

MUGSY SENT ME

By Dan Neidermyer

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 MEN, 2 WOMEN)

- CELIA** Totally ditzy blond (*with a wig if you must!*) bombshell; also the "hit" of this experience! (36 lines)
- SHASTA** A 1920's flapper and gun moll. (11 lines)
- HERMIE**..... The evening's quite sophisticated MC. (26 lines)
- LOUIE THE BEAN** Small-time crook; even smaller gangster. (23 lines)
- BENNY THE WORM** Smaller than Louie the Bean in every respect. (15 lines)
- SYLVESTER THE BLADE** A champ in the "no brains" department. (14 lines)
- BIG AL** The "man" himself. (9 lines)
- FLATFOOT CHARLIE**..... An "undercover" copper. (18 lines)

NOTE:

Every waiter and waitress is a performer. You can also add a Hat Check Girl, a Speakeasy Photographer, entertainers performing in a floor show, and whatever, whoever, and however many characters as desired.

FLEXIBLE CASTING:

Quite flexible. Several roles could be played females, including Hermie and Flatfoot Charlie with a simple name change. Other roles could be added by dividing the dialogue among other characters designed and named by the director.

COSTUMES

Appropriate for a 1920's flapper joint!

PROPS

POKER PLAYERS, table and chairs; cards

CELIA, tiny beaded purse

SYLVESTER THE BLADE, cardboard box labeled "GIFTS" and containing bottles of soda pop (*old-fashioned bottles, if available*)

VARIOUS CAST MEMBERS, several flash cameras or a strobe (*for use at the end of the performance*)

VARIOUS CAST MEMBERS, several flashlights (*for use at the end of the performance*)

AUDIO

Music from the 1920's would enhance the ambiance within Big Al's Place. Pre-recorded newscast at the end of the performance

THE BEGINNING: AT THE ENTRANCE

As your guests (audience) arrive:

- 1) Your guests (audience) are met and greeted (ad-libbed) at the front door by exciting and dazzling, sequined FLAPPERS. Among the flappers is CELIA and SHASTA, totally ditzy blond (out of a bottle or pulled on) bombshells.
- 2) BOTH CELIA and **SHASTA**: "Hi there, sweetie!" or "Hi there, cutey!" (Or any variation), make a moment's small talk (very small talk), then whisper to everyone (one individual at a time) the password to get into the joint. The password is "Mugsy Sent Me."
- 3) BOTH CELIA and SHASTA then point the direction the guests should go to gain entrance into "Big Al's Place." NOTE: Other flappers may also share the password and point the way in.
- 4) The guests then walk down a dimly-lit hallway or through a dimly-lit lobby (whatever is available at your performance space). The hallway is rather nondescript but as the guests approaches the doors into. "Big Al's Place," the place gets junkier and junkier! Crates, old boxes, ladders, painter's old drop cloths, etc., are piled near the doors. In fact, your guests would have to be very observant to spot doors through all the junk! Or is all this actually stuff in a warehouse? Whatever—it looks dank, dark, and ominous.

AT THE DOORS INTO THE PERFORMANCE SPACE

- 1) BENNY THE WORM, LOUIE THE BEAN, and SYLVESTER THE BLADE stand guard at the doors. THEY ask each guest for the password, which must be whispered so no-one else will hear! If the password is correct, one of the gentlemen escorts the guest(s) through the doors and into "Big Al's Place." Then, the process happens again with another gentleman and then, yet again.

- 2) BENNY THE WORM, LOUIE THE BEAN, and SYLVESTER THE BLADE each returns from his ushering duties and questions yet another guest. If the password is correct, the guest is escorted through the doors and into "Big Al's Place." If not—too bad! Wait for the left overs at the back door!

