Cases of Mistaken Identity

(A Comedy in Three Cars)

By Tony Howell

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STORY OF THE PLAY

It's the late 1800s and various travelers are boarding a train for their trip West, including young lovers who are being kept apart by her parents; a secret agent in-training; an elderly woman; a group of showgirls; and a couple who have just pulled off their first jewel heist.

Many of the travelers have identical suitcases which are accidentally switched. As the passengers mingle, some cases are intentionally switched, and then switched again. While the thieves frantically try to keep track of their jewels, the novice agent ends up dressed as a showgirl, thinking it's his disguise.

Meanwhile, name switches convince several of the young women that they're all in love with the same fellow. By the time the train makes its first stop, the rookie porter learns that on this train, all the adventure is just a typical case of mistaken identities! Full evening.

Cases of Mistaken Identity premiered at Jay County High School in Portland, IN, on April 26-29, 2001 with the following cast and crew.

Sasha Pembroke -- Brittney Kirtley
Neville Pembroke -- Daniel Huber
Opal Lord -- Sara Pyle
Prudence Ingram -- Stacey Paxson
Millicent Abercrombie -- Christina Hedge
Millard Abercrombie -- Craig Thomas
Seton Oberholtzer -- Toby Retherford
Maggie Leighton -- Austin Chapman
Calbert Leighton -- Dustin Mills
Rachel Leighton -- Robin Bisel
Justin Morgan -- Damon Ralston
Edward Smith -- Patrick Cavanaugh
Nicolette Spencer -- Laura Bergman
Lily Leighton -- Annette Hamilton/Chassidy Hill
Thalia Garrett -- Katie Streitelmeier
Jackson McConnahy -- Isaac Marchand
Bianca Sinclair -- Amanda Ayers
Delilah Waters -- Tosha Taylor
Gabby Morrison -- Telisa Weaver
Eve Munroe -- Lindsey St. John
Fifi Latour -- Shelly Newton
Cassie Boyd -- Rachel Weaver
Terrence Stamp -- Forrest Hammeren
William Keene -- Erik Wentz
Garnet Aberfoyle -- Sarah Marchand
Daniel Kent -- Phil Duke
Hester Westerly -- Tana Fowler
Carver Spencer -- Chris Adams
Director -- Tony Howell

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(10 m, 15 w, and any number of various travelers)

NEVILLE PEMBROKE: A sophisticated Englishman down on his luck. Dearly loves his wife. Has turned into a jewel thief out of necessity.

CALBERT LEIGHTON: The banker who is worried about his family.

SETON OBERHOLTZER: A young poor artist. A Romeo-type being kept away from the woman he loves.

JUSTIN MORGAN: A secret agent in training.

EDWARD SMITH: The experienced secret agent who is training Justin and having troubles with his digestive system.

TERRENCE STAMP: A porter in training.

WILLIAM KEENE: The head porter.

JACKSON MCCONNAHY: The manager of La Femmes.

DANIEL KENT: A policeman following Nicolette because of suspicions of danger.

MILLARD ABERCROMBIE: A middle-aged man in an unhappy marriage.

SASHA T. PEMBROKE: An Englishwoman who once danced on the stage. Dearly loves her husband, and has reluctantly joined him on this jewel heist to turn around their fading opportunities.

OPAL LORD: A rich, eccentric, elderly woman.

PRUDENCE INGRAM: Mrs. Lord's incredibly efficient secretary who also harbors a deep secret.

HESTER WESTERLY: A fighter for the cause of women's suffrage.

RACHEL R. LEIGHTON: The mother of two daughters.

MAGGIE LEIGHTON: A young rich girl being kept away from Romeo (Seton) by her meddling parents.

LILY LEIGHTON: Maggie's bratty little sister.

THALIA GARRETT: The young put-upon governess for the Leighton girls, and a would-be novelist.

BIANCA SINCLAIR: The man-hungry member of La Femmes.

DELILAH WATERS: The southern belle of La Femmes.

EVE MUNROE: The tough, street-wise fighter/leader of La Femmes.

GABBY MORRISON: The ever-talking, rambling member of La Femmes.

NICOLETTE SPENCER: An heiress who is being stalked.

MILLICENT ABERCROMBIE: A middle-aged woman in an unhappy marriage.

AUNTIE CARLOTTA SPENCER: An insane killer out to get rid of Nicolette for the family fortune.

NON-SPEAKING ROLES: Other travelers can be added as seen fit by the director. These parts are especially helpful for the opening and closing scenes on the platform. Passersby to watch the chases, to help create the busy feel of the railway platform and to react to the final unwinding of the plot can be a great help to the mood of the show. This seems to work best when these parts are given real characters to play. For example, old women, flirty girls, poor urchins, railway workers, rich businessmen and snobby ladies would all work well.

