

### DINNER AT EIGHT, DEAD BY NINE

- 1 NICK and MAGGIE should establish their presence among the diners before the actual play begins. They may meet and greet dinner guests. Prior to the beginning of NICK'S lines, MAGGIE should enter, seemingly concerned, and whisper something to NICK. They converse  
5 for a moment, and then MAGGIE EXITS. RAMON, the chef, should walk through in order to establish his character. He should return to the kitchen before NICK begins his opening lines. DARBY and TOMMY should be among the servers. Periodically, they should speak to each other to establish their relationship. When appropriate, TOMMY will  
20 return to the kitchen for a later entrance. RANK, wearing a bowtie, is seated among the guests.

Once the guests have been served, NICK will begin. When NICK is not directly involved with other characters, he can work the room, check on lights, sound, etc. He begins by ringing a small hand bell.

- 15 **NICK:** Ladies and gentlemen. Good evening. Welcome to *Dinner at Eight, Dead by Nine*. I'm Nick Quartermaine, writer and director of tonight's production. In order to make sure everyone has been served before the play begins, we will be holding the curtain for a few more minutes. Please, enjoy your meal, and if there is anything  
20 we can do, please let us know.

**BUNGLER:** (*Sloppy and disheveled, ENTERS from the lobby.*) Is this the la-de-da affair I'm supposed to be at?

**NICK:** Excuse me?

**BUNGLER:** That theatre thing. Is this it?

- 25 **NICK:** This is the guild's dinner theatre show, if that's what you're referring to.

**BUNGLER:** I've been assigned to provide security.

**NICK:** Then where would you like to be stationed?

- BUNGLER:** Dinner theatre? Don't I get to eat? (*To a SERVER.*) Bring  
30 me some grub.

**NICK:** (*To the SERVER.*) Ignore that. (*To BUNGLER.*) I'll show you to a seat.

**BUNGLER:** Like I couldn't find one myself. (*Sits in seat three at the head table.*)

- 35 **NICK:** Not here. This table is reserved for the guest of honor and her family.

**BUNGLER:** (*Picks up the glass at that seat, but doesn't drink from it.*) To the guest of honor. Cheers. Who's the guest of honor?

- NICK:** Eleanor VanHeusen. She's not here yet. Would you please put  
40 that down? That's her glass! (*Takes ELEANOR'S glass and sets it*



1 back down in the third spot.) You can sit here. (Leads BUNGLER to  
a table where actual guests are seated.)

BUNGLER: (To a guest, as he sits.) Do you know me? No? Would you  
like to? (As NICK moves away to attend to other matters, RAMON  
5 storms IN from the kitchen.)

RAMON: Nick? Nick?

NICK: Yes, what is it?

RAMON: May I speak to you for a moment? (During the exchange with  
NICK, NORA ENTERS from the lobby and sits at seat four at the  
10 head table. She places her purse near ELEANOR'S glass at seat  
three.)

NICK: Ramon, I'm under a lot of stress.

RAMON: Oh, really? Anything you'd like to share?

NICK: No! Now, what do you want?

15 RAMON: I quit!

NICK: (Suddenly distracted by the sight of NORA at the head table.)  
Excuse me?

RAMON: I quit.

NICK: (Indicating NORA.) I was speaking to her. (To NORA.) I'm sorry,  
20 this table is reserved.

NORA: Oh, sorry. (Gets up to move and picks up her purse. As she does  
so, she bumps ELEANOR'S glass and straightens it before moving  
to another table.)

NICK: (Seats NORA at an empty chair.) There's a place there. Enjoy  
25 your dinner. (Back to RAMON.) What do you mean, you quit?

RAMON: Oh, come on, Nick. You're a bright boy. It means I'm hanging  
up my apron. (Throws his apron at NICK.) I'm through.

NICK: But dinner's not over.

RAMON: For me it is. You call this dinner? I've lowered my standards  
30 as much as I intend to. This is not my idea of dinner.

NICK: Listen, Ramon, I know you're high-strung and high-maintenance,  
but I don't need any of your shenanigans tonight. (Throws the  
apron back at RAMON.) Quit tomorrow, but not tonight.

RAMON: Shenanigans? (Throws the apron on the floor.) I'll show you  
35 shenanigans. I'll quit if I like.

NICK: (Points at apron.) Put it on.

RAMON: I will not.

NICK: Put it on before I tie it around your neck.

RAMON: Have you any idea where I've worked and who I've worked  
40 for?



1 **NICK:** At the moment you're working for me, so do what you were hired to do. Cook!

**RAMON:** Cook? You call what I'm doing cooking?

**NICK:** I don't care what it's called. This is a dinner theatre. People who  
5 come to dinner theatres expect to eat and be entertained. Now, go back to the kitchen and do what you're being paid to do.

**RAMON:** I can't work like this. I'm surrounded by nincompoops.

**SERVER:** Hey, who you calling a nincompoop?

**RAMON:** (To SERVER.) Did I say nincompoop? I meant moron. (Picks  
10 up apron and moves slowly toward kitchen. MAGGIE ENTERS from lobby, obviously distressed.)

**NICK:** Could anything else go wrong?

**MAGGIE:** As a matter of fact... (Crosses to the head table and lays down her note pad near ELEANOR'S glass.)

15 **NICK:** Maggie! Thank goodness.

**MAGGIE:** Don't thank anyone yet. We've lost Mrs. VanHeusen.

**NICK:** Don't tell me that.

**MAGGIE:** If I didn't tell you, how would you know?

**NICK:** All right then, tell me.

20 **MAGGIE:** I just did. Mrs. VanHeusen is lost.

**RAMON:** Forever, I hope. (EXITS to the kitchen.)

**MAGGIE:** I have no idea where she is.

**NICK:** What do you mean? Isn't she with Desi and Hadley? Aren't they on their way?

25 **MAGGIE:** I guess.

**NICK:** Don't guess, Maggie. I need to know.

**MAGGIE:** I think so.

**NICK:** You think so?

**MAGGIE:** No, I mean, yes. She's on her way. I'm sorry, Nick.

30 **NICK:** This is a disaster.

**MAGGIE:** It's probably the weather. You know Eleanor would never miss a chance to be in the limelight. I'm sure she'll be here.

**NICK:** If she's not, what will I do?

**MAGGIE:** (From nowhere.) You could always kiss me.

35 **NICK:** What?

**MAGGIE:** (To AUDIENCE.) Did I say that out loud? (To NICK.) I mean, you could always start the show without her.

**NICK:** I can't start without her. That's not part of the plan.

**MAGGIE:** Plan? What plan?