

# MURDER ME, MURDER ME NOT

by William J. Springer

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

As the play begins, Randolph Gaston has been murdered, and everybody is after the insurance money (including the deceased). The characters we meet are the grieving widow, the girl next door, the family maid, the minister, the French inspector, and the confused boyfriend--BUT everyone isn't necessarily who they seem to be. A series of double (and double-double) crosses, mistaken identities, fake accents, a mysterious murder (the dead person is neither dead nor the person we think), hidden bodies in the sofa, and phony mustaches--it all adds up to a completely intriguing comedy.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(3m, 3w)*

**MARY ELLEN RODGERS:** The girl next door. Age 38.  
Very friendly but not sickeningly sweet.

**ALICE:** The maid. Age 30. The “dumb blonde”, perhaps even the gum chewing type. She is really well built.

**FATHER BENTLY:** The parish priest. Age 45. A fairly self-confident man. He may use an Irish accent when “in character.”

**GERALDINE GASTON:** Randolph’s wife. Age 43. A bitchy facade covers a very nervous woman, afraid of being caught.

**INSPECTOR FEYDEAU:** An insurance investigator. Age 33. A wily character, who has obviously picked up his French accent from “source unknown.”

**AMBROSE BRINKS:** A private investigator. Age 40. His somewhat easily flustered appearance covers a military-like demeanor in private.

**Setting:** The Gaston Home.

### **Synopsis of Scenes:**

ACT I: Mid-Afternoon.

ACT II: Scene 1 - Continuous.

Scene 2 - That same evening.

ACT III: Continuous.

**Playing Time:** Full evening.

**NOTE:** See end of playbook for costumes, props and sound effects.

## THE GERALDINE/ALICE SWITCH

The characters of ALICE and GERALDINE must change places and identities. Being a farcical situation, this change does not need to deceive the audience, it merely needs to suggest credibility for the other characters. (Note: Alice only appears as Geraldine while lying dead after gunshot. But when she speaks, everyone knows she's Alice. Therefore it is really only Geraldine's disguise as Alice that needs to be believable.) The most obvious changes are the costume and wig. Additional suggestions are alterations in height, silhouette and facial appearance. Try to cast two actresses of similar height, weight and physical shape.

To change height: Have Geraldine wear high heels and a heightened hairdo (wig) while Alice wears flats and a relatively low hairstyle. If both actresses are the same height whichever one is dressed as Geraldine will appear to be several inches taller.

To change silhouette: Have Geraldine wear looser outfits such as caftans while Alice wears a tight fitting maid's uniform. Here the costume change itself seems to alter the actresses' physical characteristics by either covering them up or pointing them out.

To change facial appearance: Use false eyelashes and/or eye glasses on Geraldine and not on Alice.

ALSO NOTE: It is suggested that the "dead body" at the end of ACT II, Scene 2 be played by Geraldine since the actress playing Alice may not have had time to make the change. The intermission between acts will give her the time to make the beginning of ACT II.

**ACT I**

*(The sitting room of the Gastons' home. There is a doorway SR which leads to the front hallway and the rest of the house. French windows UC open out onto the patio and yard. There is a fireplace SL and the furnishings include a sofa and desk. There is a telephone by the desk and bookshelves line several of the walls. Decor and furnishings place the Gastons' income above that of middle class, but they are by no means wealthy. AT RISE: MARY ELLEN is standing by the fireplace leafing through a book. ALICE is clearing tea things from the table.)*

MARY ELLEN: Alice, did Mrs. Gaston say how soon she'd be down?

ALICE: No, ma'am. When she got back from the morgue, she asked me to draw her bath and said she wanted some time to be alone and relax. Would you like to leave a message?

MARY ELLEN: No, Alice, thank you. I'll just wait around a little while longer.

ALICE: Would you like some fresh tea, ma'am?

MARY ELLEN: No, thank you.

*(ALICE finishes clearing the tea things as the DOORBELL rings. She places the tea tray on a table by the door SR as she exits to answer the front door. Nervously MARY ELLEN replaces the book she has been reading, then not knowing what else to do, she takes the same book back down from the shelf and pages through it. The SR door opens and Alice re-enters followed by FATHER BENTLY).*

ALICE: This way, Father. I'll tell Mrs. Gaston that you're here. *(SHE picks up the tray of tea things.)*

FATHER BENTLY: Thank you.

ALICE: Would you like some tea while you are waiting, Father?

FATHER BENTLY: No, thank you.

*(ALICE starts to exit.)*

MARY ELLEN: Oh, Alice.

ALICE: Yes, ma'am?

MARY ELLEN: Would you tell Mrs. Gaston that I'm leaving?  
She can call me if she needs anything.

ALICE: Yes, ma'am. *(SHE exits.)*

*(During the following both FATHER BENTLY and MARY ELLEN steal nervous glances at the door.)*

FATHER BENTLY: Oh, I hope you're not leaving on my account, Mrs. -

MARY ELLEN: Miss ... Miss Mary Ellen Rodgers. And you are -

FATHER BENTLY: Father Joseph Bently.

MARY ELLEN: Father Bently? You must be new to Fairview.

FATHER BENTLY: Yes, I was appointed to St. Matthew's parish a few days ago.

MARY ELLEN: Then you're replacing Father Kelly.

FATHER BENTLY: Oh, no. Father Kelly is still there. He's been named Pastor since Father Mullen was transferred to St. Anthony's. I'm replacing Father Kelly as Assistant Pastor.

MARY ELLEN: Oh. I'm glad to hear that Father Kelly's still at St. Matthew's.

FATHER BENTLY: Everyone really seems to like him, and of course they all adored Father Mullen.

MARY ELLEN: Father Mullen's been at St. Matthew's for about fifteen or twenty years. I'm surprised to hear that he's been moved.

FATHER BENTLY: Well, he is getting along in years, and with the way the parish has been growing, it was just getting a bit too much for him to handle. St. Anthony's is much smaller.

MARY ELLEN: I'm surprised that Father Kelly didn't come by to see Mrs. Gaston.

FATHER BENTLY: He had hoped to, but with his new responsibilities and all, he asked me to stop by. I guess you'd say this is my first official call. I haven't had very much time to meet many of our parishioners.

MARY ELLEN: I see.

FATHER BENTLY: I do hope I'm not interrupting anything.

MARY ELLEN: Oh, no, Father. Just an unsuccessful good samaritan act. I live next door to the Gastons. I just came over to see if there was anything I could do for Mrs. Gaston. She and her husband were so nice to me when I moved in a couple of weeks ago.

FATHER BENTLY: How good of you, Miss Rodgers. It's so important to have kind and understanding friends at a time like this.

MARY ELLEN: Thank you, Father.

FATHER BENTLY: I hope I can bring her some spiritual comfort. I only wish our first meeting could have been under happier circumstances.

MARY ELLEN: This must all be very awkward for you. I mean, not knowing the Gastons before, before all this happened.

FATHER BENTLY: It does make it very difficult.

MARY ELLEN: I'm sure you'll know exactly what to say.

FATHER BENTLY: I'm always afraid that I might say the wrong thing, particularly in an instance like this where I don't really know all the facts of the case. Father Kelly was able to tell me a few things, but with all the rushing around that we've both been doing the past few days, I still feel very insecure. Do you know if anything concrete has been determined about Mr. Gaston's death?

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