

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS CABBAGE

The Cast

Faith/Arlene Secretary gal Friday 30 plus
Charles Plumb Detective 50 plus
Gloria/Ethel 30ish Fem fatal
Harley Bear Oddfellow 30-40
Goon one/FBI two Late twenty
Goon two/FBI oneLate twenty

Synopsis

Charlie Plumb, no longer young enough for the Private Eye biz takes on one last case. A lot of fourth wall breaking, as he explains his situation to the audience. One actress misses her entrance which begins a disintegration of the production. A noir play that falls apart completely. A comedy of errors.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS CABBAGE

SCENE 1

CHARLIE PLUMB, AN AGING P.I. IS STANDING IN FRONT OF HIS DESK. HIS OFFICE IS SOMETHING OUT OF THE THIRTIES OR FORTIES.. FAITH, HIS RECEPTIONIST IS AT HER DESK IN THE OUTER OFFICE. THERE ARE TWO DOORS ONE FROM HER ROOM TO OUTSIDE AND THE OTHER LEADING TO CHARLIE'S OFFICE. THE INNER DOOR IS OPEN.

CHARLES ASIDE

My name is Charles Plumb. This is my office. No decorator has ever set foot in here, but I guess that's obvious. Have a good look around, soak it in. I say that because in a matter of days it might be a dentists office. Oh, now that I recall there was a decorator in here once. What a pain in the ass. He went around straightening up and criticizing the decor, and everything in the place. He hired me to protect him and to find whoever it was that wanted to kill him. I remember thinking if he says one more thing about my desk lamp being of the wrong period for a detectives office I might just kill him myself. As I was saying my days as a P. I. Are coming to a close ---

(There is a knock on the outer office door.)

CHARLES

Faith, get the door would you dear.

(She opens the door.)

FAITH

Hello

CHARLES ASIDE

When in to my office walks the obligatory Blond.

GLORIA

You have to help me.

(She moans and falls to the floor. There is a knife in her back)

FAITH

Charlie you better come here.

CHARLES

Holy crap.

CHARLES ASIDE

That is how my day started two weeks ago. The Blond? She'll be back. It was a short stubby little knife. Of course what you saw there was a re-enactment.

CHARLES

Faith, please help her up. See you later Gloria. Thank you.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES ASIDE

I had never been involved with a case anything like this. As it turns out, that interior decorator was Gloria's brother. Well half brother. That's what she said.

(Gloria enters the inner office.)

GLORIA

I know, he insists that we are step siblings but believe me I know the facts.

CHARLES

Whatever you say, Blondie. Now if you will excuse me, and make an exit I have a story to tell, a case to reveal.

GLORIA

But what about the "obligatory" love scene?

GLORIA ASIDE.

I hope he tells that part. I had a nice little scene in it.

CHARLES

Good bye for now Gloria.

CHARLES ASIDE

She'll be back in a later scene.

(Gloria exits the office. As she waves to the audience.)

CHARLES

All the way out Gloria. Faith would you make sure she leaves or do I have to call the stage manager?

CHARLES ASIDE

Now, as I was saying. What was I saying?

FAITH

You were explaining about the brother, sister hyphen step siblings murder case.

CHARLES

It wasn't a murder case at the time.

FAITH

Don't tell me tell them.

CHARLES

What would I do without you?

CHARLES ASIDE

I don't know. What I would do without her? So as I was saying This interior decorator, who I could not stand the sight of any more had already paid a sizable retainer. Which I needed to stay in business.

FAITH

And to pay me Charlie.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES ASIDE

She's right. She is almost always right.

FAITH

Almost? I heard that.

CHARLES ASIDE

It can be annoying at times.

FAITH

The case Charlie. The case?

CHARLES

I'm getting to it.

CHARLES ASIDE

I'm getting to it. You should have seen this guy when he walked in here.

FAITH

He looked like the groom on a wedding cake and ...

CHARLES

Who is telling this story?

(He walks over and closes the office door. Faith has moved to the door to eavesdrop.)

CHARLES ASIDE

My right hand gal, but what a mouth.

FAITH

(Shouting.) I'm left handed!

CHARLES ASIDE

I keep forgetting that. But still she is my right hand even though she insists on being left handed, and I don't know why. We live in a right handed world. Well, anyway, she is right about the guys outfit.

(Front door opens and in walks a guy in a tux. With top hat and carrying a small box.)

HARLEY

I would like to speak with mister Palumbo.

(Faith scrambles back to her desk.)

FAITH

Plumb. May I help you?

