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A Mystery Farce in Two Acts

By David Meyer

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SYNOPSIS

A mystery farce in two acts. The play is a light "Who Done It" that takes place at Moss Manor, a broken down old inn run by Mrs. Moss.

As we join the action a terrible storm is raging outside forcing an assortment of characters to seek shelter at the inn. As fate would have it, this is the day Mrs. Moss's son, Pete, returns from the service to marry his sweetheart, Terri. Terri's uncle, Washington Cloth, is violently opposed to the impending marriage and comes to the inn to demand it not take place. However, at the height of the storm, the lights go out and a murder takes place.

The balance of the show is a gathering of the suspects, a reconstruction of the crime and through a strange twist of events, the murderer is unmasked at the last minute.

PROPS

Buckets, mops, umbrellas, hangers, assortment of luggage including a medical bag, inn's register book and pen, business card, 2 flashlights and a piece of black cardboard, magazines, candles, phone, tray and cups, cigarette lighter, notebook and pencil, candlestick with candle, glasses and bottle, large knife and short length of thick rope, deck of cards, tissue, flay swatter, standing ashtray, coffee pot and cups, a bottle of almond extract, and handcuffs.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mother Moss: Proprietor of Moss Manor, short, plump, gray-haired, good-natured, motherly type.

Peter Moss: Clean-cut son of Mrs. Moss. Young, handsome ex-service man, wears military uniform, or civilian clothes carrying the uniform.

Rhett: The butler, deaf and dumb. He is happy in his position, simple-minded. Wears a bell-hop like uniform, including a jacket with tails.

Benny Fender: Middle-aged, former gangster kingpin, short, stocky, tough customer. Smokes cigars and wears three-piece suits.

Ginger Bred: Pretty, platinum blonde girlfriend of Benny. Always over made up and overdressed with jewelry, furs, etc.

Tony Nale and Marty Graw: Dim-witted henchmen of Benny. Attired in standard gangster garb.

Paul Bearer: A mortician by trade, ghoulish and sinister. Dressed in black. Age about 40.

Pandora Bearer: Wife of Paul, heavy set, over-bearing, power behind the man. Wears a black dress and veil.

Teddy Bearer: Nephew (and ghoulish imitation) of Paul, in his mid 20's.

Inspector Holski: Local policeman. Casual dress, country style.

Inspector Holmes: Partner of Holski. Casual country dress and smokes a pipe.

Charles Hoarse: Doctor, middle age, distinguished, somewhat handsome and refined. Well dressed.

Jesse Bell: Nurse, pretty, intelligent, "Girl Friday" to Dr. Hoarse, efficient. Neat dresser.

Jackquilin Cass: Working girl from the city, young, intelligent.

Barbara Wyre: Co-worker of Jacquilin, young.

Holly Woods: Middle age to older busy-body. Local gossip, heavy set, nosy.

Ivy Vine: Friend of Holly, busy-body, past middle age.

Terri Cloth: Girl next door, young innocent, pretty. Waiting to marry Pete.

Washington Cloth: Terri's uncle. Rough looking, stocky build, almost gangster like, 40's or 50's. He seems out of place with his older style suit.

ACT I

(AT RISE: The storm is raging and MOTHER MOSS (MM) is busy placing buckets under drips, mopping up puddles, and lighting candles for the ever flickering electricity. Enter RHETT with more buckets.)

MOTHER MOSS: Oh, good...just what we need. *(Begins placing buckets around. Then jokingly.)* You must take better care of yourself, you look awfully "pale." *(RHETT gives a "here we go" expression to audience.)* What a night for Peter to come home...after all these years away. I can hardly wait to see him. *(Dreamy.)* My son, all grown up, coming home from the service to marry his girlfriend. I'm so excited I could... *(KNOCK at the door, MM hurries to answer it.)* Maybe that's Peter! *(RHETT answers the door just ahead of MM. Enter BENNY, GINGER, TONY and MARTY. Tony and Marty are each holding an umbrella, one over Benny, the other over Ginger.)* Oh, good evening.

GINGER: *(Chewing gum.)* Are you kidding?

TONY: Boss, I don't like this place. It's raining just as hard in here as out there.

MARTY: *(Looking about.)* I wonder if they got running water?

BEN: *(With authority.)* We're staying! We couldn't go on in this storm *(THUNDER crash.)* if we tried.

