

DON'T BANK ON IT
By Dale Ahlquist

Cast of Characters

13 Females; 9 Males

<u>MR. MERCK:</u>	Clifford Merck, Bank president, Mrs. Merck's husband.
<u>MRS. LILLIAN MERCK:</u>	Lillian Merck, Mrs. Merck's wife.
<u>SASSAFRAS:</u>	Mr. Merck's secretary.
<u>WARREN:</u>	Bank guard.
<u>CYNTHIA:</u>	Bank teller.
<u>CHIEF:</u>	Chief Conklin, Chief of Police.
<u>BERNICE:</u>	Chief Conklin's wife.
<u>GRIMLEY:</u>	Sgt. Grimley, a policeman.
<u>OFFICER STUTZ:</u>	A policeman.
<u>MR. UBERHAUSEN:</u>	A very old bank customer.
<u>MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH:</u>	A sophisticated-looking bank customer.
<u>MRS. COLERAINE:</u>	A grouchy bank customer.
<u>ELAINE COLERAINE:</u>	Mrs. Coleraine's daughter.
<u>MR. CHAMBERLAIN:</u>	A very rich potential bank customer.
<u>MRS. CHAMBERLAIN:</u>	Mr. Chamberlain's wife.
<u>STEPHANIE:</u>	"Stevie the Toy" Mackenzie, an events coordinator.
<u>EDDIE:</u>	"Lucky Fingers" Ricardo, a locksmith.
<u>CARLA:</u>	"The Cleaner" Pulaski, A Cleaning Woman.
<u>COOKIE GARBANZO:</u>	A caterer.
<u>GLORIA PODANOVICH:</u>	A bank inspector.
<u>WINNIE:</u>	Another bank customer.

STRANGER/VINCE:

A stranger who shows up to the Mardi Gras party.

ACT I - A bank.

ACT II - A bank.

Approximate Length

75 minutes

Time

Modern Day

Place

A Bank

ACT I

Setting: Bank Lobby with a teller window, a desk, and a hospitality table with donuts.

At Rise: MR. UBERHAUSEN, a rather ruffled-looking old man, is at the teller window, being assisted by CYNTHIA, the teller. MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH, a sophisticated-looking old woman, waits in line behind him. MISS SASSAFRAS sits at her desk working.

(Enter SGT. GRIMLEY and OFFICER STUTZ, who take a look around. They proceed to the hospitality table, where GRIMLEY picks up a donut and takes a bite. STUTZ, somewhat tentatively, does the same.)

GRIMLEY

Notice anything unusual, Stutz?

(Rhymes the name with “butts”)

STUTZ

(Looking around)

It’s...Stutz, Sargent. Rhymes with “boots.”

GRIMLEY

Rhymes with “butts” as far as I’m concerned.

(Pauses)

So?

STUTZ

Sir?

GRIMLEY

Notice anything unusual?

STUTZ

(Looks around some more)

No, sir.

GRIMLEY

It’s Tuesday today.

STUTZ

But...that’s not unusual. Tuesday usually comes after Monday.

GRIMLEY

But the bank doesn’t usually serve donuts on Tuesdays. They usually serve ’em on Wednesdays.

STUTZ

(Still looking around)

Oh. That *is* unusual.

GRIMLEY

You know why that is, Stutz?
("Butts")

STUTZ

("Boots")

Stutz, sir. No, sir.

GRIMLEY

Mardi Grass.

STUTZ

Mardi...*Gras*, sir.

GRIMLEY

Stutz,

("Butts")

am I telling you why there are donuts today or are you telling me?

STUTZ

I...was...just....

GRIMLEY

Just what, Stutz?

("Butts")

STUTZ

Um...nothing, Sargent.

(Enter WARREN, the bank guard, who walks across the lobby. Looks at the officers with open resentment. GRIMLEY sneers at him.)

WARREN

I see you detected the donuts, Sargent Grimley.

GRIMLEY

I see you found a costume for tonight, Warren.

(Exit WARREN. STUTZ is puzzled by this exchange.)

STUTZ

What was that all about?

He's the bank guard.

GRIMLEY

I know, sir.

STUTZ

Bank guards are just police wannabes. They even dress up in uniforms. But they have no purpose.

GRIMLEY

But...don't they guard the bank?

