

DRESSED TO KILL

A Fashionable Comedy

By Craig Sodaro

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Life isn't easy when you're a fashion designer who can't needle her way into a designing job. Alexandra Daniels, better known as Lexie, is stuck stitching at the famous House of Van Gore, where her friend, Mona, works in the stockroom yearning for her big break on Broadway. The viperish head of the fashion house, Nan Van Gore, recently inherited the place from her Uncle Tor, who died of a heart attack in the workroom. She now plots with designer Weeza DeVries to steal designs and sell them at inflated prices to a series of hysterically vain, pompous customers.

When things just can't seem to be at more of a dead end for Lexie and Mona, a guardian angel of sorts comes to their rescue. The late Tor Van Gore makes a "spirit's visit" and convinces the girls that he didn't really die of a heart attack. He says he was murdered, but he doesn't know who did it or how. Promising he'll help the girls if they help him, Tor suggests they contact a private eye, Eddie O'Neill, who was convinced Tor had been murdered all along.

But almost as soon as the girls half-heartedly agree to solve the mystery, Miss Rushton, the house's secretary, turns up dead in the workroom. Now, Lexie and Mona, with the help of Lexie's boyfriend, Ryan, must find out who the killer is - or they'll surely be next!

CHARACTERS

(6 M, 12 W)

NAN VAN GORE: Head of the fashion house.
PEPPER: A model.
GIOVANA: Another model.
ILSA: Another model.
MARTHA JANE BILLINGSLY: A wealthy matron.
CLAYTON BILLINGSLY III: Her husband.
LADY SLIPPING-STORK: A customer from England.
CISSY CALZONE: A flashy lady.
DORA HART: A lottery winner.
MISS RUSHTON: Office secretary.
JASPER JENKINS: A lawyer and business manager.
ALEXANDRA (Lexie) DANIELS: A stitcher, 22, who wants to design.
MONA FAYE: Her friend, a stock girl, 20, who wants to act.
TOR VAN GORE: An angel; the late owner.
RYAN SACKS: Lexie's boyfriend, works for a newspaper.
WEEZA DEVRIES: Nervous fashion designer.
EDDIE O'NEILL: A private eye.
BUGSY CALZONE: Cissy's husband.

SYNOPSIS

ACT I

Scene 1: Afternoon at the House of Van Gore.

Scene 2: Late that evening, just after closing.

Scene 3: The following morning.

ACT II

Scene 1: Several days later, afternoon.

Scene 2: The following evening.

SETTING

The play takes place at the House of Van Gore, one of the great fashion houses in New York. The stage is divided in half by a suggestion of a wall UPS. The room SR is the lobby, complete with a desk, a mannequin or two sporting Van Gore originals, several plants, a painting of Tor Van Gore, and one or two customer chairs. An arch entrance USR covered with either beads or fabric leads to Nan's office. Entrance into lobby is a wing entrance DSR.

SL is the workroom, in stark contrast to the beauty of the lobby. This dingy room has a single window UPS that's too high to let in any light. There is an open closet CSL which holds clothes and empty hangers. The closet is actually an entrance for the actors, with the clothes hiding the opening. Two small work tables and two stools sit DS. One table holds a working sewing machine. A few body forms stand around the room draped in fabric. A shelf with cleaning supplies is USR. Sewing equipment, including several hams, bolts of fabric including gauze, and a sewing box, sit about here and there. An ironing board and iron are to one side. Wing entrance DSL leads to storeroom and alley door.

There are phones in both the workroom and lobby.

ACT I
Scene 1

(BEFORE THE CURTAIN: LADY SLIPPING-STORK, CISSY CALZONE, DORA HART, MRS. BILLINGSLY III and her husband CLAYTON sit in audience DSR or DSL where they can be seen and heard. As the LIGHTS come up, dramatic MUSIC plays as NAN VAN GORE stands at the mike SR.)

NAN: Finally, ladies and gentlemen, we at the House of Van Gore, have traditionally saved our very best for last ... and this year is no exception. We are pleased to present Pepper, wearing a chic evening gown. Piles and piles of organdy, chiffon, with accents of Belgian lace ... *(PEPPER enters SL wearing a fancy evening gown, full of bows and ribbons.)* ... bursting with bows, rhymed with ribbons, it will scream youth and enchantment. *(PEPPER struts dramatically.)*

MRS. B: Oh, Clayton, darling, I MUST have that! I simply MUST!

CLAYTON: Crying out loud, Pudding, you'll look like a lamp shade!

MRS. B: Clay-ton!

CLAYTON: Anything Pudding wants, Pudding gets.

NAN: Thank you, Pepper. *(PEPPER exits SR as GIOVANA enters SL wearing a slinky jumpsuit.)* And here we have Giovana in our most casual of casuals, a sleek silk design guaranteed to make you feel good all over.

LADY: Heavens! Shameful!

CLAYTON: On YOU it sure would be!

CISSY: Yeah, but it's right up my alley. Bugsy'd LOVE me in something like that. Looks just like a banana peel, and there ain't nothin' Bugsy likes better than to peel a ripe banana!

LADY: *(Horried.)* You ... you ... American!

NAN: Thank you, Giovana *(GIOVANA exits SR.)* And for our last creation, we have Ilsa wearing a lovely dress and cape ensemble just perfect for rainy spring days.

Dressed to Kill

- 6 -

(ILSA enters SL wearing a dress and matching cape.)

NAN: *(Continued.)* Made of vinyl, this is a perfect stormy weather ensemble that will keep you dry while making a real statement.

DORA: Now ain't THAT practical! I can go out in the rain or clean the pool 'n still look great! I want that, Miss Van Gore!

(ILSA struts about.)

LADY: That's the thing about you Americans. You don't care WHO wins your lotteries!

DORA: Yeah! I never DREAMED it'd be little ol' moi! But you know, it's made me a whole better person.

LADY: Not that you had much to work with.

DORA: Don't know about that, but I AM learning French. Wanna hear me?

LADY: I am breathless with anticipation.

DORA: Hey, garcon! Pass the croy-sants, sil vooz plate!

NAN: Thank you, Ilsa. *(ILSA exits SR.)* That, I'm proud to say, completes the collection of the House of Van Gore for this season. We welcome your comments and, of course, your purchases!

(LIGHTS on NAN dim as DORA jumps up.)

DORA: Let's go get 'em, girls!

(As DORA, MRS. BILLINGSLY, CLAYTON, LADY SLIPPING-STORK and CISSY step up on stage, the CURTAIN opens to reveal the House of Van Gore. As curtain opens, we see MISS RUSHTON sitting at desk. NAN stands SL of desk, very discreetly. PEPPER, GIOVANA and ILSA stand like mannequins as the crowd of Cissy, Mrs. Billingsly, Lady Slipping-Stork and Dora examine the wares at close range. Clayton sits on chair or bench, SR.)

End of Freeview

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