HARLEY

No thank you I will only discuss matters with mister ...

(He is trying to read something from a paper in his hand.)

HARLEY (CONT'D)

Mister Plat?

FAITH

Plumb.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

HARLEY

Whom did you say?

FAITH

Plumb. Charles Plumb. The Charles Plumb detective agency.

HARLEY

It cannot be.

FAITH

What can't be?

HARLEY

You are a woman, no?

FAITH

Yes. And thank you for noticing.

HARLEY

But how can you be this Mister Charles Port. If that is your name.

FAITH

It is not and I aint'.

CHARLES ASIDE

Do you believe this. Well you should because... I've meet a lot of strange ones in my time.

(The front door opens and Gloria enters. She stands starring motionless like a deer in the headlights in the doorway.)

GLORIA

Oh, crap.

FAITH

What are you doing here?

(Just then an arm reaches out and grabs her arm.)

GLORIA ASIDE.

I thought it was the love scene.

GLORIA

Sorry.

(The arm pulls her back through the doorway. Faith immediately closes the door.)

FAITH

Bye, bye and thanks for stopping by. See you soon. Now mister.

Mister? Who may I ask, is calling?

HARLEY

Harley.

FAITH

Harley?

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

HARLEY

Harley. Yes, my name is Harley.

FAITH

Sooo, Harley what would you like us to do for you?

HARLEY

You're detectives, what do you think I would like?

FAITH

Right this way Mister Harley.

(Faith opens the inner door. And shoves him through.)

FAITH (CONT'D)

Charlie this is Mister Harley.

HARLEY

You are a man.

(Charlie looks around the room expecting to see someone standing behind him.)

CHARLES

As it happens. Yes I am.

FAITH

Don't ask.

HARLEY

So you are Mr. Plat.

FAITH

He thinks your name is Plat.

CHARLES

What?

FAITH

A clue. I don't think all his wheels touched down when he landed.

CHARLES ASIDE

At first I had no idea what she meant.

(She exits and leaves the door ajar.)

HARLEY ASIDE

(In a German Accent.) I might just be a Red Herring.

CHARLES ASIDE

That is not in the script.

HARLEY ASIDE

Improvisation.

CHARLES ASIDE

(Aside to Harley.) Don't help, don't improvise...

(To audience.) He thinks he's helping.

(Aside to Harley) No more helping!

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES

Come on in Mr. Harley. Have a seat.

(Harley's next line begins w/German accent which slowly fades away.)

HARLEY

Won't be necessary I will not take up much of your time.

(He hands Charlie the box.)

CHARLES

Late for the wedding?

HARLEY

That was a joke I take it. Not funny, but a joke none the less.

Yes? As opposed to the Red Herring which I found rather humorous.

(Charlie takes lid off the box and lifts out a wad of money and thumbs
through bills.)

CHARLES ASIDE

Real money.

CHARLES

Just how may I be of service Mr. Harley? This is a lot of cabbage.

HARLEY

I'm not so sure about cabbage; It is however genuine coin of the
realm, I assure you.

CHARLES ASIDE

I told him I knew.

CHARLES

I recognise that. How may we help you?

HARLEY

CHARLES ASIDE

Before we get to my problem.

Let me help you with yours.

Who the hell furnished this,
this, monstrous excuse for an

office? That lamp belongs in the trash, I've never seen
anything so ugly. Here is my card.
This was the first time he
mentioned the lamp. Then he
hands me his business card.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

I will think about that. Now can we get to the reason for your
visit?

(Still fingering the money.)

HARLEY

Someone is try to kill me.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES

Seams understandable.

HARLEY

I beg you pardon. You hardly know me well enough ...

CHARLES

I only meant, talking to a Private Investigator, instead of going
to the police. Or have you?

HARLEY

I have been to the police.

CHARLES

And?

HARLEY

They are not interested.

CHARLES ASIDE

No crime, no case.

CHARLES

No crime, no case?

CHARLES ASIDE

When into my offices walks the obligatory blond. This time on
cue.

(The front door opens. Gloria enters. Faith closes the office door.)

GLORIA

Where is he? I saw him come in here.

FAITH

Won't you have a seat?

(Gloria sits.)

GLORIA

I want to know if he is here.

FAITH

Who is here?

GLORIA

That bastard.

FAITH

Do you know Charlie?

GLORIA

Who the hell is Charlie?

FAITH

My boss. This is his office.

GLORIA

What office.

(Faith opens the door and shows her the sign.)

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

GLORIA ASIDE.

Of course I knew. I didn't want her to know that I knew. So I went
along. I mean, I'm not a real blond.