STUTZ

Stutz.

GRIMLEY

("Butts")

Stutz.

STUTZ

("Boots")

(Enter CHIEF CONKLIN, whom they do not notice approaching them from behind)

Do you know why this bank has never been robbed?

GRIMLEY

I...don't...know.

STUTZ

Police protection.

CHIEF

That's right. Police protection.

GRIMLEY

(Suddenly realizing CHIEF)

Chief!

How do things look, Grimley?

CHIEF

How do things look grimly?

STUTZ

(Repeating the line so as to misconstrue it)

GRIMLEY

Everything looks very good, sir!

CHIEF

Glad to hear it, Grimley.

(To STUTZ)

It's Stutz,

("Butts")

Isn't it?

STUTZ

Stuu—

GRIMLEY

(Interrupting)

Yep. Stutz.

("Butts")

He's a rookie. I'm breakin' him in.

CHIEF

These donuts any good?

GRIMLEY

Better ask Stutz, sir.

("Butts")

He's eaten nearly half of them.

STUTZ

(Looks at the donut in his hand, from which he's only taken one bite)

That's not—!

CHIEF

(Helping himself to a donut)

Big day today, Sargent. I think I'd better take over here. Have a look around myself. Why don't you boys get back to the rest of your patrol.

GRIMLEY

Yes, sir. Let us know if you need anything. Let's go, Stutz.

("Butts")

STUTZ

Stutz.

("Boots." Under his breath, with sarcastic amusement.)

How do things look grimly?

(Exit GRIMLEY and STUTZ)

CYNTHIA

Anything else, Mr. Uberhausen?

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. Don't I get a piece of candy?

CYNTHIA

(Politely)

Mr. Uberhausen, the candy is for children.

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. And how many children do you get making thousand dollar deposits?

CYNTHIA

Well, I suppose we don't get many. Or any!

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. It's alright. Every time I eat a piece of candy, I get a heart attack.

CYNTHIA

(Mock scolding)

Then you shouldn't be asking for candy!

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. It doesn't matter. Every time I do anything, I get a heart attack.

CYNTHIA

Then you must be very careful.

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. That's probably what a doctor would say.

CYNTHIA

What do you mean "probably"? Isn't that what your doctor actually says?

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. I don't have a doctor.

CYNTHIA

What? You don't have a doctor?

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. Of course not. If I had a doctor, I wouldn't be making thousand dollar deposits.

CYNTHIA

But don't you care about your health, Mr. Uberhausen?

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. It costs too much money to be healthy.

CYNTHIA

(Leaning over, as if telling him how to get away with something)

Well, Mr. Uberhausen, even though I can't give you a piece of candy, I *can* invite you to go and have a donut at the hospitality table. But you have to promise not to have a heart attack. And of course, if you come to the ball tonight, there will be all kinds of treats.

MR. UBERHAUSEN

(Pauses)

Heh. Heh. Heh.

(He turns around and sees MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH behind him)

Oh. Look who's here. Good morning, Mrs. Rollingsworth. Heh. Heh. Heh.

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

(Sniffs a little dismissively)

Good morning, Mr. Uberhausen.

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Spending more of your late husband's money?

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

Good day, Mr. Uberhausen.

(Attempts to proceed to teller window)

MR. UBERHAUSEN

(Not letting her pass just yet)

Maybe we should get married. Perfect match. Heh. Heh. Heh. I put money into the bank. You take it out. We could just skip the middleman.

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

(With civilized irritation)

Good day, Mr. Uberhausen.

(Proceeds to teller window)

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Of course that didn't work out so well for Mr. Rollingsworth, did it. Probably died in self-defense. Heh. Heh. Heh.

(Shuffles toward the hospitality table)

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

Could I have a withdrawal slip, please? I seem to have run out.

CYNTHIA

Have you ever considered opening a checking account, Mrs. Rollingsworth?

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

Checks are not real money. I prefer cash.

CYNTHIA

I have to refill my cash drawer. Could you wait just a moment while I run to the safe?

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

Of course.

(Exit CYNTHIA. MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH waits, looks around. Notices MR. UBERHAUSEN looking at her.)

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Heh. Heh. Heh. Cash isn't real either.

(MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH turns away with more irritation)

CHIEF

For something that's not real, there sure are a lot of people who want it.