MM: *(To RHETT.)* Takes their coats, Rhett. *(Bit of business with RHETT taking the coats.)* I'm Mrs. Moss, the owner and manager of the inn, and this is my butler and all around assistant, Rhett. *(RHETT keeps working. Aside to the guests.)* Poor devil is tone deaf, and dumb as a wooden Indian, but he does fine work, and never once has complained.

(RHETT takes coats to the closet and hangs them up carelessly, some fall on the floor.)

BEN: I'm the Count of Monte Cristo and this is my court: Miss Bred, my comforter, and Mr.'s Anthony Nale and Martin Graw, Esquire, my associates, neither are deaf, both are dumb!

MARTY: *(Whining.)* Ah, Boss!

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BEN: We need a couple of rooms for the night.

MM: Certainly. The butler will show you to your rooms, if you'll just come to the desk and register.

(BENNY goes to the desk and signs in. RHETT leads GINGER, TONY and MARTY off SR to their rooms. Each guest carries his own luggage. RHETT carries none.)

MM: *(Continues busy work.)* Customers at last. Those two ladies that came a little while ago, and now these people. Thank God for this storm. *(At the word "storm" a loud crash of THUNDER.)* Guests in the rooms, it's like money in the bank!

GINGER: *(Enters SR, forever chewing gum, snotty.)* Hey! Benny wants to know when breakfast is.

MM: *(Acting like Ginger, snotty.)* We generally serve breakfast in the morning, tomorrow will be no exception.

GINGER: *(Ambles off SR, bewildered.)* Okay with me.

(The storm rages. RHETT comes back to the lobby just as there is a KNOCK at the front door. MM. begins to go to the door, but Rhett hurries ahead of her and answers it, as if to say "this is my job." MM. gives him a sporting look. MRS. BEARER enters first, PAUL is behind her holding an umbrella over her, and TEDDY is last, holding an umbrella over Paul. Teddy also carries an arm load of luggage.)

PAUL: *(Morbidly ghoulish.)* Good evening. *(Plastic smile.)*

MM: It's turning out to be.

PAUL: What a lovely inn. We are seeking shelter from this wonderful storm. *(Crash of THUNDER. ALL stop and look for a second or two.)* Can you spare a room for my wife and I?

MM: Of course, ah...but how about this gentleman?

PAUL: I don't believe he'll want a room. He can sleep anywhere. *(Ghoulish smile.)* Let me introduce myself, I am Paul Bearer, this is my wife, Pandora, and this my nephew, Teddy. *(TEDDY digs in pocket for card and presents it.)* My card.

MM: *(Reads out loud.)* "Paul Bearer, funeral director. Call Paul for the plot with a lot." How nice.

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TEDDY: *(Proudly.)* What's more, we deliver. *(MM looks at TEDDY.)*

MRS. B: About our rooms, do you have one with a view?

MM: *(Trying to please.)* Oh yes, we have just the thing. A beautiful view of the municipal dumping ground with Peaceful Acres Cemetery just beyond it.

PAUL: *(Excited.)* We'll take it! Where do we register?

MM: This way to the desk. My butler will show you to your room.

MRS. B: Teddy, the bags. *(TEDDY loaded down with luggage.)*

TEDDY: Lead on, Lurch.

PAUL: *(As HE signs in.)* I'm going to like it here, it's so homey. *(Ghoulish laugh as HE exits.)*

MM: *(To HERSELF.)* He's a bundle of joy. *(Goes on with busy work. RHETT enters from SR, goes to the desk, busy work behind desk, storm rages.)*

TONY: *(Enters from SR. hallway.)* The boss wants to know if you have any alcoholic beverages on the premises. He would like to have a nightcap later before he turns in.

MM: I think we can find a little something. We'll send it in when he's ready for bed.

TONY: Okay, that would be find...fine. *(Exits.)*

(More busy work; a KNOCK at the door, both MM. and RHETT start for it.)

MM: I hope it's Pete.

(RHETT reaches door first. Enter INSPECTORS HOLSKI and HOLMES. They are the epitome of the local law enforcement, not stupid bumbler types but simple country-wise types. With them are DR. CHARLES HOARSE and his nurse, MS. JESSE BELL.)

HOLSKI: Hello, Mrs. Moss.

MM: Hello, Inspector, come in.

HOLMES: Good evening, Mrs. Moss.

MM: Are you kidding? *(Indicating leaks all around.)*

HOLMES: Inspector Holski and I found these two stranded citizens down the road a piece. This is Dr. Hoarse and his assistant, Nurse Bell.

End of Freeview

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