

Mystery Weekend

By Billy St. John

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STORY OF THE PLAY

Several guests go to a remote ski lodge for a mystery weekend during which actors, posing as other guests, simulate a murder which the real guests try to solve. The event is barely under way when the host is murdered, the cable car is sabotaged, and the phone lines are cut, stranding everyone with a killer. Suddenly, a thrilling weekend becomes the height of danger. Among the guests are a famous mystery writer, a former TV detective and his starlet girlfriend, a Texas millionaire and his beauty queen wife, a couple on their honeymoon, and a mysterious bandaged scientist who was burned in a lab accident. Could one of them be the killer, or could it be one of the hotel staff or the actors? Who is the figure in a ski mask who prowls the lodge at midnight? Who replaced the blanks in the actor's gun with real bullets? Chills are guaranteed in this hairpin, twisty, curvy play that will keep you guessing until the very end.

SCENE: The reception area of Mystery Lodge built atop a mountain peak in Colorado.

TIME: The present.

AUTHOR'S PRODUCTION NOTE

The actor playing George in Act I and Michael in Act II must eat his meals using his left hand. The actor playing James and George in ACT II is right handed as you now know. Naturally men of similar height and build should be cast as James and Michael, and they should make George's raspy whisper as much alike as possible. Since the fact that George is a dual role is the play's most closely guarded secret, you shouldn't list the actors who play him in your program. I suggest you use the name I. M. Janus--an inside joke as Janus is the Roman god with two faces. For all the actors who play multiple roles, use only the first character as they appear in your program.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(9 M and 11 W)

- HORACE MINTON:** Late fifties, the former owner of the lodge, now the manager, soft-spoken.
- MILDRED MINTON:** Late fifties, his wife, stern, head housekeeper.
- ROSIE WINCHESTER:** Thirties, the cook, heavysset, jolly.
- JUDY SMITH :** Twenties, the maid, nervous.
- LARRY LANCASTER:** Twenties, an actor.
- REGINA DALE:** Twenties, an actress.
- ANNIE LAURA ANDERSON:** Sixties, a sweet little old lady mystery writer.
- LADY CONSTANCE CARSTAIRS:** Fifties, British aristocrat.
- DR. WALTER REYNOLDS:** Sixties, a retired physician.
- LANCE STEELE:** Forties, a former TV star, handsome but egotistical.
- BOBBIE BELLE:** Twenties, a sexy starlet.
- JEANINE DARROW:** Thirties, a Hollywood casting director.
- STEPHANIE VAN PATTON:** Late teens, a spoiled rich girl.
- JAMES NATHAN NYE:** Forties, wealthy owner of the lodge.
- JIMBO WELLS:** Forties, a Texas oil millionaire.
- PORTIA WELLS:** Thirties, his wife, aloof, a former Miss Texas.
- HAL JEFFERSON:** Twenties, a shy bank teller, newlywed.
- GINGER JEFFERSON:** Twenties, his bride, a secretary.
- ALLEN TAYLOR:** Twenties, an actor.
- *GEORGE NIVLEPS:** A mystery man, speaks in raspy whispers.
- MICHAEL PHOENIX:** Thirties, tough-looking forest ranger.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: Just before sunset, a Friday in winter.

Scene 2: About 11 that night.

ACT II

Scene 1: Mid-afternoon Saturday.

Scene 2: Late that night.

SET

The set is the lounging area of a rustic, but swanky, mountain resort. A two-foot high platform UC leads to accordion doors and a cable car platform that is glass-enclosed on two sides. A panoramic view of snow-capped mountain tops spans US.

The bottom half of the stationary cable car and its roof are made of a light-weight metal; the upper half is windows. A set of metal and glass doors slide open to allow passengers to enter and exit. There is a set of padded benches, a pole in the center, and four subway-type straps in the ceiling.

SL of the platform is a step that leads to a game room and the hotel staff's section. SR of the platform are two steps up to the guests' bedrooms upstairs. A large window and window seat is there.

A wide set of three steps, each six inches high, is on the DS edge of the platform. An L-shaped reception desk is on the main level to the R of these steps behind which is a five-foot high shelf unit for the guests' room keys. A phone, guest register, letter opener, stack of mail, small pad, and small lamp are on the desk. A stool sits behind it. A decorative plant is on the main floor to the L of the steps.