MR. UBERHAUSEN

Lot of people interested in money. Heh. Heh. Heh. Money generates interest because...it generates interest. Heh. Heh. Heh.

(MR. UBERHAUSEN sits down and promptly falls asleep. Enter MRS. MERCK, a whirlwind, followed by CARLA, with cleaning supplies.)

MRS. MERCK

Glisten! It all has to glisten! That's why I chose you, Carla.

CARLA

It will all glisten, Mrs. Merck. Don't worry about a thing.

MRS. MERCK

Miss Sassafras, I need to speak to my husband. Why, look who's here?! Chief Conklin! Making us feel secure!

CHIEF

Good morning, Mrs. Merck. Everything ready for tonight?

MRS. MERCK

Not at all, thank you! I don't know how we will possibly do it! Absolutely nothing has been done! And my event coordinator isn't even here yet! Miss Sassafra, have you heard from Stephanie?

SASSAFRAS

She was here earlier, but she had to get some blasting caps.

MRS. MERCK

Blasting caps!

CHIEF

Blasting caps?

MRS. MERCK

What on earth for?

SASSAFRAS

You'll have to ask her. She should be back any minute.

MRS. MERCK

Carla, the windows.

CARLA

Of course, Mrs. Merck. I was just getting to them.

MRS. MERCK

Miss Sassafra, I told you I needed to speak to my husband?

SASSAFRAS

He's in a meeting, Mrs. Merck.

MRS. MERCK

Don't tell me it's important.

SASSAFRAS

But that's what he told me to tell you.

MRS. MERCK

Of course he did. Carla! Glisten! Everything has to glisten.

CARLA

It'll glisten, Mrs. Merck.

CHIEF

(Noticing CARLA)

Wait a minute.

MRS. MERCK

What is it, Chief?

CHIEF

That's Carla the Cleaner.

MRS. MERCK

Of course it is! That's what she's doing: cleaning.

CHIEF

No, you don't understand. That's Carla "the Cleaner" Pulaski. She's a notorious pickpocket. I used to arrest her on a regular basis. She shouldn't be working in a bank!

MRS. MERCK

Really, Chief, everyone has a past they're not proud of, I'm sure. But why should I worry about things like that when I have *you* here? What I *do* have to worry about is getting ready for this ball. What about you, Chief, are you ready for the ball?

CHIEF

That's what I'm doing right now: checking on security.

MRS. MERCK

No, I don't mean that! I mean do you have your costume ready?

CHIEF

Oh, Bernice will take care of that.

MRS. MERCK

Letting your wife take care of everything. Sounds familiar. That's how Mr. Merck runs the bank. Miss Sassafra, do you think you could interrupt that meeting?

SASSAFRAS

He asked not to be disturbed.

MRS. MERCK

How convenient.

(Enter CYNTHIA)

CYNTHIA

Just one more minute, Mrs. Rollingsworth. Sorry for the delay.

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

(Patience starting to wear a little thin)

Very well.

CYNTHIA
(Crossing to SASSAFRAS)

I need to speak to Mr. Merck.

SASSAFRAS

In a meeting. Can't be disturbed.

CYNTHIA

We have a problem.

MRS. MERCK

A problem? What's the problem?

CYNTHIA

The safe.

MRS. MERCK

The safe?

CHIEF

The safe?

CYNTHIA
Someone closed it, and now I can't open it.

MRS. MERCK
(As if stating something obvious)
Then call Mr. Ricardo.

CYNTHIA
Yes, Mrs. Merck.
(To SASSAFRAS)

Could you call Mr. Ricardo? You have him on speed dial, don't you?

SASSAFRAS
As a matter of fact, I do.

(She picks up the phone and makes a call. CYNTHIA returns to the teller window, where MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH is still waiting.)

CYNTHIA
So sorry about the delay, Mrs. Rollingsworth. It shouldn't be much longer.

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

Do I understand that you cannot get into the safe?

CYNTHIA

It's not a problem. We'll have it open very soon.

CHIEF

(To MRS. MERCK, suspiciously)

Who's Mr. Ricardo?

MRS. MERCK

Edward Ricardo. A locksmith who specializes in bank vaults. He's very good.

CHIEF

Eddie "Lucky Fingers" Ricardo? He's a safecracker!

