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Dramatic Publishing

A Farce in One Act

by

ANNE COULTER MARTENS

Whodunit?



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(WHODUNIT?)

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Whodunit?

A Farce in One Act

FOR EIGHT MEN AND FIVE WOMEN
AND EXTRAS

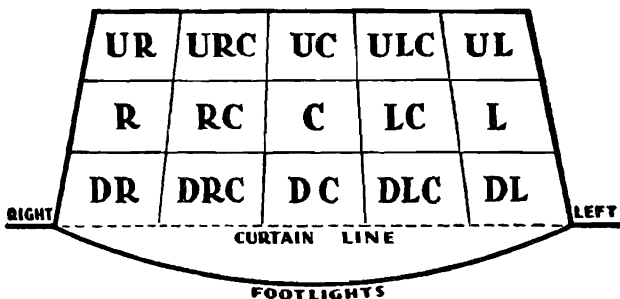
CHARACTERS

ANNOUNCER	<i>a young man</i>
PETE THURSDAY	}
MR. SOUTH	
MRS. SOUTH	
MISS FANCY BLUE	
JUNIOR	<i>a young G-Man</i>
ALICE	<i>a sweet young girl</i>
GRANDMA	<i>a gentle old lady</i>
MALCOLM	<i>a handsome young man</i>
HARRIET	<i>the gloomy housekeeper</i>
FEATHERSTONE	<i>a proper butler</i>
JAKE	<i>a sinister character</i>
UNCLE EBEN	<i>a bad-tempered old man</i>
A NURSE, TWO STRETCHER BEARERS AND A YOUNG GIRL.	

PLACE: *The stage of the auditorium where the play is presented.*

TIME: *The present.*

CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS

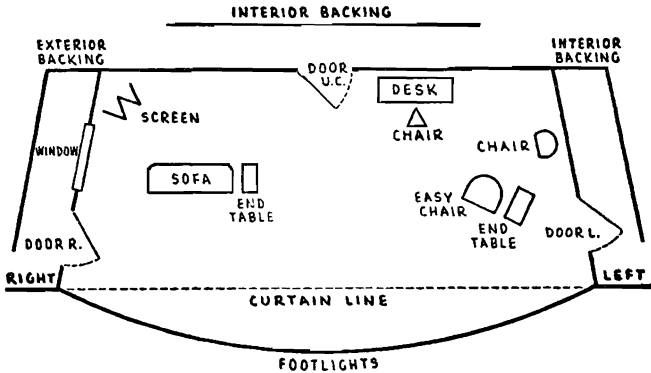


STAGE POSITIONS

Upstage means away from the footlights, *downstage* means toward the footlights, and *right* and *left* are used with reference to the actor as he faces the audience. R means *right*, L means *left*, U means *up*, D means *down*, C means *center*, and these abbreviations are used in combination, as: U R for *up right*, R C for *right center*, D L C for *down left center*, etc. One will note that a position designated on the stage refers to a general territory, rather than to a given point.

NOTE: Before starting rehearsals, chalk off your stage or rehearsal space as indicated above in the *Chart of Stage Positions*. Then teach your actors the meanings and positions of these fundamental terms of stage movement by having them walk from one position to another until they are familiar with them. The use of these abbreviated terms in directing the play saves time, speeds up rehearsals, and reduces the amount of explanation the director has to give to his actors.

STAGE CHART



PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Sofa, two end tables with lamps, large easy chair, desk and chair, telephone and paper knife on desk, screen, straight back chair, a piece of unfinished knitting, pictures.

NURSE: Large bottle with smelling salts label.

STRETCHER BEARERS: Stretcher.

JUNIOR: G-Man badge.

GRANDMA: Cane.

JAKE: Large black bag.

MALCOLM: Handkerchief.

THURSDAY: Wrist watch.

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SCENE: *The auditorium where the play is about to begin. In front of the stage R is a table with three chairs, and to the L is a table with four chairs. One empty seat remains in the front row.*]

BEFORE RISE OF CURTAIN: *The ANNOUNCER comes out L and signals for attention.*]

ANNOUNCER [*seriously*]. Tonight we are going to present a melodrama of vengeance, terror and sudden death, "Death in the Dark." If there is anyone in the audience with a weak heart, I advise you to leave now. [*Waits.*] No? Well, I don't blame you for not wanting to miss it. But just in case some of you ladies feel a little faint as our play progresses, we have provided a nurse with smelling salts.

