

Mystery of the Stolen Spotlight

~ A Side-Splitting Yuletide Stumper ~

Written by Brian Sylvia

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Detective Vic Torious is called to the Broken Leg Theatre where the leading lady has suddenly and mysteriously disappeared. The theatre's Christmas extravaganza was her return to the stage after a long hiatus. Clearly, she did not disappear of her own volition, but where is she and who is responsible? From a visiting Hollywood producer, to a jealous understudy, to an ex-finance, to an opportunistic scriptwriter, eight different suspects remain at the theatre awaiting detective Vic Torious' arrival. His pun-filled inquiries take the audience on a hilarious series of twists and turns as they try to uncover who is responsible for the leading lady's disappearance. After the suspects have been questioned, audience members vote for the guilty party. The prologue, post-intermission, reveals the true culprit. But wait, there are multiple endings for multiple shows! Or you can simply select your favorite conclusion. An optional mistress of ceremonies may lead the production.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 m, 4 w - 1 optional)

DETECTIVE VIC TORIOUS: (M) detective who always gets to the bottom of it, while taking audience on a pun-derful journey. *"True story."*

CLIFF HANGER: (M) visiting movie producer trying to determine if the Christmas extravaganza would do well on film.

SADIE WORD: (W) Understudy for the Christmas production's leading character, Faye Derway.

HOWARD INO: (M) the leading man - somewhat clueless.

BARNABY WILDE: (M) Faye Derway's ex-boyfriend who has appeared in town for opening night.

WANDA PHULLE: (W) the costume designer and prop manager for the show.

ANITA MANN: (W) widowed theatre owner and show producer.

MADGE ORITY: (W) box office manager.

TEX BOCKS: (M) Texas-born script writer.

CARMEN GEAX: (optional) the mistress of ceremonies. She wears very over-the-top outfit.

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SETTING

There is a collection of set pieces and Christmas props on what is clearly the backstage of a theatre. There is a ladder upstage right, a costume rack upstage left and a reindeer prop in an extreme downstage corner, obviously not affecting sight lines.

Prologue

(AT RISE: CARMEN enters and speaks directly to the audience.)

CARMEN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Carmen Geaux, your hostess for the evening. Thank you so much for joining us this spectacular, and somewhat alarming, holiday event. In just a little while you will meet a group of, let's just say, *interesting* individuals. Seven of these individuals all end up being suspects in a crime at the famous Broken Leg Theatre on historic Pinecone Island. Not much happens on Pinecone Island, so when it does, it's a big deal, especially during the Christmas season. There's no time like the Christmas holiday season here. The streets are decorated with wreaths, featuring our very own pinecones, and brightly colored lights, houses have manger scenes and inflatable snowmen in their front yards, and the sounds of Christmas carols fill the air. As you are probably aware, Pinecone Island is quite famous for our celebrations of the Christmas holiday. In case you can't tell... I just *love* Christmas!

Speaking of Christmas carols, why don't we get into the spirit of the season by singing one together right now. *(Leads the audience in a carol.)* Yes, Pinecone Island is full of holiday history: from our quaint little Yuletide Museum on Mistletoe Lane to the Comet and Blitzen Food Truck, to our wonderful historic little Broken Leg Theatre. This year they are presenting a revival of the "Pinecone Island Christmas Extravaganza," which incidentally made its debut nearly fifty years ago at that very theatre. But something quite dramatic has happened. It appears there has been a tragedy involving the leading lady of the Christmas extravaganza: the iconic stage and screen starlet, Faye Derway. I am still not too sure exactly what has happened. Now before you assume too much, I think it's important to let you know that you're about to go on a journey of uncovering evidence. Pay close attention, because later on we'll be asking *you* to decide who you think is the guilty party.

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CARMEN: *(Cont'd.)* And remember, out of respect for the other amateur sleuths around you, *do not*, under any circumstances, use your cell phone. The recording of evidence is not allowed. You are to do all of this from memory. So, from me, Carmen Geaux, and all of us here on Pinecone Island, welcome to our quaint little center of holiday history. Oh, and please help us get to the bottom of our little problem. Get ready, because the cast of characters are about to make their way out onto the backstage wing area of Broken Leg Theatre. Have a good evening, and I'll see you later.

