

# Final Notice

By L. Don Swartz

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**Dedication**

*For all my Ghostlight friends - yesterday, today and tomorrow.*

**STORY OF THE PLAY**

Mickey Chigger, a nasty newspaper critic, turns up dead at the Chestnut Hollow Little Theatre's final dress rehearsal of "The Curse of Infant Isle." The players, desperate for a box office success, will go to any lengths to avoid a scandal. And that means moving the critic's body from the rest room where he died to a nearby parking lot. That way the late Mr. Chigger will keep his dignity, even though he doesn't really deserve it, but even more importantly, the theatre won't get bad press such as "The play was so bad it killed the critic!"

But just when they think they might squeak by, a detective arrives on the scene to declare that the critic has been murdered! To add to their troubles, Editor Blather of the local paper insists that the Little Theatre host a memorial service for the late Mickey Chigger, a decision she soon regrets with the ever-wailing Widow Chigger and inappropriate bathroom sound effects blaring from the sound booth. Does the critic's laptop computer with his final review hold the clue to the identity of the murderer? And what in the detective's mysterious past makes him seem so familiar? Here's a spoof just for (and about) community theatres that will knock'em dead with laughter.

*This play, first entitled "Final Notice," was originally produced by Starry Night Theatre Inc. at the Ghostlight Theatre in North Tonawanda, N.Y. on Oct. 17, 2002. It was directed by Don Swartz, with set design by Debby Koszelak Swartz and lighting by Jesse Swartz. The cast in order of appearance was as follows:*

*Inspector Diddle/Chris Thompson ... Jesse Swartz*

*Miss Crystal/Meg Thompson ... Joann V. Mis*

*Miss Olive/Justine Flint ... Julie Senko*

*Henry/Brian Thompson ... Chris Fire*

*The Duchess/Dot Ott ... Debby Koszelak Swartz*

*Wendell Booth ... Paul McGinnis*

*Betty ... Joy Ann Wrona*

*Kirby Plank ... Patrick Kaples*

*Editor Blather ... Lauren Hejna*

*Widow Chigger ... Kathy Ellis Donner*

*Detective Titwell ... Larry Norton*

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS** (5 m, 6 w)

**CHRIS THOMPSON:** (20-30) Leader of the group. Serious “actor.” Humorless, uptight.

**MEG THOMPSON:** (20-30) Chris’ wife. Actress and brains of the Little Theatre. Stabilizer.

**BRIAN THOMPSON:** (20) Chris’ younger brother and all around cut-up. Skirt chaser.

**JUSTINE FLINT:** (20-30) Actress. Flair for dramatics in everyday life. Edgy.

**DOT OTT:** (Mature) Wealthy, drunk, character actress. Prone to dozing off on stage.

**KIRBY PLANK:** (Teen) Young actor who quits the play because he only has one line.

**WENDELL BOOTH:** (20-30) Technician. Not dumb, just in another world.

**BETTY:** (20-30) Technician. Suffers a chronic sinus condition that makes her speech unintelligible.

**EDITOR BLATHER:** (30-40) Slick and sleek. Snobby and sometimes ruthless.

**WIDOW CHIGGER:** (Mature) Her constant wailing makes her speech unintelligible.

**DETECTIVE GERKIN TITWELL:** (40) Hard-boiled sleuth with a secret past.

**NOTE:** For Act I, Scene I, “Preview Night,” the cast doubling is as follows:

Chris Thompson—Inspector Diddle  
Meg Thompson—Miss Crystal  
Brian Thompson—Henry  
Justine Flint—Miss Olive  
Dot Ott—The Duchess

**SETTING:** Chestnut Hollow Little Theatre.

**TIME:** The present.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

Scene 1: Preview Night  
Scene 2: Immediately Following  
Scene 3: Two Days Later

### **ACT II**

Scene 1: Immediately Following  
Scene 2: Four Days Later  
Scene 3: Two Weeks Later

### **PROPS**

Fire extinguisher  
Stopwatch  
Radio  
Flashlight  
Notebook  
Laptop computer  
Cash box  
Camera  
Box of tissues  
Gun  
Detonator  
Plaque (dedicating Chigger Field)  
Newspaper clippings  
Magazine  
Tool belt with tools  
Napkin  
Cell phone  
Police badge

### **SFX**

Thunder storm, flatulence, classical music, rock music, applause, explosion, cats fighting, bees, motor boat running, monkey laughing, toilet flushing, phone ring, and cell phone ring.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(The Chestnut Hollow Little Theatre's stage is set up for their upcoming play: The sitting room of a large house on Infant Isle, a small island, a scone's throw off the coast of England. It is a dark and gloomy room with old furniture; SL a fireplace, with two wooden chairs beside it; a bar with stools SR; right of the bar, French doors that lead to the outdoors; and a grand set of double doors, center, that leads to a hallway. There is a large picture window behind the bar, another window can be seen in the hallway when the double doors are open and a tall window SL of the fireplace. A small sofa sits in front of the SL window and a rocking chair SR of the double doors. A large portrait of a mysterious woman hangs above a desk near the double doors.)*

