

AGATHA CHRISTIE NEVER TOOK TRIG

A Play in Two Acts

By Jeffrey Smart

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PUBLISHED BY

ELDRIDGE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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DEDICATION

For NANCY GRIGGS, whose need, drive, dramaturgic advice and computer generated this play.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Kathy has asked Janet to devise a plan to get Nick away from Wendy so that she can have him for herself. Janet has come up with the excuse of a party to relieve the tensions between their two trigonometry study groups. During the party, they play a murder game, pretending that their trigonometry teacher is the victim. The participants become edgy because of the parallels between their characters and themselves. All calm is shattered when word comes that their trigonometry teacher actually has been murdered. The characters try to figure out each other's motives in the real murder and the motives behind the game. When the "real" murder turns out to be a fake, Janet's motives are revealed and the characters make some important realizations about each other and themselves.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This play improved considerably after a reading from the Buchholz High School Drama Club, under the guidance of Nancy Griggs. That cast was as follows:

KATHY.....Kim Hoots
JANET.....Lydia Huber
BOBBIE.....Sarah Renier
ALLAN.....John Pishotta
TERRY.....Lisa Ulmer
WENDY.....Laura Corson
NICK.....Kevin Sario
GREG.....Heath Ward

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 M, 5 W, 1 Flexible)

KATHY: Janet's best friend, impulsive and emotional. Her current plans: get back at Wendy and get a chance with Nick, the hunk who haunts her dreams.

JANET: Kathy's best friend, quiet and always planning two steps ahead. An intelligent student. She might seem cold and aloof at times.

BOBBIE: A "drama freak" - specifically, a techie. Her off-beatness and careless style - she never acts "the lady" - has made her a bit defensive at times. For some reason, she doesn't quite trust Janet, though for the most part relations are good.

ALLAN: A very bright student who flourishes in front of a computer. In general, he is affable and polite, never aggressive, and safe to bring home.

TERRY: The Brain (*m or f*). Witty, insightful. Occasionally uses those qualities to destroy those around. A loner, but not really evil - just a little beyond most of us.

WENDY: Very attractive, very together, very used to getting her own way. She and Nick make an attractive couple. Does she use her looks to get away with murder?

NICK: Smart enough in his own sphere, if we could find it. He has jock good looks without the dedication to practice. He is content wherever he is as long as he's with Wendy. Refuses to think.

GREG: Refuses to conform to anything - except his own little bunch of refuseniks. He can surprise you by thinking almost anything, but he is most concerned with not being manipulated by others.

MISS LANSING: The high school trig teacher all the students despise. Since she should be cast with some formidable teacher easily recognized from school and since her appearance in the play should be a surprise, perhaps it would be best to leave the character listing out of the program and include that teacher's name under "Special Thanks."

SETTING

Janet's living room, an evening in early spring of this year. There are three entrances to the room: the front door, a hall exit, and a closable kitchen door. Other notable features beyond the usual living room furnishings: a practical fireplace, a stereo unit with headset, and a large table.

PROPS

BOBBIE: Grocery sack with chips and dips, magic marker.

KATHY: Drink, tray of drinks, large blown-up poster of a teacher, gradebook.

JANET: Three bowls, note cards for everyone, briefcase full of props (medallion, guitar strap, 2 hair bows, headset, hat, preacher's collar) napkin.

WENDY: Can of spray paint.

ALSO: Backpacks, books and papers, tape player.

SOUND EFFECTS

Opening (*applause, voice, laser, flames, screams*)

Telephone

Doorbell

Doorbell

Doorbell

Doorbell

Telephone

Doorbell

ACT I

(In darkness, we hear a tape of a PUNK ROCK concert. Two choices: a song about hot and burning or applause and JOAN DARKK'S voice saying "What a totally hot audience! You're hot!" Then there is the SKRAK of a laser and the ROAR of a flame, followed by the HORRIFIED SCREAMS of the audience. AT RISE: JANET'S living room on a Friday evening, about 8:00. Janet and KATHY are listening to the tape.)

KATHY: That's great, Janet.

JANET: It was real easy to do. I took a concert album, a *Star Wars* movie, and a sound effects record, and there it was - the death of Joan Darkk.

