

BEAUTY and the DECEASED

By Marc Holland and Michael Davis

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Beauty and the Deceased

- 2 -

STORY OF THE PLAY

It's a time of big cars, guys in fedoras and dames who are as quick with a wisecrack as they are with a gun. Into this world walks Nick Addams, Private Eye. All Nick has to do is find out who's framing him for the murder of the husband of the beautiful woman who hired him to help her in the first place. (Got that?)

Throw in a bunch of killers hired to rub out a gumshoe named Nick Adams (one D, no relation), a girl Friday who keeps saving Nick's neck (against her better judgment), and an underworld kingpin who might just have something to do with all this.

Beauty and the Deceased

- 3 -

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 m, 4 w, extras)

NICK ADDAMS: Private eye.
DIXIE TURNER: Nick's girl Friday.
VERONICA ABERCROMBIE: Nick's client.
DANNY BOYD: Police lieutenant.
DAD: Nick's dad, a shoeshine man.
DICK MURDOCK: Actor.
ARTHUR SCANLAN: Actor.
HELEN HIGHWATER: Actor.
HILLARY FERGUSON: Actor.
NASH ABERCROMBIE: Veronica's husband.
DUTCH SANCHEZ: Crime boss.
BUNNY: Dutch Sanchez's goon.

OTHER PARTS (can be doubled):

MAN: Doing a crossword puzzle.
TWO THUGS: Generic thug types.
TOMMY STEINER: Diner owner.
MAX: Head waiter at the Blue Orchid.
MAITRE D': At the Blue Orchid.
WAITER: At the Blue Orchid.
PANICKED GUY: Can't pay his bill at the Blue Orchid.
PATRONS: At the Blue Orchid.

Beauty and the Deceased

- 4 -

SETTING

Initially the stage is bare save for pools of light on the floor, suggesting the light of lampposts. The scenery will be lit as needed, with Nick's office at SR, the shoeshine stand combined with Tommy's Diner at CS and the Blue Orchid nightclub at SL. Dutch's office (behind the diner) consists of a desk, chair and file cabinet.

PROPS

PRESET: Magazine, screwdriver, "Closed" sign, four standing microphones, stapler, pepper shaker, vase of flowers.
NICK: Lighter, cigarettes, whiskey flask, dollar bills, bushy feather duster, gun, appointment book, change, notepad.
DIXIE: Eyeglasses, purse, ledgerbooks, 2 pairs of handcuffs.
VERONICA: Ring with large diamond, wad of money, red wig, trench coat, envelope with business card, banana.
MAN: Newspaper, pen.
THUGS: Pistols, huge knife.
TOMMY: Cup.
DAD: Shoeshine kit.
MURDOCK: Half-dollar, script.
MAX: Photograph.
ARTHUR: Toupee, cigarette, script.
WAITER: Tray of drinks.
BUNNY: Rope.
DUTCH: Briefcase with two envelopes (one holding photos), gun, sling, star of death.
BOYD: Festive bouquet of flowers, gun, badge.

SOUND EFFECTS

Slow saxophone playing Blues, door knocks, numerous gunshots, somber organ music and organ vamps, rimshot.

Beauty and the Deceased

- 5 -

ACT I

(AT RISE: A slow, sultry tenor saxophone plays evocative BLUES. NICK ADDAMS is briefly illuminated from the lighting of his Zippo and his cigarette. He steps slowly into the first pool of light.)

NICK: When the last flicker of honest sunlight disappears and the city is enveloped in the inky embrace of night, I go to work. I don't punch a clock. I don't have a union. I don't go to Christmas parties, drink too much spiked eggnog and make a sloppy pass at the boss' wife. I'm my own boss. I'm Nick Addams, private eye. That's Addams with two D's. There was a private eye named Adams with one D a few years back, but he had a habit of committing indiscretions indiscreetly. Not my way of doin' business. No sirree. I -

(During HIS speech, the LIGHT he stands under has slowly faded and gone out. He scoots to the next SPOTLIGHT pool.) ... I got nothing but admiration for the fairer sex. I like my women like I like my coffee ... dark and bitter. I'm afraid my luck with women ... *(The new SPOTLIGHT HE stands under has faded out even faster than the previous one. He moves to the next one. During this speech, the LIGHT he's standing beneath, naturally, fades out while the spot he stood under initially comes back on.)* ... my luck with women is what you'd expect with the job I have to do. Every woman is either: A) A kid sister who needs a shamus to be everything her rich, corrupt daddy can't be; B) A femme fatale who's all hips and seamed stockings and alibis that aren't worth the air they're spoken into; or C) A genuine victim who needs a lot of help with her problems, and, let's be honest, problems I got enough of.

(HE goes back to the first pool of light.) Yeah, trouble and me have always had a hate-hate relationship. I'd been having tête-à-têtes with trouble long before I became a private eye. I was going to be a dentist.

Beauty and the Deceased

- 6 -

NICK: *(Cont'd.)* But then I got to dental school and found out there was going to be some math. No dice. They said there was no way I could go to dental school without math. I can't for the life of me figure out why. When it's just you and a mouthful of diseased enamel, who cares about the multiplication tables? I mean, even that moron that didn't recommend Trident to his patients that chew gum is still working. Ah, well. Tough break. Actually, I like being a private eye. Well, that's not entirely true. Actually, I hate being a private eye. It's dangerous. I mean, there are some serious nutbars out there.

(LIGHTS up on his office. Light from between the Venetian blinds washes over his cluttered desk.) But I do have to pay bills, so, I'm a dick. Not a very busy one. I've forgotten during which presidential administration I had my last client. In fact, I'm sitting in my office, thinking about locking up and calling it a career. But whenever I do that, the knock that will change my life forever invariably ... uh ... knocks. *(There is a rap at the door.)* That is the unmistakable knock of one Dixie Turner, girl Friday.

(Enter DIXIE TURNER. She is dressed in a no-nonsense outfit. Her hair is done in a like manner and she is bespectacled.)

DIXIE: "Girl Friday"? Is that another name for "Unpaid Secretary"?

NICK: I lure you away from a lucrative position with a Fortune 500 company to toil in unappreciated obscurity and this is the thanks I get. You ingrate.

DIXIE: Normally, I'd slap you so hard your dog would stutter for a remark like that. Not today.

NICK: Really? What's the occasion?

DIXIE: I think we have a client.

NICK: A what?

DIXIE: I'm not surprised you'd forget. Clients. They hire you. They pay you. We eat. Client go-o-o-od.

NICK: It's all coming back. Send the unfortunate soul in, Dixie dear.

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