THE CAPRICIOUS PEARLS

By

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STORY OF THE PLAY

When Boss and his gang reconvene after being dismissed from parts better left unsaid, they go over the original map Boss had drawn showing where he had hidden a valuable string of pearls in a vacant house. They find it is now a home for aged ladies. And what ladies! Grannie Carlson loves to scoot in her wheelchair, Mrs. Hildebrand has a caustic tongue, and Mrs. Katts has eyesight that leaves something to be desired. How the crooks find the pearls and what they do with them make this one of the funniest plays ever.

PLAYING TIME: About 30 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

4 m, 9 w

THE GANG:
Boss
Little Auggie
Lefty
Clarence
Angel

THE LADIES:
Mrs. Hildebrand
Mrs. Teasdale
Granny Carson
Mrs. Katts
Mrs. Plunkett

THE OTHERS:
Ellen Landrum: owner of the home
Maude: an older employee
Lucy Lee: a younger employee

Casting Note: A more humorous effect may be achieved by casting Boss as a small slim person and casting his three henchmen and Angel, his "moll," as tall, strong people who tower over him but jump to do his bidding.

SETTING

The main scene of the play takes place in the living room of the Landrum Home for Aged Ladies. The set may be decorated to suit the taste of the director. At stage right must be a sofa behind which Boss, Little Auggie and Lefty will hide. At stage left must be a big, brown chair. Other furnishings are variable. There are two exits, upstage center, leading to outside; and one stage left which goes to bedroom-library wing of the home.

HAND PROPS

Crumpled sheet of paper -- LITTLE AUGGIE
Large pair of glasses -- LITTLE AUGGIE
Rolled up paper to resemble diploma -- ANGEL
Mop, bucket, soap box -- MAUDE
Book -- LUCY
Wheelchair, small blanket -- GRANNY
Knitting, books, embroidery -- Ladies
Newspaper -- MRS. KATTS
Old paper to resemble map -- BOSS
Large, red handkerchief -- LITTLE AUGGIE
Cup of tea -- MRS. PLUNKETT
Ornamental fan -- MRS. TEASDALE
Small rag doll -- LUCY
Five pearls

COSTUMING

GANG MEMBERS should be dressed in the stereotype criminal attire of the '30s--dark suits, dark shirts, white ties, hats pulled low.

ANGEL would be covered with clanking bracelets and dangling necklaces and, of course, have a beauty mark on the cheek.

CLARENCE is the single exception to this picture, wearing a sweatshirt with a big heart inside which is written "MOM."

The OLD LADIES are decrepit and are so dressed and made up. MRS. HILDEBRAND would be made up in the style of old ladies who wear too much powdered makeup to hide their age (or attempt to). ELLEN LANDRUM alone is a straight character, a middle-aged woman of some wisdom and great kindness. MAUDE should be dressed in the most unbecoming costume available with a hair style to match, preferable one which falls primarily into her face.

ACTING

This play has been written in a spirit of fun. It will be infinitely more successful if it is performed in the same spirit. Each part (except Ellen's) requires a character-actor performance.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE Stage apron. SPOTLIGHT hits BOSS, pacing stage impatiently, looking from time to time at his watch. A KNOCK is heard off SR.)

BOSS: Password!
LITTLE AUGGIE: *(Entering from SR.)* String of pearls!
BOSS: Pass.

(LITTLE AUGGIE advances to CSL, waiting for orders, at attention. A second KNOCK is heard.)

BOSS: Password!

LEFTY: *(Entering from SR, duplicating actions of LITTLE AUGGIE.)* String of pearls!
BOSS: Pass.

(LEFTY crosses to LITTLE AUGGIE. Each stands with head turned to BOSS, at full attention, waiting for orders. A third KNOCK is heard.)

BOSS: Password!

(CLARENCE enters exactly as LEFTY and LITTLE AUGGIE did. He, however, remains silent, in pained thought.)

BOSS: I said password!

CLARENCE: *(Hesitantly at first, then quicker as HIS ideas pick up momentum.)* Diamond - diamond ring? Emerald bracelet? Ruby earrings? Twinkle, twinkle, little star, like a diamond in the sky? *(LEFTY and LITTLE AUGGIE show their evident disgust and BOSS his exasperation.)*
BOSS: Oh, come on in, Clarence, and stop jabbering. Can't you get anything right? Just stand over there.

CLARENCE: Deck the halls with jewels? A diamond in the hand is worth two in the window? All around the cobbler's bench the cops chased the ol' jewel thief?
BOSS: Now cut it out!
CLARENCE: I can't remember, Boss.
BOSS: All right! All right!
CLARENCE: I tried real hard. I just can't remember. I tried. I really tried.
BOSS: It's all right, Clarence!
CLARENCE: Over and over I said it to myself. You got to remember that password, Clarence, I said to myself -
BOSS: SHUT UP!
CLARENCE: Yes, sir.
BOSS: Okay now, boys -
CLARENCE: I'm really sorry, sir. I really tried.
BOSS: Now, boys -
CLARENCE: I said to myself, Clarence, I said -
BOSS: I'm gonna kill you, Clarence. Right here in front of these two witnesses.
CLARENCE: I'm sorry, Boss. I'll be quiet. But only - *(An obvious movement of BOSS'S arm toward an arm holster inside his coat stops CLARENCE quite suddenly.)* I'll - be quiet.

(The THREE MEN stand on the stage at attention looking at BOSS as he addresses them.)

BOSS: *(In HIS best oratorical style.)* Okay now, boys, I know you're wondering why I called this meeting.
CLARENCE: Heck no! You're gonna tell us where you hid the pearls!
BOSS: Shut up, Clarence, I'm telling this.
CLARENCE: I'm sorry, Boss. Why did you call this meeting?
BOSS: I'm gonna tell you where I hid the pearls. Now as you all know, we've been on vacations for the past five years in various places around the country.
CLARENCE: Gee, have you? I been in Sing-Sing myself.

End of Freeview

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