

A MURDERER AMONG US

By Billy St. John

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DEDICATION

*A MURDER AMONG US is dedicated to my siblings, - my
brother, Steve St. John, and my sister, Connie St. John -
McDonald, - with love
Billy St. John*

STORY OF THE PLAY

When college-age triplets Karen, Sharon, and Darren La Pointe, offspring of two famous detectives, are hired to solve their first murder mystery, they are determined to make their parents proud. The problem: Who killed Osgood Buckley-Lodge. His widow, Gwendolyn, has hired the triplets, admitting her actions killed her husband. But she says it was a trap and anyone who had stepped into the room that night would have been the murderer. Is she telling the truth, or setting yet another clever trap?

Perhaps the murderer is Osgood's eccentric sister, or Gwendolyn's spoiled, lazy children, or the eerie butler and his sarcastic wife. To add more confusion, not one but two mysterious strangers appear during a thunderstorm.

To catch the murderer among them, as well as find a missing will, the La Pointes call upon their special abilities -- Karen's brain, Darren's brawn, and Sharon's extra-sensory perception. They succeed, but not before there's a second murder, and an attempt on their own lives.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

5M, 8W

GWENDOLYN BUCKLEY-LODGE: Wealthy widow.
INGRID THORSON: Swedish agency assistant.
BORIS ZACKERY: Butler.
KAREN LA POINTE: Sister with brains.
SHARON LA POINTE: Sister with ESP.
DARREN LA POINTE: Brother with muscle.
JASMIN ROGERS: Gwen's spoiled daughter.
SIMON ROGERS: Gwen's spoiled son.
OLGA BUCKLEY-LODGE: Osgood's eccentric sister
DORIS ZACKERY: Housekeeper, Boris's wife.
HARVEY LUMPKIN: Attorney.
LETICIA BRISBAINE: The other woman.
LT. JACK DAVIS: Skeptical police detective.

Synopsis of Scenes

Act I

Scene 1: The study at Buckley-Lodge Manor. Dusk.

Scene 2: About thirty minutes later.

Act II

Scene 1: Later that night, a little past midnight.

Props

Act I: Note pad and pen for Karen; tennis rackets for Jasmin and Simon; luggage for Boris and Darren; blood on Karen's thumb (see notes); handkerchief for Olga; twigs and leaves in the hair of Olga and Doris; gun for Harvey; coffee service for Doris; checkers game including sheets of 8 1/2 x 14 paper stapled together for Olga, knife handle on back of Boris.

Act II: Handkerchief for Doris; notebook and gun for Jack; flashlight in desk; car keys for Harvey.

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Set Design

The set is the study of Buckley-Lodge Manor, a country estate. A large bookcase which contains books, bric-a-brac and a candle, fills most of the right wall. There is a door DS of it.

There is an archway in the center of the upstage wall; beyond it is a staircase leading out of sight to the R. The front door is out of sight to SL, and there is enough space between the staircase and the archway for entrances off UR as well. The entry hall area should be elevated a foot creating one step in and out of the main room.

The left wall is dominated by a set of French doors that open out of the room; a set of draw drapes can close them off, and a set of sheers are always pulled shut over them. Through the sheers we can see the indistinct image of the front lawn and perhaps trees in the distance. SR there is a long sofa facing front with a pair of chairs DS of it on either side facing in toward each other. A small coffee table is below the sofa. A table of liquor bottles and glasses and a lamp is against the UR wall; over it hangs a display of six ornate daggers. Pictures and other decorations cover the entire upstage wall. A bell cord hangs to the L of the archway near a triple light switch.

To the L of the archway is an armchair with a floor lamp above it. A desk on which is a telephone and a lamp with a shade that swivels and a strong bulb is placed against the UL wall; a desk chair is below it. A round game table is LC with four low-backed chairs around it. A light with a Tiffany shade hangs over the table.

Karen's Scratch

A small container of stage blood should be preset on the drinks table for Karen to dab her thumb in just before she 'scratches' it on the dagger.

The Lightning Scene

Rehearse this scene thoroughly with the lights on before trying it in the dark since the sudden flashes of light will truly be blinding. The light man is a vital part of this scene, so he should be involved in these rehearsals. The lightning flash - a scoop light mounted outside the French doors to shoot white light across the stage - must be short in duration so that the audience will see just enough of the action to get the idea of what's going on, but not see too much. Since the light man won't be able to see where the actors

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are in the dark, give him dialogue cues from the actors before each flash. Each actor with a specific cue for the light man must be sure to project his or her line above the general noise and confusion that is taking place.

Boris' Death

Boris will have to have the handle of a fake knife attached to his back during the lightning scene. Have a small picture mounted on the wall behind him where he stands behind the L end of the sofa. Put the picture on hinges and cut a small hole in the flat behind it. A hook and eye can hold the picture securely closed. When the lights go out, a technician behind the flat can swing the picture open, and reach through the hole to attach the knife to Boris' back. This technician would be hidden from the audience's view even during the lightning flashes. The knife handle could have a strip of Velcro glued to it, with a matching strip of Velcro sewn to the back of Boris' coat. An alternate suggestion would be to have a pin or hook attached to the handle so that the handle could be hooked to Boris' coat.

Jasmine must remove a knife from the display board during one of the blackouts. She can lay it behind the row of liquor bottles on the drinks table. During the blackout in Act II, she will also remove the knife she holds on Olga, of course.

A blood capsule can be pre-set on the drinks table. As Boris is gathering liquor bottles, while his back is to the audience, he can pick it up. During a blackout, he can slip it into his mouth. At the proper moment, he can bite the capsule and use his tongue to force the fake blood out of the corner of his mouth. White Kayro syrup and red food coloring made a realistic looking substitute for blood that you can put into your mouth.

Please see end of script for Costuming Suggestions.

ACT I

(BEFORE CURTAIN: A telephone RINGS in the darkness. An area light comes up on a distraught GWENDOLYN BUCKLEY-LODGE DL, who is holding a telephone.)

GWEN: Answer! Oh, do hurry and answer!

(A SPOT comes up on INGRID DR, who lifts a telephone receiver to her ear.)

INGRID: Allo! Trident Detective Agency. How may ve help yoo?

GWEN: This is Gwendolyn Buckley-Lodge. You must put me through to Mr. or Mrs. La Pointe immediately!

INGRID: Vell, dot would be hard to dew - dey're in Holland tracking down a diamond ring - I mean, a diamond smuggling ring.

GWEN: But they're the best detectives in the city. I need them desperately. What am I going to do?

INGRID: File dey've gone, dey've left dere children in charge - Sharon, Karen and Darren. Dey can handle duh case for yoo, I'm sure.

GWEN: Dere - I mean, their children?

INGRID: Oh, yah, dere triplets. Dey're studying at duh university to be great detectives, yoost like Mr. and Mrs. La Pointe. I know dey can help yoo.

GWEN: They're students?

INGRID: Yeah. Dey're very good; *(Pronounced like "GOUDa" cheese.)* I know - I'm in class vid dem. I'm an exchange student from Sveden. Dey hired me to be dere secretary file ve're on summer break.

GWEN: I see. Well, I suppose they'll have to do. You see, my husband has been murdered -

INGRID: *(Cutting in.)* Oh, yumping Yehosafat! I'm sure dey can find out who killed him!

GWEN: I know who killed him - I killed him. I need to find out why.

End of Freeview

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