*(AT RISE: It is night. A thunderstorm is raging. The room is empty. A man, INSPECTOR DIDDLE, sneaks on with a flashlight. He is looking for something. CRYSTAL quietly ENTERS the room.)*

**CRYSTAL:** Inspector Diddle!

**DIDDLE:** Miss Crystal! I'm sorry, I didn't mean to wake you.

**CRYSTAL:** You didn't wake me, I couldn't sleep.

**DIDDLE:** It's 'ard to sleep when there is a killer in the 'ouse.

**CRYSTAL:** Yes. What are you doing sneaking around in the dark, Inspector Diddle?

**DIDDLE:** I'm not sneaking, I'm sleuthing. Perhaps the reason you can't sleep is because your conscience is bothering you. 'Aven't got anything on your mind, like say, a murder, 'ave you?

**CRYSTAL:** Nice try, Diddle. I didn't kill my brother. I never cared for him, true. He was a loud and smelly brute, but it wasn't me that done him in. It's dark. I'll light the lamps. *(As SHE turns the switch on each light, a lamp glows on the other side of the room.)* There. That's much better.

*(There is the SOUND of flatulence coming from the hallway.)*

**DIDDLE:** Ssssh. Someone is out in the 'all. Let's listen.

*(The flatulent SOUND is repeated. The door opens, and HENRY ENTERS.)*

**HENRY:** Ah, what a nice surprise, finding the two of you together.

**DIDDLE:** 'Enry, there you are. I was just about to knock you up.

**HENRY:** How many times do I have to tell you that in America we say "wake you up"?

**DIDDLE:** Well, we're not in America, cowboy, and 'ere in the United Kingdom, every morning we knock you up. What are you doing sneaking around in the 'allway?

**HENRY:** I wasn't sneaking. I was merely walking. It's not my fault that the floor boards creak.

**DIDDLE:** That was no floor board.

**CRYSTAL:** Henry, what are you doing up?

**HENRY:** I couldn't sleep so I thought I'd come down for a drink. *(HE crosses to the bar.)*

**DIDDLE:** There's a lot of that going around. Maybe you couldn't sleep because the voice of the murdered victim was crying out for revenge.

**HENRY:** Don't fiddle with me, Diddle.

**DIDDLE:** I wasn't anywhere near your diddle.

**HENRY:** I didn't kill Otis. Sure, I'm glad he's dead. He was a big, fat, ugly pig.

**CRYSTAL:** Henry, please. He was my brother.

**HENRY:** Oh, right, sorry. It wasn't me, and unless you've got the goods, I suggest you shut that pie hole of yours.

**DIDDLE:** 'It a nerve, 'ave I?

**HENRY:** I'm gonna hit something in a minute.

**DIDDLE:** You Americans. That's all you ever do is bandy your fists about.

**CRYSTAL:** Please, this is getting us nowhere.

*(There is a flatulent SOUND from the hall.)*

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**DIDDLE:** Ssssh. I 'ear something in the 'allway.

**CRYSTAL:** *(Calling out.)* Oh, for God's sake, get in here before it's too late!

*(SHE throws the door open and pulls OLIVE into the room.)*

**OLIVE:** Inspector Diddle.

**DIDDLE:** Miss Olive. I was just about to knock you up.

*(HENRY spews his drink across the bar.)*

**OLIVE:** You needn't have bothered, I have an electrical gadget for that.

**HENRY:** I am never going to get used to this.

**OLIVE:** I heard some strange noises in the hallway.

**DIDDLE:** We 'eard that too.

**OLIVE:** It was the Duchess. She was wandering the halls, looking for old Pooch. Have any of you seen her?

**HENRY:** Nope.

**CRYSTAL:** I haven't seen her. I do hope she hasn't wandered outside. Infant Isle is very small. She could easily fall off a cliff and drown.

**DIDDLE:** Perhaps she was up and about a dirtier business than looking for a dog that died fifty years ago.

**OLIVE:** Please, Inspector Diddle. The Duchess is not well. Something has pushed her quite to the edge of a nervous breakdown.

**DIDDLE:** Or could it all be the disguise of an evil genius?

*(THE DUCHESS appears on all fours outside the French doors.)*

**HENRY:** Don't look now, but the evil genius is on all fours and licking the window pane.

**OLIVE:** Oh, Duchess! *(SHE opens the door.)*

**THE DUCHESS:** Has anyone seen me old Poochy?

**OLIVE:** Oh, Duchess, do come in out of the rain. *(SHE and HENRY help the old lady to HER feet.)* Gently. Gently. Let's set her on the divan. *(THEY set HER on the divan.)*

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