

# **THE POISONED PEN**

by  
Craig Sodaro

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## **SYNOPSIS**

When movie mogul Mandrake Masterfiend, producer of the schlockiest horror movies in history, invites some of Hollywood's craziest characters to his birthday party, the evening's a killer—literally. That's because he also invites Rona LaMona, the most vicious gossip columnist in the business who writes weekly under the title "The Poisoned Pen," to stir up the pot a bit. Though the actors, designers, and directors of some of Masterfiend's greatest successes enthusiastically reenact some great scenes from such movies as "My Girlfriend Had Two Heads" and "A Teacher by Day, a Vampire by Night," they suddenly find themselves playing suspects when Rona bites off a little more than she can chew of her poisoned pen and dies.

Luckily the actress who portrays "Sabrina Slade—Girl Detective" on a weekly television show is on hand to take charge. Sabrina interviews the suspects and begins to gather evidence but isn't quick enough to stop the killer from killing a second, then a third time!

There's nonstop action and laughs before Sabrina tricks the killer so truth, justice and the American way can prevail!

**CHARACTERS** (4 m, 10 w)

ED NEIL: an old actor—a very old actor.  
TINA DANE: 20s, an actress.  
ELLIOT ASKMAN: 40s, a movie director.  
JAKE HINTON: 20s, a hunky stunt man.  
MANDRAKE MASTERFIEND: 40s, a producer of horror films.  
MRS. CRABTREE: 30s, the foreign housekeeper.  
LINDA LORRAINE: 60s, an actress.  
NELDA SPEARS: 40s, an actress.  
MORGANIA: 30s, Masterfiend's wife.  
SCARLETTE O'MARA: 30s, a production designer.  
THEDA THORN: 40s, Masterfiend's agent.  
CHARLOTTE WRIGHT: 20s, a television actress.  
SARAH JANE: 30s, a gossip columnist.  
RONA LAMONA: 30s, the biggest gossip columnist.

**SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

**ACT I**

Scene 1: The great room of Masterfiend Manor, late afternoon.  
Scene 2: The same, forty minutes later.

**ACT II**

Scene 1: The same, several hours later.  
Scene 2: The same, midnight.

### **SETTING**

The great room of Masterfiend Manor, somewhere along the coast of Southern California. A fireplace up center dominates the room with a huge movie poster hanging over the mantel advertising "Creature in the Black Balloon." On either side of the fireplace are large windows covered with floor to ceiling curtains. Up right are several chairs with a low table in the center. A similar chair grouping is down left. A small fainting couch or padded bench large enough for an actor to lie on is situated down right. Entrance up left leads to upstairs in the house. Down left leads to dining room and other rooms. Down right leads to main entrance and other rooms, including another set of stairs to the second floor. The room is decorated with old movie memorabilia, props from Masterfiend's many horror films such as ghoulish masks, weapons, scientific equipment including test tubes and beakers on a small set table. Other posters from the films mentioned in the script would also be an appropriate addition.

### **PROPS**

Lab coat, hypodermic for Ed  
Sheet covering Rona; also pen and notebook  
Tray of drinks for Mrs. Crabtree  
Stuffed rabbit for Ed  
Bag for Masterfiend holding various items as a stuffed parrot, a quarter  
Huge hypodermic needle for Linda  
Several garlic bulbs on a string for Nelda  
Table set with test tubes, tongs  
Mop or large sponge for Mrs. Crabtree  
Legal pad and pen for Masterfiend  
Canvas bag for evidence including a .22  
Snifter of brandy  
Suitcase for Charlotte  
Snack food for Scarlett  
Long lab coat, hideous mask and gloves for Charlotte  
Suitcase containing greeting card, pamphlet, business letter, plane ticket, newspaper clipping, voodoo doll, canceled check, autograph book, book on acting, personal letter  
Watch for Masterfiend  
gas mask and an aerosol can

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: The stage is dark except for a spot DSR. RONA LAMONA, covered with a sheet, lies on couch apparently unconscious. Only her right hand hanging beneath the sheet is visible to the audience. ED NEIL, looking like a mad scientist in his lab coat and holding a hypodermic, moves in on RONA. TINA DANE is tied to a chair and gagged, upstage from Rona.)*

ED: And now, my dear, the moment I have been waiting for all my life! *(TINA bounces up and down in her chair trying to get someone's attention.)* Oh, my dear, don't worry ... you'll get your turn ... next! *(TINA, in horror, backs her chair away.)* Just think of it, my beauty ... you will be the first woman with two heads! Twice the conversation, twice the singing, and twice the kissing!

*(TINA tries to scream as ED moves to inject RONA. ELLIOT ASKMAN enters right.)*

ELLIOT: Dr. Dangerfield, what are you doing?

ED: What do YOU want, Mr. Sanders?

ELLIOT: I came looking for Wanda.

ED: Wanda who?

ELLIOT: Wanda Loverly, my love!

ED: Why would Miss Loverly, your love, be in my laboratory?

*(TINA tries to attract ELLIOT'S attention.)*

ELLIOT: She said you'd asked her down here to help out in a little experiment!

ED: Wouldn't it be wonderful, Mr. Sanders, if you had two Miss Loverlys to love?

ELLIOT: What are you talking about? Cloning?

*The Poisoned Pen*

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ED: Come, come! It's 1938. Cloning isn't even in the dictionary yet. No...I mean something more dramatic and immediate!

ELLIOT: Dr. Dangerfield, I think you're nuts!

ED: Nuts? I suppose I am! I'm a cashew in the world of science just like Beethoven was a Brazil nut in the world of music and Van Gogh was a pecan in the world of art.

ELLIOT: What IS your point?

ED: I am about to give your Miss Loverly two heads!

ELLIOT: That's horrible! That's ghastly! You're out of control!

ED: Regrettably I am IN control, Mr. Sanders.

ELLIOT: What do you mean?

*(ED claps his hands. SARAH JANE and SCARLETTE O'MARA enter right like zombies. They grab ELLIOT.)*

ELLIOT: Hey! What is this? Who are these babes?

ED: Two of my less successful experiments!

*(SARAH and SCARLETTE growl at ED.)*

ED: Shut up or you'll be back in your cages! Just hold him tight!

*(TINA bounces around in her chair terrified.)*

ELLIOT: For the love of everything decent, Dr. Dangerfield, don't do this!

ED: Who ever said I was decent? *(ED grabs RONA'S upstage arm and raises the hypodermic high.)* And now, my sweet, you'll be the woman with two heads!

*(TINA, ELLIOT, SARAH, and SCARLETTE scream as JAKE HINTON enters right.)*

JAKE: What's going on here?! *(ALL freeze and look at JAKE.)* Drop that needle, buster, or I'll bust your arm!

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