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.)

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?

End of Freeview

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