(LIGHTS shift as CARMEN exits and VIC enters.)

VIC: *(Downstage, directed toward the audience.)* It was December twenty-first, and I was on Pinecone Island for the holidays. I had just left the Comet and Blitzen Food Truck where I not only enjoyed a slice of fresh fruitcake, but I was asked to interrogate a suspect in the theft of cheese toast. Let's just say that I really *grilled* him. *(Aside. Matter-of-fact.)* True story. I don't take kindly to those who steal. In my entire life, the only thing I ever stole was a joke. And, man, was I ever *pun*-ished for that. My name is Vic, *(Pause.)* Vic Torious. Indeed, I have quite a reputation in this part of the country as the sleuth who almost always gets to the bottom of the mystery. Yes, I don't like to say it about myself, others say it about me. I hadn't had a legitimate case since I was called to Juniper Heights. There was a report of the theft of bathroom fixtures in the city's only police station. And the officers there were left with nothing to go on. *(Aside. Matter-of-fact.)* True story. But as I left the food truck, I received a call from the Broken Leg Theatre right here on Pinecone Island. It seems that their star performer in their Christmas extravaganza had mysteriously disappeared. It was opening night and now, the afternoon before the first performance, their star, a Miss Faye Derway was missing. I suspected kidnapers. The last time I investigated a kidnapping, it had been perpetrated by a group of mimes.

VIC: *(Cont'd.)* When interviewing the victim, he could not bring himself to share the horrors of being with those mimes. He said it was *unspeakable*. When they told me, even I was *speechless*. *(Aside. Matter-of-fact.)* True story. So here we are just days before Christmas and that call came in. I was summoned to the Broken Leg Theatre and asked to enter through the backstage entrance. The theatre staff was all asked to remain and were apparently willing to cooperate so far. I wasn't sure what I would encounter. Let's hope this turns out like the kidnapping at the middle school. Luckily, he woke up. *(Aside. Matter-of-fact.)* True story. *(Exits.)*

Scene 1

(AT RISE: Backstage at the Broken Leg Theatre. VIC enters.)

VIC: Curious. No one is here. I can only hope this isn't like that thief who had entered the store and stole their labeling gun. Let's just say he had a price on his head.

(ANITA enters.)

VIC: *(Cont'd.)* I only saw one production at this theatre, the off-Broadway touring company of the award-winning show entitled "The Dictionary." It was a play on words. *(Aside. Matter-of-fact.)* True story. *(Looking around.)* But this theatre has quite a rich history.

ANITA: Especially with our Christmas productions. The Broken Leg Theatre is famous for our festive and colorful holiday celebrations. And no one has better costume designs than us. *(Extends hand to shake.)* My name is Anita - Anita Mann, and I'm the theatre owner. And you are?

VIC: Vic Torious, detective extraordinaire. I received a phone call about a missing actress.

ANITA: *(Confused.)* A phone call? Who was it that phoned you?

VIC: I have no idea. I never got a name. They hung up when I asked.

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ANITA: Well, coincidentally, we do have an emergency involving our leading lady, but I hadn't planned on calling a private detective. I like to keep things discreet.

VIC: I understand. I use a tailor who is very discreet. The name of his shop is Ahem, Ahem. (*Aside. Matter-of-fact.*) True story.

ANITA: Yes, well, that is very, shall we say, useless.

VIC: Thank you. So, Anita Mann, are you the only person present? I was told there would be an entire theatre staff here.

ANITA: There are certainly others present. But, as I was saying, Detective, we have no need of your services. I have no idea who called you, but we can handle this little incident.

(*MADGE enters carrying a notepad.*)

MADGE: Isn't it just like you, Anita Mann, to sweep things under the rug. Hello, Detective, I am Madge Ority, the box office manager here at the Broken Leg Theatre.

ANITA: So, Madge, did you call for this detective?