UPON ENTERING "BIG AL'S PLACE"

- 1) "Big Al's Place" is dimly-lit (some might say, "It's dark in here!"). Crates, boxes, and piles of warehouse junk are everywhere. Among the crates and boxes are tables and chairs for the guests.
- 2) Anyone entering would at first glance think this is a very junky place filled with cast-off debris and boxes and boxes of trash. A second look would bring some admiration that in the midst of all this junk there is actually order and table settings and aisles that are being worked by WAITERS and WAITRESSES serving appetizers and finger snacks to the guests who are seated and being seated.
- 3) Music of the 1920's is playing (either recorded or being played on the piano).
- 4) GANGSTERS and MOLLS are milling about the room, having "secret" and rather hush-hush conversations between themselves (ad-libbed). These conversations can be "overheard" by the guests. What is "heard" are bits and pieces of warnings: "We expect to be raided tonight") or threats: "Don't let Big Al hear you say that!" or gossip: "Did you hear Celia's now Big Al's squeeze?" and/or any succulent snippets of such.

NOTE:

The fun for your GANGSTERS and MOLLS is to create the most fanciful conversation(s) imaginable. Thus, really giving the guests an ear full!

ADDITIONAL NOTE:

The GANGSTERS and MOLLS circulate throughout the room.

MUGSY SENT ME!

Therefore, the GANGSTERS and MOLLS could hold the same conversation in several sections of the staging area (Big Al's Place) or create totally new conversations in each section of Big Al's Place.

SEVERAL GANGSTERS are playing high-stakes poker with MOLLS leaning on the gangsters' shoulders. (Card-playing action is impromptu and ad-libbed.)

If the music warrants such, several GOONS and their CHICKES are dancing the Charleston.

WHEN ALL THE GUESTS ARE IN BIG AL'S PLACE

HERMIE: (*Speaking to guests*) Hey, you dolls and potential inmates, good evening. Good to have you here at Big Al's Place. And tonight, tonight we want you to enjoy yourselves, but you must be on your best behavior. That'll be good practice for many of you who in the future will get time knocked off based on your good behavior.

SEVERAL POKER PLAYERS: (*With much exuberant enthusiasm and variations of the following statement*) I did.

HERMIE: But one point you must remember. If we should suddenly be raided by the feds—

ONE OF THE POKER PLAYERS: (*Interrupting*) How can those gumshoes know we're in this warehouse?

HERMIE: These days, even the walls have ears. You can never be too careful. Snitches are everywhere.

A GANGSTER: (*From among the many in Big Al's Place*) Hey— watch what you're saying about the feds. My brother's now with the FBI.

ANOTHER GANGSTER: (*From among the many in Big Al's Place*) So they finally caught up with him!

HERMIE: Like I said. If we should be raided, nothing— absolutely nothing—is happening here except— (*His demeanor urging the guests to get it!*) "Friendly conversation and social dancing," right? So— (*Making certain the guests do "get" it*) —if someone—anyone—should ask you "what" happens here, you answer— (*Works the guests until he gets the answer*)

GUESTS: "Friendly conversation and social dancing."

The POKER PLAYERS help the audience along, saying slowly and with much exaggeration—"Friendly conversation and social dancing." THEY also "do" what they're saying they are doing: small talking and dancing with each other.

And just for good measure—

HERMIE: *(Again asking the guests)* So, if anyone should ask you "what" is happening here, your answer is—

GUESTS: "Friendly conversation and social dancing."

HERMIE: *(As if a warning)* And—above all—you do not want to be "seen" or be photographed here. The result could be a little time behind bars.

ONE OF THE POKER PLAYERS: I did a little stir time, and they wanted to let me out early. I wouldn't let them.

ANOTHER POKER PLAYER: That was dumb. Why not?

ONE OF THE POKER PLAYERS: My wife was out here.

A GANGSTER: *(From among the many GANGSTERS in Big Al's Place)* I know what you mean. My wife came on visiting day to see me in the state pen. Boy, did she give me some tongue lashing! She kept nagging, "You're in here for attempted robbery, and how long for attempted burglary?"

A MOLL: *(From among the many MOLLS in Big Al's Place, pulling on a long string of gum she's been chewing)* What's wrong with that? You were, weren't you?

A GANGSTER: Yeah, I was. But my wife kept shouting, "And last month attempted murder. Why are you such a failure?"

ANOTHER GANGSTER: *(Chiming in; telling everyone)* Hey, my cousin Chico just got back from two years on an island in the Pacific.

ANOTHER MOLL: *(Wow! that's nice!)* Oh, yeah? Where was he?

ANOTHER GANGSTER: Alcatraz.

ANOTHER MOLL: *(Not getting it)* But I always thought your cousin Chico lived in San Quentin. How long did he live there before moving to the island?

