

# MURDER AHOY!

By Craig Sodaro

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Ahoy, mystery fans! Book passage on the *Titan*, a cruise ship headed for the grave of the *Titanic*. Filled with *Titanic* buffs, the object of the expedition is to bring up artifacts for auction. But when romance goes sour and the very wealthy and spoiled Blake Witherspoon is murdered, a new course must be chartered.

Social director Ettah Denny tries to steer passengers back to having fun, but Tara Dawn DePue, a detective and antique dealer, decides to solve the crime. With the captain too sick to help, the audience and crew must try to find out who killed Witherspoon before the killer strikes again.

Audience members stay involved throughout they play as they participate in a trivia contest and crossword puzzle, look for clues, bid on auctioned items, help stop a suspect from escaping and even carry a "body" offstage!

Walk up the gangway to loads of fun in a clever, easy-to-produce and exciting evening's show.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3 m, 3 w)*

**ETTAH DENNY:** Social director of the cruise. A bubbly, but basically naive woman who always looks on the bright side. 60-ish.

**SMITTY SMITH:** Nephew of the captain. He's not interested in the sea, but has come along for the ride and finds out he's in over his head. 50s.

**BLAKE WITHERSPOON:** Wealthy, snobbish young man who has always gotten what he wants. 20s.

**DAISY CLINE:** Fiancée of Witherspoon, a young, sweet girl who seems to be hiding a terrible secret. 20s.

**ZACK MITCHELL:** An inventor hoping to turn the world upside down with his new devices. He wears his heart on his sleeve. 20s.

**TARA DAWN DEPUE:** Of the Dallas DePues, a down-home antique collector who's got more relatives than anyone can possibly count. 20s.

**SYNOPSIS OF PLAY**

**ACT I:** Evening on the third day of the voyage.

**ACT II:** Fifteen minutes later.

**NOTE:** *See back of book for additional production notes.*

## SETTING

The lounge of the *Titan*, a mid-size cruise ship. A stage or playing area at front with chairs or tables and chairs facing the playing area. Portholes along the walls give the feel of being on a ship, as do several life preservers here and there. A banner above the playing area proclaims: "*Titan*, Your Voyage Into History." Posters and pictures of the long-lost *Titanic* decorate the curtain or wall behind the playing area. On the stage or playing area itself, we see a podium bearing the name and logo of the *Titan*. There's also one banquet table covered with a cloth that goes to the floor. A phone hangs on the wall near the front of the room.

## PROPS

**ETTAH:** Clipboard (no defined use in script, but it would look appropriate and can contain notes helping her keep things in order), purse with driver's license.

**BLAKE:** Note that reads: "Twinkle, twinkle, little star, How I wonder where you are. Down below the sea so deep...You'll never find me, you slimy creep! Signed: Mr. Antiquarius."

**SMITTY:** Handcuffs, gun, Hawaiian shirt (worn under uniform coat), sunglasses, tourist hat.

**TARA:** Handcuffs.

**USHER:** Checks (from tables).

**SET PROPS:** Tambourine, note cards for trivia game, and bells for contestants (placed on table before curtain); stretcher (stood against wall before curtain), dummy wrapped in sheet; "Inhibitors" (one large and one small squirt/water guns painted dramatically); gag and ropes. Tied box of salvaged "artifacts" (placed behind table before curtain), including eyeglasses, gold hand mirror; ballpoint pen initialed "A.T.", and a silver serving spoon.

**SOUND EFFECTS:** Weird space gun sound.

## ACT I

(AT RISE: ETTAH enters at the rear of the auditorium or lounge. SMITTY follows her.)

**SMITTY:** Ms. Denny, wait!

**ETTAH:** Miss, please, Smitty. I'm a miss and I don't want you to forget it. I'm...eligible, you see.

**SMITTY:** Some people never give up!

**ETTAH:** (*Incensed.*) Captain Smith, our passengers are waiting.

**SMITTY:** You know I'm not the captain. Not really! So don't call me that!

**ETTAH:** So where is the captain? He promised me he'd be here tonight. After all, we've reached our destination - -

**SMITTY:** That's what I got to talk to you about.

**ETTAH:** But I'm the ship's social director, Smitty. I was so lucky to land this job. After all, a woman my age! Do you know how hard it is getting a job when you're over thirty?

**SMITTY:** Over thirty?!

**ETTAH:** And I do want to do the very best job I can. This is my first voyage and I want everyone to be happy, happy, happy! And you're making me very sad, sad, sad, so get lost! Be a good boy and watch out for icebergs. Too-da-loo!

