

MIDNIGHT WAX

By L. Don Swartz

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DEDICATION

*For Ellard the Cat, my most reliable midnight friend,
with love, L. Don Swartz*

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

Midnight Wax was originally produced as part of the play FRIGHT NIGHT by the Ghostlight Theatre Company at the Grant Street Theatre in North Tonawanda, NY, on October 16, 1997. Fright Night is also available from Eldridge Publishing.

STORY OF THE PLAY

A reporter agrees to spend the night alone in a wax museum to write a Halloween feature. Before the sun rises on the following day there is a dead body, and an unusual list of strange suspects. Everyone it seems has a secret, including one of the wax figures.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 3 w, 6 flexible, extras)

GORDON MIDGETT: A man with a mysterious “condition” who does not speak; 40-something.

HERBERT MIDGETT: Gordon’s younger brother and owner of Midgett’s Midnight Wax Museum. Deeply passionate about his work. Intense. Also 40-something.

DAVID: Dedicated employee at the wax museum. Outsider. Quiet. Early 20s.

CAROLINE: Another dedicated employee at the wax museum. Smart. Early 20s.

TERRY BARKER: Very ambitious newspaper reporter with a secret. Late 20s - early 30s.

LOIS: Newspaper photographer. Late 20s - early 30s.

EXTRAS: Patrons, cops, coroner, detectives.

WAX FIGURES: Six human beings who like to stand perfectly still. (Parts originally written as dummies.)

PLACE: An exhibit room in Midgett’s Midnight Wax Museum.

TIME: The present.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Late October. Afternoon.

Scene 2: Later that night. Midnight.

Scene 3: The next morning.

Scene 4: Later that day.

SETTING

A room in Midgett's Midnight Wax Museum, located at the bottom of Hamilton Hill, Niagara Falls, New York. The room is shadowy and surrounded by thick drapery. There are no windows. There are six dressed and posed figures in wax. They include; "The Red Death" descending a staircase; a "Witch" huddled over a caged child; the "Grim Reaper" standing in an old English graveyard; the "Headless Horseman" with his grinning jack-o-lantern; "Mr. Hyde" holding his cane, standing beneath a Victorian street lamp; and "The Prince of Darkness" sitting on a dark and majestic throne. The Prince of Darkness figure is draped in white canvas tied down with thick pieces of rope. A sign near the exhibit states "Closed for Repairs." Each figure is elaborately costumed and dramatically lit. Each figure is designed as his original author described him. There is an entrance way SL and SR, each leading to adjoining exhibit halls.

The settings for the six wax figures are arranged in a horseshoe formation. (Straight line should be avoided.) Free standing door frames are placed between the first and second and fifth and sixth figures. In the original production the figures were arranged from SR to SL as follows: Witch, (door frame) Prince, Horseman, Hyde, Red Death, (door frame) Grim Reaper. The figures' settings can be as elaborate or as simple as desired. When in doubt, spend time and money on the figures' costumes.

Scene 1

(AT RISE: It is late afternoon. GORDON is sweeping the floor with a push broom. MR. MIDGETT enters, SL. He wears an eye patch over one eye. DAVID and CAROLINE are with him. As they talk they make minor repairs to the figures.)

MIDGETT: (Crossing to the Witch, he places new battery - powered flicker candles on top of her cage.) All I'm saying is, I don't want you two hanging on to any false hopes. I don't think this'll do any good, but at this point it can't hurt. I hate to see it end, too. This museum is my parents' lifework. It's the only business I know.

DAVID: Just the fact that Terry Barker has agreed to spend a night alone here is a really good sign. It's the best kind of free publicity, and everybody reads her "About Town" column.

MIDGETT: The locals, maybe, but we can't count on their support. We need to grab the tourists as they walk down the street. Who's going to stop in here when they see that Palace of Gore sitting up there on the hill? (Crosses to Hyde to replace bulbs on lamppost. DAVID and CAROLINE follow HIM.)

CAROLINE: Their figures are so manufactured. Mr. Midgett, you saw 'em. Assembly line knock-offs. Mannequins in Halloween costumes. Where's the craft? Where's the art?

MIDGETT: Caroline, you know and I know, but the public doesn't care. For their money they want squirting blood and rolling heads.

CAROLINE: It's not right.

MIDGETT: No, it's not.

DAVID: Where will you go? What will you do?

MIDGETT: I have no idea, David. There's nothing else I'm good at. This is what I do. Maybe I can get a job at one of the new wax museums. (Crosses to Grim Reaper, places Styrofoam tombstone, small shovel and lantern.)

CAROLINE: Don't even say that. What about Gordy? What's going to happen to him?

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MIDGETT: Once there's no job for him here, he'll have to go back to the institute. So long as he works here, the state provides his wages.

DAVID: Gordy can't go back to the institute. He hated it there. After what happened the last time, they might not even take him back.

MIDGETT: I know. The ironic thing is, Gordon is one of the best sculptors in wax my father ever trained. He has that rare gift for giving his figures a look that is so lifelike. It's as if he is able to give his creations breath. We'll have to wait and see what happens. Here comes Ms. Barker. Get that cart out of here.

(DAVID and CAROLINE exit SL with the cart. TERRY BARKER enters SR. LOIS is with her.)

MIDGETT: Ms. Barker, good to see you again.

TERRY: Hello, Mr. Midgett. Good to see you. This is Lois, my photographer.

MIDGETT: Photographer? How do you do?

LOIS: Nice to meet you.

TERRY: Do you mind if she gets some shots?

MIDGETT: We don't allow cameras in here.

TERRY: I know...but, for the article.

MIDGETT: *(Crossing to HER.)* Lois, is it?

LOIS: Yes.

MIDGETT: *(Taking HER camera, he studies it throughout their exchange.)* May I ask you a few questions first?

LOIS: Sure, I guess.

MIDGETT: How long have you worked as a newspaper photographer?

LOIS: Over ten years.

MIDGETT: Are you one of the good ones?

LOIS: I think so.

MIDGETT: Would you take a picture of a dying princess inside a crumpled Mercedes-Benz?

TERRY: *(Under HER breath.)* Not this again.

LOIS: Honestly?

MIDGETT: Honestly.

End of Freeview

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