

Murder Box

A full-length play

By
Reid Conrad

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DEDICATION

To Cheyenne, Cody and Lynn

STORY OF THE PLAY

At the end of the 1940s an old theatre building is about to be torn down. As the theatre's acting troupe is packing up the props, costumes and set pieces, an old magician's trunk is wheeled onstage. Suddenly, members of the company are turning up dead. Margaret, the director's assistant, is the only witness to these crimes, and no one will believe her! Can she solve the mystery, or at least convince her fellow cast and crew about the sinister happenings, before the entire company is doomed? And when ghosts from the past mysteriously return, will former victims turn into new killers themselves? This thriller has plenty of twists, turns, and terror, and you never know who will end up in the "Murder Box."

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

"Murder Box" was originally performed at University High School, Orange City, FL., on March 31, 2018.

Original cast members included:

*Binky: Ethan Crane
Louis: Dexter Gilmore
Margaret: Ashley DaSilva
Eve: Storm Smith
Marshall: Brandon Boies
Vera: Cheney Scott
Emily: Sabrina Schepmans
Madigan: Olivia Crispino
Stan: Troy Thompson
Julia: Amanda McCreight
Priscilla: Megan Glynn
Jenie: Maria Matta Denis*

Doctor: Lucas Laguer

Nurse: Ila Falstreau

Policeman 1: Dakota Johnson

Policeman 2: Diego Polo

Original crew members included:

Mimi Vazquez, Assistant

Director

Laura Vaughan, Stage

Manager

Annalee Weydert, Lighting

Keltie Corbin, Sound

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 m, 8 w, 4 flexible)

LOUIS: A stagehand.

BINKY: A stagehand.

MARGARET: The director's assistant.

EVE: An actress.

MARSHALL: The director.

VERA: An actress.

STAN: An actor.

JULIA: An actress.

EMILY: A chorus girl.

MADIGAN: A chorus girl.

PRISCILLA: A chorus girl.

JEANIE: A chorus girl.

POLICEMAN 1

POLICEMAN 2

DOCTOR

NURSE

SETTING

As 1949 comes to an end, so too does the life of an old theatre. The entire play takes place on the stage of that theatre.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

We used a representational, 1940s film noir approach to our production including costuming, physically-created sound effects and acting style. Since much of the action in the first act is played for Margaret's benefit, our actors employed at those moments a more heightened melodramatic style. The magician's box was created specifically for this production. We made sure it was large enough to easily accommodate a body and placed it on hidden wheels to make movement easier. Also, the box was constructed with a false back. When we brought it to the backstage area, where others outside our group were present, we left the back on so as to create the illusion of a solid unit. However, just prior to our play we removed the back, allowing access for actors and actresses during the blackouts. This proved quite effective for the audience, especially those who had been backstage during our load-in. You, however, may not be in a competitive situation and therefore not need the deception of including a false back on your "murder box."

In the second act, it is essential to disguise the magician's box to keep the majority of the audience "in the dark" that Margaret did, indeed, follow the cast to their new theatre.

ACT I

(AT RISE: Lights up on stage. SFX: Distant thunder is heard, then again a little closer. A woman, MARGARET, enters from SL. She moves to center and stops, where a full costume rack stands. She takes off her coat and hangs it on the rack. Two men, LOUIS and BINKY, enter SR carrying a large black box, of the steamer trunk variety. Louis wears overalls, a jacket and a driving cap; Binky is in baggy jeans and a bulky pullover sweater. The trunk they carry is old and has decorations on the sides including the still visible name "Malvolio the Magician" scrolled across the front. As the two men approach right center, they stop.)

BINKY: I ain't lookin' forward to goin' back out in that weather.

LOUIS: Shoulda wore a cap. Yer ears are still red as beets.

BINKY: Wait a minute. I gotta warm them up.

(The two men lower the box to the stage floor. BINKY makes an elaborate show of massaging his ears. LOUIS sits on the box. MARGARET moves to them.)

MARGARET: Louis! Binky! What do you think you are doing?

LOUIS: We're movin' this box out.

MARGARET: Where did you find it?

LOUIS: Down in storage. In the back.

MARGARET: What's in it?

LOUIS: Don't know.

MARGARET: What do you mean you don't know? Didn't you look?

LOUIS: Nope. They want the place cleared out. We're gonna clear it out.

(MARGARET moves to box, pushes LOUIS, who stands, and tries to open it. It appears locked. She kicks it.)

LOUIS: *(Cont'd.)* They didn't say nothin' about goin' through every box to see what's in it.

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MARGARET: Sounds empty.

BINKY: That's what I said.

MARGARET: *(Shooting BINKY a look.)* Well, leave it here. I can fill it with props and then you can come back and take it.

LOUIS: If we're still here.

MARGARET: Where else would you be?

LOUIS: O'Brien's.

(The TWO MEN start off left.)

MARGARET: Oh, no you don't! You won't be drinking on *my* watch!

(SFX: There is a loud clap of thunder and the LIGHTS go off. MARGARET screams.)

LOUIS: Everything aw-right, Maggie?

MARGARET: Yes, I'm fine, and don't call me Maggie. Now go and find the light switch.

LOUIS: Storm must have tripped the breakers.

MARGARET: Well, find the breakers then, and fix them. We can't get our work done in the dark.

LOUIS: *(Snapping on a flashlight.)* Don't bother me none. You, Binky?

BINKY: *(Turning flashlight on.)* Nope. Not a bit.

(The TWO MEN continue to exit left.)

BINKY: *(Cont'd.)* I can still find my way to O'Brien's.

MARGARET: Not before you get those lights on!

(MARGARET is left in total dark as THEY exit. There is silence. A crash of thunder. Margaret screams. Silence again.)

MARGARET: *(Tentatively.)* Anybody there? *(Loudly.)* Is anybody out there? Yoo-hoo! *(Silence again.)* Somebody, please.

End of Freeview

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