GLORIA

Detective? What does he want with a detective?

FAITH

Who are you talking about?

GLORIA

Mister Bear.

FAITH

Wearing a tuxedo and top hat? Looks like he fell of a wedding
cake?

GLORIA

That's him. I saw him in here before.

FAITH

No you didn't.

GLORIA

When I came in before...

FAITH

When you made the wrong entrance?

GLORIA ASIDE.

I forgot about that.

GLORIA

Oh yeah, sorry.

FAITH

One second.

(She crosses to office door and pokes her head in.)

FAITH (CONT'D)

Charlie, you better come out here.

CHARLES

Say Harley, excuse me a sec.

(He puts the box on the desk and begins crossing to the door.)

HARLEY

Have you got any empty boxes?

CHARLES

Empty boxes? Why?

HARLEY

Something large enough to place that horror in.

(He pokes the lamp with his cane.)

CHARLES ASIDE

Another shot at my Mother's lamp.

(Charlie goes out and Faith quickly closes the door behind him.)

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

FAITH

You are not going to believe this.

(Harley begins poking around in the office mocking the decor.)

HARLEY ASIDE

Who decorated this place? No taste whatsoever.

FAITH

His name is Bear. (Pointing to the inner door.)

CHARLES

Harley Bear?

FAITH

Like a Teddy bear in a tux.

(Faith chuckles.)

GLORIA

That isn't funny, you know.

FAITH

If you say so. (Laughing.)

GLORIA

You're the detective? You are kinda cute.

CHARLES ASIDE

Where did that come from?

GLORIA

I want to see him.

CHARLES

FAITH

Who?

Who?

GLORIA (CONT'D)

The man in that room.

CHARLES

There is nobody in that room.

(All this time Harley is poking around the office and under his breath critiquing the appointments and rearranging the room. Tossing the offending lamp into a drawer)

HARLEY

That chair belongs in an old Bogart movie.

(THE REFERENCE TO FURNITURE PERIOD SHOULD REFLECT THE SET
PIECES.)

FAITH

The man you are looking for left a while ago.

CHARLES

He what?

CHARLES ASIDE

Who is in control here?

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

GLORIA

(Very loud.) No he didn't. I saw him come in here but, I didn't see him go out.

(Harley hearing the shouting exits out a window.)

HARLEY

I will be in touch.

(As Harley goes out Gloria pushes her way into the office followed by Charlie and Faith.)

GLORIA

You son-of-a-bitch. Stop him. He's getting away.

(She notices the box on the desk.)

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Is that the dingus?

CHARLES

Dingus? What the hell?

CHARLES ASIDE

What are you saying? There is no dingus in the script.

CHARLES

Who the hell are you, and who the hell is Harvey Bear?

GLORIA

Harley.

FAITH

It's just to funny. I can't stop laughing.

CHARLES

Who are you people?

GLORIA

What's in that box?

CHARLES

None of your business.

GLORIA

I have to stop him.

(She bolts out the door.)

CHARLES

What did he do in here. Faith! Do you see this?

FAITH

Holy Mayflower mover in a tux?

CHARLES

An interior decorator. Here's his card. Where the hell is my lamp?

(The phone rings.)

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES ASIDE

I don't have to tell you who that is. I do? Don't you read
Detective novels?

FAITH

Want me to get that?

(Charlie just stares at her.)

CHARLES ASIDE

How many people who's primary job is to answer the phone need to
be told to answer the phone?

FAITH

Okay okay you don't have to tell me twice.

CHARLES ASIDE

I shouldn't have to tell her once.

CHARLES

I shouldn't have to tell you once.

(She crosses to his desk and picks up the phone.)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Why not use my desk.

FAITH

Hello, Charlie Port detective Agency.

CHARLES

Charles, Charles Port.

FAITH

Excuse me. The Charles Port detective agency. How may I help you?

(Pause) No I am not Mr. Port.

(She cups the receiver.)

FAITH (CONT'D)

Do I sound like a man? (Pause) Who may I say is calling. (Pause)

Don't believe her? Who is her? ... He hung up.

CHARLES

Who was that?

FAITH

It sounded like the Bear.

(She exits to outer office, leaving the door open.)

CHARLES ASIDE

See what I mean sometimes it's hard to get a straight answer out
of her.

(He opens a drawer and pulls out the lamp.)

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES ASIDE (CONT'D)

Why would he do that to my lamp? I understand why someone would
want to kill him.

(There is a knock on the outer door. Faith ignores it. Another knock.)