**SMITTY:** But you don't understand!

**ETTAH:** Oh, you young whippersnappers have all lost your snap. Whatever it is, you can handle it! Just keep telling yourself, "This is not a movie. This is not a movie!"

**SMITTY:** Miss Denny!

**ETTAH:** Go on, now. We all want to play *Titanic* Trivia not "Save the First Mate's Behind," don't we, folks?! (*SHE leads the CROWD in clapping and moves to playing area. SMITTY exits through door they entered, as she mounts the stage and moves to the podium, dramatically.*) After all, it's the *Titanic* that brought us here, isn't it? Our love of the legend? Our interest in this most spectacular of all human tragedies? Or maybe just our ghoulish curiosity?

**ETTAH:** *(Cont.)* Regardless of our reasons, that great lady lies twelve thousand feet below us right now. You saw her on the monitors right here this very afternoon. Our underwater robot, Fred, showed you live pictures of how she looks today. And I only hope I look as good at *(number of years since 1912.)* You also had a chance to see Fred picking up objects from the massive debris field. And the best part comes tonight when...well, we'll save that for a surprise later. Right now, ladies and gentlemen...boys and girls...it's time to play... *(SHE shakes a tambourine and gives it a whack.) Titanic Trivia! (Solicits cheers from the AUDIENCE.)*

To play our game we need four contestants from the audience. The winner of our game will win a coupon good for the next voyage of the *Titan* which is going to take us to the Caribbean Sea to view the wreck of Bluebeard's own ship, the *Blackbird*. How about that, folks? *(Again, ETTAH solicits clapping.)* Now, who are our lucky contestants? *(See note on picking contestants. Once the contestants are called, picked, or volunteer...)* Come right on up here! That's right. Don't be bashful. We're all friends on this old leaky tub, aren't we? Why don't you come right over here. *(NOTE: Questions below serve as a guide to introducing contestants. They will respond naturally and ETTAH can build on that.)*

My, but that's a pretty outfit you've got on. I'll bet you got that in the ship's boutique. You look like you've got your sea legs. In fact, you're so good at this sailing bit, you don't even look like you've been at sea for the last three days. Are you a sailor? And where are you from? What's your reason for coming on the voyage? Are any of you descendants from those on the *Titanic*? Oh, my, we did on one voyage but we couldn't find anything that belonged to her...what was it? Great, great, great uncle of her former husband's business partner's wife.

*(BLAKE enters at rear door dragging DAISY.)*

*Murder Ahoy!*

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**DAISY:** Get your hands off me, Blake Witherspoon!

**BLAKE:** Shut up, Daisy! You're making a spectacle of yourself again.

**ETTAH:** Do come in and join us!

**BLAKE:** Thanks! We'd LOVE to! (*HE plops into a seat with DAISY sitting beside him.*)

**ETTAH:** Well, folks, let's go ahead and get the game started and find out which of you is going to the Caribbean! I need two of you on my right and two of you on my left. For the first round, we'll play as teams. I'll ask three questions. If you know the answer, pick up the bell on the table and ring in. Whoever rings first will get to answer the question. If you guess wrong, the other team gets a chance to guess. Whichever team answers two of the three correctly wins the round and eliminates the other team. Then guess what happens? No, you don't have to mud wrestle to see who wins. I'll ask a final question and whoever guesses the right answer, wins! Are we ready? (*SHE reads questions from note cards.*)

Question one. Ready with those bells? Why don't you ring them once just to make sure they work. (*CONTESTANTS do so.*) Very good! You ever thought of hiring on at Notre Dame? Now, here's your first question. And they'll all be multiple choice. Ready? Question one: What steamship line owned the *Titanic*? Was it the White Star Line? The Carnival Cruise Ship Line? The Cunard Line? (*Bells ring. Correct answer: White Star Line.*)

Ready for question two? Well, it's ready for you! On the night she sank, which of these items was NOT on the menu in the first-class dining salon? Filet Mignon Lili? Sauté of Chicken Lyonnaise? Chicken pot pies? (*Bells ring. Correct answer: Chicken pot pies.*)

Excellent! And now for our final question: How many lifeboats, including collapsibles, managed to get away from the sinking ship? Twenty? Twenty-four? Twenty-eight? (*Bells ring. Correct answer: Twenty.*) Ladies and gentlemen, how about a hand for our winners who will now go on head-to-head combat! (*To LOSING TEAM.*) And thank you very much for playing.

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