[*From a side entrance of the auditorium R, a girl dressed as a nurse comes in with a huge bottle labeled "Smelling Salts."*]

ANNOUNCER [*ominously*]. Are you ready, Nurse?

NURSE [*solemnly*]. Ready. [*Sits at a table in front of the auditorium at R.*]

ANNOUNCER. As an added precaution, we have stretcher bearers ready to carry you out if the smelling salts fail to revive you.

[*From the side entrance R, two young fellows wearing the white coats of hospital attendants come in carrying a stretcher.*]

ANNOUNCER. That's a good firm stretcher, I hope?

FIRST BEARER. Never broke yet.

SECOND BEARER. Holds up to three hundred pounds. [*They sit at the table R and put the stretcher down beside them.*]

ANNOUNCER [*pleading*]. Any lady in the audience who weighs over three hundred pounds, please don't faint till you get home! [*With enthusiasm.*] Now, we have just been informed that several famous detectives are attending this performance. For this reason, we are going to present our play in an entirely new way. [*As he talks, he strolls to C stage.*] After the victim meets his untimely end, we will stop the play completely and give these visiting detectives a chance to detect the killer. You in the audience will have an opportunity to hear their solutions. Maybe you will agree, maybe not. When they have reached their conclusions, we will continue the play, showing you exactly who the guilty person is. [*At C.*] Allow me to introduce the detectives. [*Indicates PETE THURSDAY.*] I'm sure you're all familiar with Pete Thursday, that daring young man who captures criminals every Wednesday. Mr. Thursday, will you come forward, please. [*PETE THURSDAY gets up from a seat in the audience and comes to the front of the auditorium. He is a casually dressed young man with an unsmiling face, who speaks in a serious monotone.*]

THURSDAY. It's a pleasure to be here. I just want to say that what I can do on Wednesday, I can do on any day of the week. [*Sits at a table which is in front of the auditorium L.*]

ANNOUNCER [*striding to R stage*]. Next we have a double feature in the detective world, that happy-go-lucky, zany couple, Mr. and Mrs. South! [*MR. AND MRS. SOUTH get up from seats in the audience and come to the front of the auditorium. MR. SOUTH wears a business suit with a gay tie. MRS. SOUTH wears frivolous clothes and a ridiculous hat.*]

MRS. SOUTH. Hello, hello, hello, hello, hello! [*Blows kisses to the audience.*]

MR. SOUTH. Darling, you sound like a broken record.

MRS. SOUTH [*giggling*]. Don't we always break the record? Every time my husband and I go anywhere, somebody gets

killed. [*Looks at one person in particular in audience.*] I wonder who it will be tonight? [*They sit at the table L with THURSDAY.*]

ANNOUNCER. Now, a pleasant surprise. That fearless girl detective whose exploits are recorded in scores of books, Miss Fancy Blue! [*Indicates FANCY BLUE. She gets up from a seat in the audience and comes to the front of the auditorium. She is a confident girl in her teens, wearing typical teen-age clothes and bobby socks, and chewing gum vigorously.*]

FANCY. Hi! The only mystery I've never been able to solve why I never have time to do my homework. [*Sits at table L and winds her legs around the chair legs in te fashion.*]

ANNOUNCER [*to DETECTIVES*]. We hereby challenge you to find the right solution to this killing.

THURSDAY [*with conviction*]. We accept the challenge. [*OTHERS nod.*]

ANNOUNCER. When the play comes to a halt, you'll have an opportunity to grill the suspects. Any questions? [*From the rear of the auditorium, a young boy stands up. He has a large shiny badge pinned to his jacket, reading, "Jr. G-Man." He comes running down the aisle.*]

JUNIOR. Hey, mister, I want to try, too!

ANNOUNCER. Who are you?

JUNIOR [*proudly*]. I'm a Junior G-Man. [*Points to his badge.*] See my badge? [*Comes to the front of the auditorium.*]

ANNOUNCER [*annoyed*]. Sorry, son. This is a serious matter.

JUNIOR [*as if this explains everything*]. I eat the cereal that matters. That's how I got my badge.

ANNOUNCER [*dismissing JUNIOR*]. Run along home and start eating for a rocket gun.

JUNIOR [*to DETECTIVES*]. Aw, let me sit here with you.

THURSDAY [*in a tough voice*]. Scram, kid. [*Stands up, giving JUNIOR the cold eye.*] This is big league stuff.