CHARLES

Faith, get the door would you dear.

(She opens the door.)

FAITH

Hello

GLORIA

You have to help me.

(She moans and falls to the floor. There is a knife in her back)

FAITH

Charlie you better come here.

CHARLES

Holy crap.

(He rushes to outer office. Carrying his lamp.)

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Is she?

FAITH

What? Is she what?

CHARLES

Alright. Is she Okay.

FAITH

I think she's dead. Should I call someone?

(Harley enters.)

HARLEY

Of course she's dead. She was trying to kill my father.

CHARLES ASIDE

Actually that is how my day ended.

END SCENE 1

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

SCENE 2

(Two days later. As lights come up Charlie is being worked over by two guys
in suits. One of them holds a gun.)

SUIT ONE

We could keep this up if youz wants too.

CHARLES

No, that's okay. You can stop any time now.

SUIT TWO

But you aint' told us nothin'.

SUIT ONE

That's true but I'm getting tired. Aint' you tired.

CHARLES ASIDE

What am I supposed to say? Besides I was so tired of being hit by
these knuckle dragging Apes I couldn't remember what they were
asking me.

CHARLES

Actually, I'm so tired I can't remember what you asked me.

CHARLES ASIDE

They just stared at each other.

(They do so.)

SUIT TWO

I'll ask him again this time you hit him.

SUIT ONE

Okay with you pal?

CHARLES

Sure.

CHARLES ASIDE

Why not? He didn't look as mean as the tired one.

SUIT TWO

What was the guy in the tux hired you for.?

CHARLES

He hired me to find out who wanted to kill him.

SUIT ONE

For the last time. That is us. And we want you to tell us where he
is.

(Suit one punches Charlie in the gut. He collapses.)

CHARLES

I can't.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

SUIT ONE

Do you think I like beating up old people?

CHARLES

You appear to be good at it. So yes.

SUIT TWO

He is. So now tell us where we can grab this guy.

CHARLES

I can't tell you because I don't know.

CHARLES ASIDE

I really don't know. I know what you are thinking, Bear gave me his card. You are right but I don't know what I did with it.

CHARLES

The only thing I can tell you is that he is an Interior Decorator.

(Suit Two knocks Charlie out.)

SUIT TWO

He decorate this dump for you? Interior decorator? What a dump.

Mike, maybe he leaved it here?

SUIT ONE

Proibly' not. Lets search the dump.

SUIT TWO

We done that.

SUIT ONE

Yeah, I forgot. This is a waste of time. We gotta find that stuff.

(He kicks Charlie and they exit. After the door closes Charlie manages to roll over and get to his feet.)

CHARLES ASIDE

I'm not going stand here and tell you that I might have... Might! Have told them but truthfully I had no idea what it was they were looking for. I could have been the money I guess. Well I managed to get myself together. Oh, you probably want to know what happened with the blond. I wish I had time to tell you. The cops were here all day yesterday.

(Faith enters the outer office door. Gloria is with her.)

GLORIA

Flesh wound?

CHARLES ASIDE

Guess I won't have to. Apparently she isn't dead. Let's have a listen.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

GLORIA ASIDE.

I still have the love scene to do.

CHARLES ASIDE

What love scene?

FAITH

Listen to me, we have to find your brother...

GLORIA

He is not my brother that bastard.

FAITH

He said that you hired people to kill your father...

GLORIA

His father.

GLORIA ASIDE.

How many times do I have to tell her.

GLORIA

You got that? His father. He's the one who took the plans and now
we are all going to die.

FAITH ASIDE

I'm just going to go with the flow here. What the hell.

FAITH

What? What plans and who are the we who are going to die.

(Charlie staggers in from the other office.)

FAITH (CONT'D)

Did you hear that?

CHARLES

Hear what?

GLORIA

We are all going to die.

CHARLES

In my business that is a common phrase.

CHARLES ASIDE

It really is if you give it some thought. Who do I do business
with? Cheating wives, cheating husbands, embezzlers, angry
partners of embezzlers, a real collection of people other people
want to blackmail or murder.

FAITH

Charlie, you look like hell.

(Gloria crosses to Charlie and caresses him.)

GLORIA

Oh, you poor thing. Where does it hurt? You can tell Glory.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES

Hello Gloria. I just took a going over by a couple of gorillas in suits. Where is Harley? And what were those two goons looking for which I don't have or know anything about.

(Charlie tries to peel Gloria off of him.)

FAITH

Some kind of plans.

GLORIA

War plans or something Harley's father took from a Defenses contractor he works for.