DSL leads to the dining area. An L-shaped bookcase is set in the UR corner of the room. URC is a fireplace with a raised hearth on which people can sit. A fire screen covers the opening; a fire burns behind it. A short, bushy plant is DS of the fireplace. DR is another step leading to a door to the outside.

A wide sofa is DRC; there are chairs to the L of the sofa, at the US and DS ends of the hearth, and to the L of the bookcase. A coffee table is DS of the sofa.

Mystery Weekend

- 5 -

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: Some of the weekend guests have arrived and are conversing. They wear attractive, expensive winter clothes except the older ladies, Miss Anderson and Lady Carstair, who wear dresses.

HORACE is behind the desk wearing a suit and tie. MILDRED, in a dark dress, and ROSIE, in a cook's uniform and apron, stand DSL looking over the weekend's menus. JUDY, in a maid's uniform and cap, enters from the dining area after a couple of beats carrying a tray of mugs of spiced tea. MILDRED tells her not to spill any, then allows her to serve. LARRY and REGINA stand by the bookcase, UR, talking. ANNIE LAURA ANDERSON is seated on the sofa with LADY CARSTAIRS. WALTER, in a suit and tie, stands at the fireplace warming his hands. LANCE and BOBBIE stand at the window URC with JEANINE. STEPHANIE sits on the sofa chair, LC, pouting.

There is the muffled sound of a motor running and the grinding of gears from beyond the double doors. The sounds stop and the doors are opened by JAMES NATHAN NYE to reveal a cable car which has come to rest in its station behind them. HE steps from the car and assists the new arrivals out. THEY are: JIMBO WELLS, a large, boisterous Texan in western clothes; PORTIA WELLS in designer clothes, jewels and furs; HAL and GINGER JEFFERSON, a pleasant couple over-awed by the ritzy company; and ALLEN TAYLOR who spots LARRY and REGINA and scowls at them. When THEY see him, THEY react surprised, then turn away and talk in frantic whispers. Last off is GEORGE NIVLEPS whose head is completely covered with bandages, and eyes covered by sunglasses. These GUESTS should act as if they are coming from a cold cable car into a warm room. The others show interest in these new arrivals. JAMES closes the double doors and then removes his outer coat as he speaks. JUDY gives her now-empty tray to ROSIE, then takes JAMES' coat off UL for him.)

Mystery Weekend

- 6 -

JAMES: *(To newcomers)* Welcome to Mystery Lodge. Your luggage was sent up earlier and has already been taken to your rooms. If you'll see Horace at the desk, he'll distribute your room keys. Oh, please sign our guest register while you're there.

(JUDY returns and stands quietly at the doorway. The NEW ARRIVALS go to the desk where HORACE gives them room keys after THEY have signed the register. JAMES comes down to MILDRED and ROSIE to see how things are going. The OTHERS whisper among themselves about the newcomers. When the keys have been assigned, JAMES addresses THE CROWD.)

JAMES: While you're all here, let me introduce everyone and brief you about our murder mystery weekend. *(HE moves among THE CAST during his introductions.)* As you know, I am James Nathan Nye. I own Mystery Lodge and am your host for the event. At the desk is Horace Minton, the lodge manager. This is Mrs. Minton, his wife, who serves as head housekeeper here. Rosie...Rosie Winchester... is a marvelous cook as you will soon discover. Judy Smith is one of our maids who'll be happy to serve you. The rest of our staff is in town at the foot of the mountain gathering supplies; they'll join us presently. Horace, if you'll send the cable car down so it will be ready for them?

(HORACE crosses to the double doors, presses a button next to them, then returns to the desk. We hear the muffled sounds of the motor starting and the grinding of gears. The sounds will stop after a couple of minutes. This happens as the dialog continues.)

WALTER: You don't bring your supplies up by jeep, Mr. Nye? I noticed there's a lane that goes off down that side of the mountain. *(HE indicates the side opposite the cable car.)*

JAMES: You're right, Dr. Reynolds, there is a road that winds down that side, but it's totally blocked off at the foot. There was an avalanche last winter which dumped tons of boulders at the base of the mountain.

End of Freeview

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