

At a suburban house. There is a lively get-together in the living room. They're laughing and drinking. Food is set up on the main table.

Outside the door, a man's shadow appears on the front porch. He rings the bell. The host, Ms. Palmer, answers the door.

MS. PALMER  
Inspector, come in.

INSPECTOR  
Ms. Palmer, how do you do?

A stony-faced man in a dark suit and fedora hat enters.

MS. PALMER  
This way.

Ms. Palmer leads the inspector to the living room where the festivities are taking place. The group falls silent as the solemn Inspector enters.

MS. PALMER (CONT'D)  
Everyone, this is the Inspector.

INSPECTOR  
How do you do?

MR. KLEIN  
Is something the matter?

The Inspector paces as he talks.

INSPECTOR  
Ms. Palmer asked me to come. She has informed me that a crime has taken place this evening in this very house.

MS. SHERBERT  
What kind of crime?

MS. PALMER  
A serious one.

INSPECTOR  
Indeed. Ladies and gentlemen, someone in this room ate the last shrimp.

The guests gasp.

MS. LUKEWARM  
It wasn't me.

MR. OLIVE

Nor I.

INSPECTOR

This criminal saw the final shrimp on the tray. He or she did not ask, "Does anyone want the last shrimp?" as any polite, decent person would do. He or she did not say, "Has anyone not gotten a shrimp? You should have the last one." No, this villain gobbled up that crustacean when no one was watching. Oh, it was sly.

MS. PALMER

It was a jumbo shrimp at that.

INSPECTOR

Jumbo. A wicked act.

MS. PALMER

It's by far the favorite appetizer. I usually split the last one into tiny pieces so everyone can have a bit. It's selfish otherwise.

INSPECTOR

Shellfish selfish.

MS. SHERBERT

Who do you think is the culprit?

INSPECTOR

I have my suspicions. Like you, Ms. Sherbert.

MS. SHERBERT

Me?

INSPECTOR

Ms. Sherbert, you were found with a fork in the parlor. While Mr. Olive, you were discovered holding a toothpick in the breakfast nook. And you, Ms. Lukewarm, have a cocktail sauce mustache.

Ms. Lukewarm frantically wipes her face.

MR. OLIVE

That does not mean we ate the last one.

MS. PALMER

When it comes to jumbo shrimp, who knows what people are capable of?

MS. LUKEWARM

I would never eat the last one and not ask, "Hey, is it okay if I take it?" I'm not a monster.

INSPECTOR

Are you sure, Ms. Lukewarm? You would never sneak away food, denying others?

MS. LUKEWARM

I would not.

INSPECTOR

Not even Mexican dip?

MS. LUKEWARM

How do you know about that?

INSPECTOR

Three years ago, you were visiting family. Your aunt made Mexican dip, also known as five-layer dip. Creamy guacamole, tomatoes, sour cream, a heap of cheese, and refried beans that taste better than they look. It was all eaten the first night. Or was it? Was it, Ms. Lukewarm?

MS. LUKEWARM

I .... I ...

INSPECTOR

While everyone was distracted yelling at each other about politics, you grabbed a tupperware container, snuck in the remaining dip and hid it in the backup refrigerator in the storage room.

MS. LUKEWARM

I can explain ...

INSPECTOR

Did you do to the last shrimp what you did to the last of the Mexican dip? If so, adios to your innocence.

MS. LUKEWARM

It's true about the Mexican dip.  
But I did not take the shrimp. I  
felt too much dip guilt to do  
anything like that again.

MR. KLEIN

I don't even eat shellfish. I'm  
Jewish.

INSPECTOR

I know about you, Mr. Klein. You  
grew up going to a Reform temple in  
Houston, Texas. It's the least  
strict denomination and no one, not  
a-one, is Kosher. In fact, I've run  
the data. No one eats more  
shellfish than Reform Jews.

MS. PALMER

It's true. I saw him double-fisting  
shrimp earlier in the evening.

MR. KLEIN

Not me.

INSPECTOR

Do you want me to bring up the crab  
salad you ordered last night?

MR. KLEIN

My word. You know everything.

INSPECTOR

Ms. Sherbert.

MS. SHERBERT

What?

INSPECTOR

Are you the devourer of the final  
shrimp?

MS. SHERBERT

No. I would always let another have  
the last one.

INSPECTOR

Really? Does the phrase grape  
leaves mean anything to you?

MS. SHERBERT

The Mediterranean dish?

INSPECTOR

A green leaf stuffed with rice and delicious spices.

MS. SHERBERT

What does this have to do with me?

INSPECTOR

Last year, you were out with colleagues at a Greek restaurant. A mixed appetizer plate was ordered for the table. Why a large platter had only two grape leaves is its own mystery.

MS. SHERBERT

Oh yes, Zorba's. It was overpriced.

INSPECTOR

Alas, the plate was passed around. No one dared be so inconsiderate to take one of the precious grape leaves, knowing heck, everyone wants a grape leaf. And then the plate came to you, Ms. Sherbert. And you grabbed a whole one. Did you cut it in half to share it? No. You ate it in one bite. Everyone stared at you with their mouths agape. Agape at the leaf grape.

MS. SHERBERT

I don't remember.

INSPECTOR

Of course not. That's the kind of thoughtlessness about your fellow diners that would lead someone, without asking, to eat the final shrimp.

MS. SHERBERT

I'm not that inconsiderate anymore. Remember, Mr. Olive, earlier I inquired if I could get you another double bourbon and you asked me to get you two.

INSPECTOR

Mr. Olive. That brings me to you.

MR. OLIVE

Yea?

INSPECTOR

Do you have anything to share?

MR. OLIVE

No thanks.

INSPECTOR

Are you without sin?

MR. OLIVE

Okay, I've done bad things.

INSPECTOR

What things?

MR. OLIVE

I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die. But I did not take the last shrimp. There is a line, and I did not cross it.

INSPECTOR

What about you, Ms. Palmer?

MS. PALMER

Me? I called you as soon as I saw that the tray was empty.

INSPECTOR

Very clever. Did you eat the treat from the sea yourself and then report the malfeasance so no one would suspect you? I have seen that game before. But in the end, you will lose.

MS. PALMER

I am the hostess. I bought the shrimp for my guests.

INSPECTORS

And that's why you were the most injured. Did you resent the way they gobbled up your star nosh? And the resentment built up to the point that you took your revenge, shrimp-style?

MS. PALMER

Dear God, no.

INSPECTORS

All of you stuffed yourselves, downing one after the other.

(MORE)

## INSPECTORS (CONT'D)

The cocktail sauce getting in your hair. In such a state of seafood madness that you squeezed the lemon frantically, squirting yourselves in the eye.

MR. KLEIN

Were you watching us?

INSPECTOR

A large tray gone at 7:45 when the party started 7:30. You created a situation where there was only one shrimp left in a span of 15 minutes. In that respect--you are all guilty.

A cat meows. All look over and see the cat, Ms. Sprinkle, lying on a chair, licking her paws. Next to her paw is the tail of a shrimp. The inspector raises an eyebrow.

CUT TO:

The inspector holds Ms. Sprinkles, whose paws are now tied with handcuffs. The inspector walks toward the front door. The guests stand behind him, shaking their heads. He turns and tips his hat.

INSPECTOR (CONT'D)

My work is done. Good evening. Oh, and do stop being such gluttonous pigs. I would have loved a shrimp.

The inspector walks out the door, the shadow of a man and cat following behind.