CHARLES ASIDE

Espionage? With a war going on. What a surprise. Holy crap.

CHARLES

Espionage? With a war going on. What the hell did he steal? And why where you trying to kill Harley?

GLORIA

That is none of your dam business.

CHARLES

Well, he hired me to find the people who wanted to kill him so it is my business.

(The door flies open and two FBI agents enter. These are played buy the same actors played the thugs.)

FBI ONE

F.B.I. Every body hands where we can see them.

FBI TWO

What he said. (Pointing to Charlie) You. Are you Charles Port?

CHARLES ASIDE

Before I answer him let me explain something. I know you all noticed that these guys look like the gorillas who just beat me up.

FBI TWO

You didn't answer me. And remember it is a crime to lie to a federal agent.

CHARLES

Maybe that depends on why you want to know.

FBI ONE

Because we are the Federal Bureau of Investigation. And we want to know why those to mugs left here with nothing. Are you working with them?

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES

No.

FBI TWO

No?

CHARLES

Those guys just beat me up. So no I am not working with them.

CHARLES ASIDE

You see, we are in a kind of budget squeeze so we couldn't afford
two more actors. So these guys are doubling up.

FBI ONE

Are you stupid or what? You let those guys nearly kill you why
didn't you give them the damned paper? You could have screwed up
this entire operation.

CHARLES

What operation? What paper?

FBI TWO

Gloria, didn't you let him in on the plan?

GLORIA

I thought he wasn't a good enough actor, and being in terrible
shape I thought it would be more convincing to let them beat it
out of him. Who knew he was that tough?

CHARLES ASIDE

Now I am beginning to sense that something is rigged here. So I
lied a little.

CHARLES

Tough? Let me tell you, if there is one thing I am not, it is
tough. Plus I didn't know what they wanted.

CHARLES ASIDE

The second part was true. So I asked.

CHARLES

Was someone supposed to tell me something? Give me something?

GLORIA ASIDE.

Some detective.

GLORIA

Harley didn't give it to you?

CHARLES

He only gave my ...

CHARLES ASIDE

Hold on a minute he had given me something. His business card and

..

(Charlie turns to Gloria.)

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES

The money. He gave me the money.

CHARLES ASIDE

They seemed to be waiting for more. That's when I knew.

CHARLES

So I was supposed to give them something. What and why.

FBI ONE

This was a set up to expose a spy ring. You were supposed to give them the info and then we could track them to who hired them.

CHARLES

Why didn't you just follow them?

FAITH

Yeah! Why didn't you?

FBI ONE

We need evidence.

FBI TWO

We needed to nab them with the Goods in their possession.

FBI ONE

Come on Frank we aren't getting anywhere with this broken down Shemus.

(the FBI guys exit.)

FAITH

I gotta go next door and get their First Aid kit.

(She exits.)

GLORIA ASIDE.

My moment, my big scene.

(She approaches Charlie.)

GLORIA

Listen Charlie, (Caressing him.) I didn't mean for you to get so beat up. What can Glory do to make it better.

GLORIA ASIDE.

I just love, love scenes. Don't you?

(She kisses him.)

CHARLES

What the hell do you think you are doing?

GLORIA

The love scene.

CHARLES

There is no love scene.

GLORIA ASIDE.

But my character is the love interest.

DETECTIVE CHARLIE PLUMB AND THE CASE OF THE MYSTERIOUS
CABBAGE.

CHARLES ASIDE

There is no love interest, no love scene.

GLORIA

I am drawn to you. I know it isn't in the script but Gloria is the
femme fatale I feel it.

CHARLES ASIDE

Excuse me, a moment. There is no femme fatale. My character
figures the whole thing out.

CHARLES

You and the fake FBI guys and the two goons are after Harley's
money which he thinks he is hiding by giving it to me. Then the
five of you confess when confronted and are arrested.

GLORIA

But you'll wait for me? Won't you Charlie.

CHARLES

You screwed up the entire play.

(Faith enters with First Aid Kit. Gloria is sobbing.)

FAITH

What happened to the Blond?

GLORIA

They cut my love scene.

FAITH

I don't remember any love scene.

CHARLES ASIDE

I don't know how to fix this so could we have the lights down?

FAITH

What the hell happened?

CHARLES

Just take a bow Arlene. Not now. When the lights come back up.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

(Gloria is all over Charlie. Everyone else is lined up for bows.)

CHARLES

Ethel, get the hell off me! You will never work in this town
again.

(Company bow. The FBI guys walk off in disgust.)

CURTAIN