

EDMUNDS. Yes, sorry sir, I just wanted to anyway, guess what they told me? *(Waits a beat, no one guesses.)* They had just fired our man Earl the previous week for embezzlement, but first they cut a deal with him. If he told them everything, they said they wouldn't prosecute, so he did. He admitted to getting kickbacks from the Procurement department. And he confessed that he had a longstanding drug habit that he was using his kickbacks to feed.

HENRY. *(Almost to himself.)* We have to start vetting people better!

EDMUNDS. So I asked if Earl had also confessed to them that he was dealing with these ladies here. And their answer was what my wife calls a showstopper. *(Explaining.)* You know, something an actor says that changes everything and may actually stop the show. Well, not really stop it, but it does have a big impact. Something that throws a monkey in the wrench. Anyway, they said that our man Earl never dealt with either of them. Not once. No, Earl said he only ever dealt with *(Dramatic pause, while EDMUNDS looks around.)* Arthur Rechs.

WILLIAMS. For god's sake Edmunds, why did you never tell me this before?

HENRY. Yes, that would have spared us all that crap the Inspector just threw at everyone.

EDMUNDS. "Guilty people do guilty things." Ladies, your documents showed without a doubt that Mr. Rechs was doing side deals with our man Earl.

MARY. So that proves that we are totally innocent doesn't it?

EDMUNDS. I'm getting there. I really am. Actually, they had been at this for years. Mr. Rechs's department hands out thousands of contracts each year. They buy everything from paper clips to tanks, for the entire bureaucracy. Earl was an accounting type in a company whose main source of revenue was those same government contracts. Mr. Rechs had a gambling issue and Earl had a drug habit. Both cost a lot of money sir. *(Long pause. EDMUNDS stops to think through what he is about to say. Ad libs a start, then stops. Finally.)* Okay people. This is the most important part, so I really have to pay attention. *(Shakes his head.)* I mean you have to pay attention to what I'm saying. *(Pause.)* My wife says they always explain the tricky bits in a mystery way too fast and I think that she may be on to something, so here goes. Really slowly. *(Dramatic pause, uses hands to help illustrate his points.)* So, the two of them – Mr. Rechs and Earl – ran a scheme where Mr. Rechs would give Earl enough details on upcoming Procurement contracts that Earl's company could win almost every bid they submitted. *(Pause.)* We still good? Sir, are you with me on this? *(WILLIAMS just stares at EDMUNDS.)* Here is the tricky bit: they figured out how to submit a bid at the right price that included a fee for some *(Mimes air quotes.)* "independent consulting work". Nothing too big to draw attention and the name of the consultant was always different, but the company that got paid was always the same – a company owned by Mr. Rechs and Earl. It was a classic kickback scheme. And it now looks as if

Mr. Rechs was running similar schemes with other suppliers as well. *(Pause.)* I know this is hard to believe, but the government is just not very good at monitoring its own contracts. *(Pause.)* Did I do that too fast, does anyone need me to go over any of that again? *(WILLIAMS is*

*following, still just staring at EDMUNDS. All others look at each other, somewhat perplexed, but signal they understand enough for him to continue.)*

LIZ. So why did you ever think that we were...

EDMUNDS. Sorry, sorry, just let me finish, so this thought train doesn't lose its caboose. The problem was that Mr. Rechs and Earl couldn't exchange all their information at work or create a paper trail. Way too risky. They had to meet in a neutral place, a place that changed often enough to avoid suspicion. And that is where your very dedicated theatre group came in. *(Explaining.)* You see, one of your plays actually involves about three months from start to finish. During this time, Mr. Rechs and Earl could legitimately be together every night and talk to each other somewhere, or hand over papers, all without raising any suspicion.

LIZ. It *did* seem strange to me at the time that they talked together so much. And that picture? *(WILLIAMS throws EDMUNDS a sharp look.)*

EDMUNDS. *(Interrupting.)* They regularly moved on to other organizations.

MARY. But that *still* doesn't mean we were involved in the fraud.

LIZ. Because we weren't!

WILLIAMS. Edmunds, I have cut you more than enough rope on this...

EDMUNDS. Of course sir. But I am coming to the hanging part. The key is this: their entire *m. o.* *(Explaining.)* – sorry, that means *modus operandi*. It was a term the police used back in Roman times for “method of operation”...

WILLIAMS. Edmunds!! This is your last chance. Wrap this up!!

EDMUNDS. Yes sir, yes. Sadly for them, their entire *m. o.* was a two edged sword that could be used as a hammer. It gave anyone who went through the documents these ladies provided and who was able to figure out what was going on, a perfect opportunity to blackmail *both* Mr. Rechs *and* Earl for say 30% to keep their little scheme a secret. *(Pause.)* And that is exactly what you did, *(Looks at WILLIAMS.)* wasn't it sir? *(General amazement ensues. The air goes out of WILLIAMS's anger.)*

WILLIAMS. *(Coldly.)* Watch yourself Edmunds. Accusing a superior officer of a serious crime can get a Constable into a lot of trouble. You take that phoney accusation outside this room and you'll be lucky to be on parking meter duty for the rest of your working life.