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

The chase/running across the stage sequences seem to work best when the characters work on their own individual running styles, styles that are motivated by their characters. Do they run primly perhaps daintily? Is it hard work for them? Do they run a few steps and then jump a little like a skittish colt? The more variety in the runs and the more motivated by character they are, the more interesting these sequences will be.

THE SUITCASES

The suitcases must be identical, of course. Small, straw picnic baskets work very well, as long as the cases match.
Case #1 jewels of Samarkand
Case #2 kiwifruit
Case #3 donation pledges for Hester's charity
Case #4 Leighton family fortune for the new bank
Case #5 Thalia's latest novel, *The Swordsman of Portia*
Case #6 Seton's artistic supplies
Case #7 Justin's secret agent kit and handbook
Cases #8-11 Costumes for La Femmes
Case #12 Nicolette's papers for her fortune

***See Costume, Prop and Set notes at the end of the script.**

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: The loading platform of a train in the very late 1800s. The exteriors of three passenger train cars can be seen onstage. MILLICENT and MILLARD, rushed and arguing, are being followed by an overworked TERRENCE carrying their luggage. WILLIAM has a luggage cart and is following RACHEL. JUSTIN [holding case #7] and EDWARD are in a deep discussion and often check their watches. OPAL is talking to PRUDENCE [holding case #2], obviously checking on last-minute details. LILY runs around with a harried THALIA [holding case #5] running after her. NICOLETTE [holding case #12] stands looking forlorn and lost. DANIEL seems to be reading a newspaper. CARLOTTA is bundled up and walks straight to the train and gets aboard immediately. Extras are saying good-bye to relatives and hurrying around with luggage. SFX include a buzz of noise, a conductor's voice, the sound of a train, announcements of departures and arrivals. Into this excitement walks NEVILLE [holding case #1] and SASHA, both dressed smartly but casual. She is obviously nervous.)

SASHA: *(After a moment, she turns to him.)* Darling! Are you sure about this?

NEVILLE: Don't tell me you're getting cold feet? Not now! It's a little late, you know. I must say, we've pretty much committed ourselves, it seems to me.

SASHA: Oh, Neville, dear, we could go back, couldn't we? I mean, no one may even know yet. We could just go back to the way things were. Couldn't we?

NEVILLE: You know that isn't true. Things weren't even the way they were when they were the way they were, now were they! *(Beat. He even confused himself for a moment.)* I mean, it's not like we could go back to our flat, now could we. We were evicted two days ago, weren't we? So, where do you propose we go back to? The alley at Monmouth and East 12th? That was a pleasant night, wasn't it!

SASHA: But this seems so drastic! There must be a simpler way! I mean we aren't the first ones to find ourselves in a ... a ... financial drought!

NEVILLE: I thought we agreed! No more living hand-to-mouth. We were going to make the break for it once and for all!

SASHA: I know, Neville darling, but really, to commit a ... a ... felony!

NEVILLE: Sasha! Ssh! *(Under his breath.)* You must be careful! We are now jewel thieves and you can't go around announcing to everyone on track number nine that we've committed a crime! *(Beat.)* Nine and crime! They rhyme! Oh, and so does rhyme! How terribly clever of me!

SASHA: I hope you're right about this, Neville darling. I truly hope you are, but if it doesn't work ....

NEVILLE: It will work! Now, let's go find our stateroom and get this very special case settled in its proper place.

SASHA: Don't you think we should find a safer place to keep our ... our ... loot, I believe we're supposed to call it.

NEVILLE: The fancier the case, the more it will attract attention. No, this case is perfect. They're a dime a dozen. Look around, everyone has one. Even if the authorities should start nosing around, no one will remember a very average couple with a very average case.

SASHA: I must say, Neville, it sounds as if you know what you're doing. Are you sure you weren't a thief before we were married?

NEVILLE: No, darling, but remember, I did go to the theatre a great deal.

SASHA: Yes. All those female chorus girls!

NEVILLE: And I married the only chorus girl that truly mattered.

SASHA: Perhaps I should go back to the stage, Neville. We could return the jewels and then ....

NEVILLE: Sasha! This is the only way! Now, don't frown, sweetheart. From now on, it's only smiles for you!

(HE grabs HER hand and they take off onto the train. As they go, they pass OPAL and PRUDENCE who have been talking.)

OPAL: But, Prudence ....

PRUDENCE: It's all taken care of, Mrs. Lord. *(Checks her notebook.)* The reservations for your stateroom have been confirmed. The steward has been notified of your presence and I personally watched all the luggage go on the train.

OPAL: And my kiwifruit?

PRUDENCE: Right here, safe and fresh.

OPAL: Did you know that most Americans just call it kiwi?

PRUDENCE: You have mentioned that before, Mrs. Lord.

OPAL: When my late husband, Roger, the poor dear, and I lived in New Zealand, I actually saw a kiwi, and believe you me, it was not a fruit.

PRUDENCE: Of course not, Mrs. Lord.

End of Freeview

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