(As MRS. MERCK starts to respond, she is interrupted by the grand entrance of STEPHANIE. She is colorful and flamboyant.)

STEPHANIE

If you really want to have a Mardi Gras party here, you should knock out this wall.

MRS. MERCK

Stephanie! I thought you'd never get here.

STEPHANIE

I *was* here, and you weren't. But no matter. We need to make the floor bigger.

MRS. MERCK

What?

STEPHANIE

There is not enough room on this floor. And the other problem is: it's too high. We need to make it lower.

MRS. MERCK

This is the floor we have to work with, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE

The real problem is the ceiling.

MRS. MERCK

It's a lovely ceiling!

STEPHANIE

Lovely, lovely. I make note of the original ornamental terra cotta. But it's too low.

MRS. MERCK
Too low for what?

STEPHANIE
For the fireworks display.

MRS. MERCK
Fireworks display! Inside?

STEPHANIE
It's too cold to go outside this time of year.

MRS. MERCK
But fireworks inside the bank?

STEPHANIE
Yes! The climax of the evening! When everyone will take off their masks! It's going to be BIG!

MRS. MERCK
(Pauses)
I like it.

CHIEF
Wait a minute.

STEPHANIE
I don't have a minute.

MRS. MERCK
Neither do I.

CHIEF
You have to talk to the Fire Chief about having an indoor fireworks display.

MRS. MERCK
Oh! The Fire Chief! Has he been invited? Miss Sassafra, has the Fire Chief been invited?

SASSAFRAS
I hope so!

MRS. MERCK
What do you mean, you hope so? Find out. What an insult to the poor Fire Chief not to be invited.

CHIEF

He's going to be more insulted if you put on an indoor fireworks display without his approval.

MRS. MERCK

No one is asking for his approval!

CHIEF

Mrs. Merck, there are certain regulations, fire codes—

MRS. MERCK

You know what your problem is, Chief? We give you public servants too much power. You are supposed to be serving us and yet *you* make all the rules. And another thing: the fire department's job is to put out fires. But it seems like all they've done is create a system where we can never even start a fire. We do all the work so that they don't have to do any! And still we pay for them.

CHIEF

Mrs. Merck, I think you've got it a little backwards.

MRS. MERCK

No, Chief. I just explained that you are the one who has it backwards.

CHIEF

You can't have indoor fireworks!

CARLA

Yes, you can. It's just a matter of the right ventilation.

CHIEF

What do *you* know about ventilation?

CARLA

Cuz I understand how people breathe.

CHIEF

Well...everyone understands that. Inhale and exhale.

CARLA

But ya actually gotta think ahead. Ya gotta think of the exhale first. Get the bad air out, then you get the good air in. Bad out. Good in. Simple engineering.

(Stops to reflect)

When ya think about it, moral principles work much the same way.

CHIEF

I don't think I—

MRS. MERCK

Stephanie, where is the band going to set up?

STEPHANIE

No band. No live music.

MRS. MERCK

What?! We have to have a band!

STEPHANIE

Place isn't big enough. Unless we knock out that wall.

MRS. MERCK

We can't knock out that wall. That's the outer wall of the safe.

STEPHANIE

What about the other wall?

MRS. MERCK

Stephanie, we can't redesign the bank in time for tonight.

STEPHANIE

Then no live music. Which is actually good. Recorded music works better. We can get exactly what we want and we don't have to rely on some band that only knows eleven songs that all sound the same and have too much brass. I'll set up the speakers. We need to hang some wire. And make sure no one will see it. We can cover it up with some streamers. Of course, we have to make sure the streamers don't catch on fire...

(STEPHANIE wanders off, looking at the walls and ceiling)

CHIEF

Wait a minute.

MRS. MERCK

Now what is it, Chief?

CHIEF

That's Stevie the Toy!

MRS. MERCK

Who? What?

CHIEF

That's Stevie "The Toy" Mackenzie. She's a con. And an *ex-con*!

MRS. MERCK

Stephanie?

CHIEF

Yes! Stevie the Toy.

MRS. MERCK

Why do they call her “The Toy”?

CHIEF

Because you think you’re playing her, and she’s playing you. She’s a hustler. A con artist extraordinaire.

MRS. MERCK

She’s an event coordinator.