VIC: No, it was not Madge Ority as it was clearly a man's voice on the other end of the phone. (*Digressing.*) For a while I was getting phone calls from various numbers. The caller would sneeze and then hang up. Let me tell you, I got so tired of those cold calls.

MADGE: I don't care who it was that called. Someone needs to investigate this right away. Faye Derway did not simply walk away. I suspect that someone may have taken her.

VIC: That sounds like the time the Pine Valley police received a report that a baseball-themed toy factory had blown up under mysterious circumstances. They called me for my opinion. Of course, I suspected foul play. (*Aside. Matter-of-fact.*) True story.

ANITA: And stop being so dramatic, Madge. We all know that Faye Derway was trying to resurrect her career and it wasn't going as she expected.

VIC: So, Faye Derway was trying to make an acting comeback. And during that attempt, the famous actress has disappeared?

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(SFX: Sinister minor chord progression. THEY look around.)

VIC: *(Cont'd.)* How completely confounding. *(To MADGE.)* Is that a notepad you are carrying, Miss Ority?

ANITA: Surely it is.

VIC: Ma'am, my name is not Shirley. As I stated earlier, my name is Vic Torious.

ANITA: I meant that, oh, never mind.

MADGE: Yes, I wrote down the names of everyone who was in the theatre at the time of the disappearance.

VIC: *(Taking the notepad.)* Interesting. What is this name right here?

MADGE: Howard Ino.

VIC: Well, this is your writing, is it not?

MADGE: It is.

VIC: Then please simply answer the question. What is this name right here?

MADGE: Howard Ino.

VIC: I cannot be of assistance if you refuse to answer my simple question.

ANITA: She is answering you. Howard Ino.

VIC: You too, Anita Mann?

ANITA: I am answering you as well: Howard Ino.

VIC: Ladies, please simply answer the question.

MADGE and ANITA: *(Frustrated.)* Howard Ino.

(HOWARD enters.)

HOWARD: They are talking about me, Howard Ino.

VIC: *(Confused.)* So, these ladies got you in on their little coverup, did they? And what is your name.

HOWARD: Howard Ino.

VIC: *(Frustrated.)* Perhaps we need to try again. This is thoroughly confusing. The other day I was on a case with a similar situation. I tried finding synonyms for confusion, but all I came away with was uncertainty and disorientation. *(Aside. Matter-of-fact.)* True story.

HOWARD: I'm disoriented a lot myself. Sorry to have caused any uncertainty, but my name is Howard.

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VIC: There, was that so hard? (*Looks at MADGE and ANITA.*)

MADGE: That's what we said.

VIC: What did you say?

MADGE: Howard Ino.

VIC: Ladies, we're going to have to move on from this tactic of yours. So, Howard, what is your role here at the theatre?

HOWARD: I am the leading man in the production, Philip Phrostbyte.

VIC: My name is not Philip, it's Vic. Vic Torious.

HOWARD: Well, Vic Vic, Philip Phrostbyte is my character's name.

ANITA: (*To MADGE.*) Between the two of them, we may never leave here. (*Announcing.*) I have other things to do. I will be in my office upstairs if anyone needs me. And do *not* let news of this incident leave this theatre.

MADGE: (*Introducing them again.*) Vic Torious, Howard Ino.

VIC: (*To HOWARD.*) Are they always this evasive?

(*TEX and BARNABY enter.*)

VIC: (*Cont'd.*) I admit that sometimes I get slightly confused. The other day I opened my wallet and found nothing but paper bills. That simply didn't make cents. (*Aside. Matter-of-fact.*) True story.

HOWARD: I would be confused by that as well.

BARNABY: Indeed, you would. You said that you're confused when someone says they picked their nose.

HOWARD: Exactly, I was born with mine.

VIC: And who are you, gentlemen? (*To MADGE.*) Are they on this list?

MADGE: Yes, this is Barnaby Wilde, Faye Derway's ex-boyfriend who just appeared on Pinecone Island two days ago.

VIC: Ex-boyfriend? Recently arrived? Interesting timing, Mr. Wilde!

(*SFX: Sinister minor chord progression. THEY look around.*)

BARNABY: Thank you?!

End of Freeview

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