RICK. (as they pass right in front of FORENSICS, who now turn their heads right, to follow them off---) It.....was.....the..... ham....ster..... (they go off)

FORENSICS snap back to face audience; give a snappy "thumbs-up" and broad smiles.

VOICE OFF. "Fade to black" !

- C U R T A I N -