CHIEF

Oh, she coordinates events alright.

(MR. MERCK finally emerges from his office with MR. and MRS. CHAMBERLAIN, who are obviously rich)

MR. MERCK

Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, I can’t tell you how happy we are to finally have you banking with us.

MRS. CHAMBERLAIN

Well, we really could not refuse your generous offer, Mr. Merck.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN

(Gruffly)

And we finally got fed up with you hounding us all the time.

MR. MERCK

Ha! Ha! Ha! Oh, look, here is my wife!

MRS. CHAMBERLAIN

Mrs. Merck! Delighted.

MRS. MERCK

Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, we are so pleased. And may we expect you at our wonderful Mardi Gras Ball this evening?

MRS. CHAMBERLAIN

Oh, of course! We wouldn’t miss it for the world!

MR. CHAMBERLAIN

Unless the world makes a better offer.

MRS. CHAMBERLAIN

Oh, don't listen to him. He's such an old coot. We've been planning on coming ever since we ordered our costumes months ago!

MR. CHAMBERLAIN

Costumes? What costumes?

MRS. CHAMBERLAIN

Oh, now, we're not going to give anything away.

MRS. MERCK

Oh yes! That's the whole fun of it!

MR. MERCK

And look, here's the Chief of Police!

MR. CHAMBERLAIN

What's he doing here?

CHIEF

Protecting your money, sir.

(Enter EDDIE "LUCKY FINGERS")

EDDIE

I'm here to bust open the safe again.

MR. MERCK

(Very embarrassed)

What's *he* doing here?

CHIEF

Do you want me to arrest him?

MR. MERCK

Uh, Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain, let's just step back into my office for a minute. There is, um, one more form that needs to be notarized.

(Exit MR. and MRS. CHAMBERLAIN, ushered into the office by MR. MERCK, but just before he follows them in, WARREN enters and intercepts MR. MERCK)

WARREN

Mr. Merck, I have a security issue I need to discuss with you.

MR. MERCK

This is a bad time, Warren. Talk to Chief Conklin about it. If he approves it, I will.

WARREN

Mr. Merck, you rely too much on the police. I mean, why do you even have me working here if you rely so much on the police?

MR. MERCK

I wonder the same thing, Warren.

WARREN

I think we can do a better job ourselves. Other banks are getting these here security cameras.

MR. MERCK

And you think we should get one?

WARREN

Well, yeah, that's what I was thinking. Not just one but several.

MR. MERCK

So you can sit and watch TV.

WARREN

They're called monitors.

MR. MERCK

They look like TVs. I don't pay you to watch TV. In fact, what do I pay you for?

WARREN

But other banks—

MR. MERCK

Other banks don't have police protection.

(Exit MR. MERCK, leaving WARREN just standing there. EDDIE approaches CARLA, who is busy cleaning.)

EDDIE

So, Carla the Cleaner.

CARLA

Eddie Lucky Fingers. Long time, no see.

EDDIE

That's because I never got visiting privileges to the Women's Penitentiary.

CARLA

Yeah, and they wouldn't let me come visit the boys, either.

EDDIE

Staying clean?

CARLA

Staying lucky?

EDDIE

How'd you get a job in a bank?

CARLA

I was about to ask you the same question.

EDDIE

Believe it or not, they hire me to open their safe. Sometimes twice a week. Good honest work.

CARLA

I'm doing honest work, too.

EDDIE

Then why'd you lift that lady's wallet?

CARLA

Just wanted to take a look at it. Nothing in it. She came in here to fill it up.

EDDIE

So you're just a sightseer now.

CARLA

Yeah, that's all. But you know what they say about old habits.

EDDIE

Yeah, old nuns wear 'em.

CYNTHIA

(Approaches EDDIE)

Mr. Ricardo. If you don't mind, we're in rather a hurry.

EDDIE

I'll get right on it.

CYNTHIA

Thank you.

(Exit EDDIE. CARLA crosses to MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH and hands a wallet to her.)

CARLA

Excuse me, ma'am. I think you dropped this.

MRS. ROLLINGSWORTH

Oh! Why, thank you!

CARLA

Don't mention it.

(Pauses)

Please.

(Exit CARLA)

CHIEF

Mrs. Merck, I must object. Eddie Lucky Fingers is a convicted felon.