

NEXT VICTIM, *PLEASE*

By Rocky Soderman and Terri Ferguson

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STORY OF PLAY

Here it is. This tongue-in-cheek murder mystery captures comedy in its funniest form. Silly it's not, hilarious it is. The one-liners will have you roaring, while the action in this who-done-it will have you climbing the walls. The story is ridiculously believable and with a good cast, you can literally have the toughest of audiences knee-slapping every scene.

It all happens when rich, old-man Murdock (*the Colonel*) is about to announce his last will and testament. The whole arrogant family has been invited to Murdock Manor to witness his final wishes. And every greedy one of them wants a piece of the action. What happens after they gather will make you howl with laughter. Will anyone survive to the final curtain?

Performers can milk their parts to the max. Directors will have a heyday. One thing is certain, the excitement never ends. It has it all. And things only get worse when Detective Swift arrives. But in the end, crime doesn't pay and you-can-guess-who is off to jail.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(Approx. 7 m, 7 w)

COLONEL MURDOCK: very rich, ailing, tough-as-nails old man

FIFI: petite, bubbly, French maid

HIGGINS: expressionless, monotone, slow-walking butler

SUSAN: Colonel's prissy daughter, mid-20s

CLIFFORD: Colonel's ivy-league son, 20s

REBECCA KIPLING: Colonel's stuffy, big-game hunter sister

LAWRENCE: Colonel's oldest son, arrogant and rude

BEATRICE: Lawrence's submissive wife

KID 1: spaced-out child of Lawrence and Beatrice

KID 2: another

PENELOPE: Colonel's stuck-up older daughter

PRISCILLA WALDORF: Colonel's other sister, high-class and overbearing

HERBERT WALDORF: Priscilla's wimpy husband

DETECTIVE SWIFT: bumbling policeman

PLAYING TIME: About an hour.

CASTING

Characters can be switched to fit the needs of individual productions. Sometimes this should be done on purpose. For instance, a female playing the part of a male detective can have the audience in stitches. Also, for increasing the cast, simply add walk on parts such as additional servants and maids to give an even greater image of a rich mansion lifestyle.

SETTING

The main living room at Murdock Manor, a mansion owned by wealthy Colonel Murdock. USC is a couch with end tables and (*working*) lamps on both sides. SR of the sofa are two arm chairs. DSR is a tea cart with pot, cups and tray. Next to the cart is the DSR exit to the mansion's kitchen and dining room. USR exit leads to a sitting room and patio. USL exit leads to bedrooms in the mansion. An exterior door is DSL. Potted plants, throw rugs, bookcases, pictures, mirrors, and wall-papered flats add to the authenticity.

SOUND EFFECTS

Doorbell, thunder/lightning, gunshots, stage lights flickering, and buzzing sound for electrocution.

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: COLONEL MURDOCK is sitting in a wheelchair as FIFI scampers around dusting. She stops and addresses audience.)

FIFI: Ooo-la-la! This is Murdock Mansion ... and he is Colonel Murdock. I am Fifi. I work for ze Colonel for one week now.

COLONEL: *(Calling out.)* Higgins?

FIFI: *(Continuing.)* And I should be cleaning. Ze Colonel is expecting ... how you say? ... relatives.

(HIGGINS enters DSR goes UPS of wheelchair; FIFI exits DSR.)

COLONEL: *(Not seeing HIGGINS, calls again.)* Higgins?
Where are you?

HIGGINS: *(From behind.)* You rang?

COLONEL: You know my family will be arriving soon.

HIGGINS: Yes.

COLONEL: And we need this place ship-shape.

HIGGINS: Indeed, sir.

COLONEL: You understand my family expects everything perfect.

HIGGINS: Oh, how could I forget, sir.

COLONEL: It's in the blood, you see.

HIGGINS: I don't doubt that, sir.

COLONEL: It'll be splendid seeing the family again ...
(Daydreams.) Oh, Higgins? Bring me a copy of my last will and testament. I plan to read it to the family tonight and it does need a few changes.

HIGGINS: Changes, sir?

COLONEL: Just a couple of minor details. Now, run along.

HIGGINS: Right away, sir.

(HIGGINS exits USR as SUSAN and CLIFFORD enter USR and nearly knock him over. Higgins sidesteps.)

Next Victim, Please

- 6 -

SUSAN: *(Whiny.)* Hig, watch where you're going!

HIGGINS: Pardon me, Miss Susan.

CLIFFORD: Higgins, we'll have lemonade on the patio, if you will.

HIGGINS: Coming right up, sir.

SUSAN: *(To COLONEL.)* Hi, Daddy.

(SUSAN kisses the COLONEL on the head and She and CLIFFORD both continue to cross until the Colonel stops them.)

COLONEL: Now, hold on! Hold on! Did you two remember the family will be here anytime?

SUSAN: Ewwwww!

COLONEL: *(Continuing.)* ... and I want to be proud of my youngest son and daughter. So dress snappy now.

(SUSAN and CLIFFORD exit USL. HIGGINS enters USR.)

COLONEL: *(To HIMSELF.)* Confounded kids! When are they gonna grow up? *(Then, louder.)* Higgins? Blast it! Higgins, where is that will?

HIGGINS: *(From behind, again.)* I'm here, sir.

COLONEL: Oh ... oh, I'm sorry. Very well.

HIGGINS: Your will, sir. *(HIGGINS hands the COLONEL the will and remains standing.)*

COLONEL: Thank you, Higgins. You're a good man.

HIGGINS: Will there be anything else, sir?

COLONEL: No, Higgins. Not at the moment.

HIGGINS: Very well, sir.

(HIGGINS exits USL. The COLONEL looks over the will. HE flips through the pages, then exits USR. The DOORBELL rings. Higgins enters USL and answers the door.)

HIGGINS: Greeting, Madame Kipling. I trust your safari was successful?

(REBECCA enters SL and stomps proudly past HIGGINS.)

REBECCA: *(Stuffy.)* Yes. Yes, my good man. My hunts are always successful.

(CLIFFORD enters USL.)

CLIFFORD: Aunt Rebecca. How nice!

REBECCA: Oh, Cluffy, how you've grown.

(REBECCA holds her cheek out for a kiss. CLIFFORD kisses air. The DOORBELL rings again. HIGGINS, still there, answers.)

HIGGINS: Greetings, Master Lawrence ... Ms. Beatrice, children ... won't you come in?

(LAWRENCE, BEATRICE and KIDS enter SL with suitcases and skateboards. HIGGINS exits DSR. Kids wander around gazing at everything.)

LAWRENCE: Well, Aunt Rebecca. I see you've finally emerged from the jungle. And, if it isn't my baby brother, Clifford.

CLIFFORD: Lawrence and Beatrice. I should have known that with father reading the will tonight, you two would be among the first to arrive.

BEATRICE: Don't pay attention to him, Lawrence. He's just envious that the Colonel is going to leave most of his estate to us.

LAWRENCE: Sorry ol' chap. You're bound to get something, though.

REBECCA: Now, nephews! Let's not fight. After all, we all know my brother will most certainly leave his biggest treasures to me. Come, let's go see the Colonel.

(ALL exit USL. FIFI enters DSR.)

End of Freeview

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