KATHY: I can't wait for this party to start. This is going to be great. And we've got the house all to ourselves, right?

JANET: Right. Mom and Dad won't be back till twelve. *(KATHY hops about excitedly.)* Kathy. What's gotten into you?

KATHY: I'm thinking about Nick. Oh, Janet, if I can off Wendy like I plan to, Nick will be all mine. Oh, Nick, what a dream.

JANET: Yeah, he's kinda good looking.

KATHY: Janet! He's only the cutest guy I know. I can barely

concentrate in Miss Lansing's class because he's sitting so close to me. I just watch all the muscles move under his shirt. I never thought breathing could be so exciting. And once I get Wendy ...

JANET: There's no assurance Nick will be yours.

KATHY: I just need to get him alone, once.

JANET: If we're all in here playing the game, there won't be much chance.

KATHY: I've got to. You'll help me, won't you?

JANET: I never promised I'd get him alone. I'm trying to split him and Wendy apart.

KATHY: How?

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JANET: It's the roles they play in the game. Nick plays the lead guitarist and Wendy is the rival rock star. Leading suspects. With each suspicious of the other and a little pushing to make sure they are ...

KATHY: I'll push Nick, you push Wendy.

JANET: I don't think it'll take much.

KATHY: You think it's going to work, don't you? Getting Wendy?

JANET: I've tried my best.

KATHY: And she really does deserve it. After what she's done to me.

JANET: Yeah, that was pretty mean.

KATHY: And now she's done for. I want her here. I want her here now. *(The PHONE rings.)*

JANET: I got it. Hello? Hi, Terry. Terry, you can't back out on us now. You gotta be here. You're group leader ... OK, I'll tell you ... we're also going to play a murder game. Everyone gets to figure it out. You'll get a chance to show off. OK, see you then. *(SHE hangs up.)*

KATHY: Terry didn't want to come?

JANET: S/He's coming now.

KATHY: This has gotta work. We asked them to come. We told everyone to come. Is Greg gonna come?

JANET: Yeah. I told him Nick would be here. He said as long as there was one person he could stand he'd be here.

KATHY: Good. And everyone knows to tell their parents they're coming here to study. And Wendy can't suspect anything because we've told everyone we're just trying to get our groups together with this party. And if it still goes wrong, I'll take the blame. I'll stand up to Wendy once and for all.

JANET: I don't think she's the type to stand up to "for all." You'll get this once and that will be it.

KATHY: Once is enough. Boy, I've waited for this a whole semester. Remember our motto:

TOGETHER: We don't get mad, we get even.

(DOORBELL rings.)

KATHY: OK, remember ...

JANET: We don't get -

KATHY: No. This is our party. You're in charge. I'm just going to sit back quietly like I always do. You take the lead and I'll help out a little. That way I can just swoop in for the kill. OK, get the door.

(JANET opens the door to BOBBIE and ALLAN. Allan keeps trying to speak.)

JANET: Hi. Hey, our groups are making up already.

BOBBIE: Yeah, I guess. Here's the food. *(SHE hands a grocery sack to JANET.)*

JANET: Thanks, Bobbie. You can set your book down there with Kathy's knapsack. *(SHE does so.)*

BOBBIE: Yuk, Kathy, I have always hated the color of your backpack. Pink. That's such a girl color. And such a pukey pink.

ALLAN: Janet! Can I use your bathroom?

JANET: Sure. Down there and third door on your left.

ALLAN: Thanks.

(ALLAN exits. JANET sets bag on table and goes into kitchen to retrieve three bowls and returns during the following.)

BOBBIE: Allan was telling me in the car that he only got home for three seconds since school ended. He ate his dinner in the car while he was driving me here. We were almost killed by a chocolate shake.

KATHY: How come Allan drove you? I thought you had a car.

BOBBIE: I do. Or did. I've had a day, too. I've been out collecting props for this dumb musical they're doing at school. I'll give you one hint about how bad it is: I had to get fifty miniature flags for the chorus. A two-fisted patriotic salute to the grand old flag. Yuk. *(SHE unpacks the grocery bag.)* I brought corn chips, tortilla chips, potato chips, salsa, onion dip, and cheese spread.

End of Freeview

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