ANOTHER GANGSTER: Two-to-five years.

YET ANOTHER GANGSTER: *(Yelling halfway across the room)* Hey, Mandarino, I saw a poster hanging in the post office last week saying, "Man Wanted For Car Theft."

MANDARINO: *(Actually any gangster and/or goon)* Oh, yeah? What's it pay?

YET ANOTHER GANGSTER: (*Still yelling halfway across the room*) No, no. It's not a job. The poster had a picture of my brother's second cousin once removed by marriage on it.

MANDARINO: Oh, yeah?

YET ANOTHER GANGSTER: He was arrested for doing his Christmas shopping early.

MANDARINO: They arrest you now for that?

YET ANOTHER GANGSTER: He was doing it before the car lot opened.

HERMIE: Yeah, well, we don't want any of— (*Indicating the guests*) —you's going to no island in the Pacific or up the river either—so you all be careful who you're talking to tonight. Be sure you know who's sitting across from you. In fact, you better find out now. So, turn to the persons next to you on all sides and find out who they are and the why and how they got in here. Now (*Urges the guests to introduce themselves to each other and get acquainted*)

HERMIE: Now that you know each other, and you're pretty sure you ain't sitting next to a stool pigeon, remember—if someone asks you what you're doing here, you say—

GUESTS: "Friendly conversation and social dancing."

HERMIE: —and if we do get raided, I strongly advise you all to flee out into the dark of the night and then go into hiding 'til the heat dies down or you get a new face— (*Looking around the room*) —which for some of you it wouldn't hurt.

CELIA: (*Running up to him and—as always and at all times—rather dense*) But, Hermie, what really, really, honestly, and for true does happen here at Big Al's Place? (*Ending her question with her trademark phrase followed by a silly, nonsensical, air-headed giggle*) Poop-poop-ie-shoe!

HERMIE: What would you like to do here, Celia?

CELIA: (*Becoming very serious*) I'm not sure. Let's think—

HERMIE: No, let's do something you can do—too. (*A beat, then:*) Really, Celia, honey, you know what happens here inside this old warehouse night-after-night.

CELIA: (*Giggles, then*) Oh, yeah, I do. But I was just making certain. Poop-poop-ie-shoe! Almost everything you can't do—legally these days - (*Followed by even more giggles*)

LOUIE THE BEAN: Hey, Hermie, when's Big Al expected to show up?

HERMIE: A question I can't answer, Louie the Bean. You know the details of Big Al's business dealings ain't never made public - can't be too careful with the feds snooping behind every door these days.

LOUIE THE BEAN: *(Referring to the doors the guests entered)*
Yeah, but we're behind crates.

HERMIE: Big Al's got a lot to think about these days.

BENNY THE WORM: And he carries a lot around with him too.

LOUIE THE BEAN: Yeah, like 225 pounds. And that's what my question is.

HERMIE: Spill it.

LOUIE THE BEAN: Without Big Al here, when do we eat?

HERMIE: *(Motioning to the waiters and waitresses)* Right now.

LET THE SPAGHETTI SUPPER BEGIN!

HERMIE'S motioning does exactly that . . . sets everything in motion. The WAITERS and WAITRESSES begin serving the meal. Remember, the appetizer was served earlier.

Some "down" time is given to the serving of the meal during which no action among the performers happens (other than the continuing card playing and the usual GANGSTER/MOLL conversations. This allows for an orderly serving of the food.

During this "down" time, MINGLE WITH THE GUESTS!

CELIA and SHASTA along with HERMIE, LOUIE THE BEAN, BENNY THE WORM, and SYLVESTER THE BLADE move from table-to-table, small-talking with the guests, and mostly welcoming them to Big Al's Place and encouraging them to have a good time and to eat all their food, because if Big Al's Place gets raided by the feds, "You might not be sure of where your next meal's coming from!"

At an appropriate time...

LOUIE THE BEAN: *(Starting up again)* When does the floor show start up?

CELIA: Floor show, Louie the Bean? What's the floor supposed to show? We just sit and look down at the floor?

LOUIE THE BEAN: Yeah, doll, we just sit all night long and look down at the floor 'til early morning.

And with that...

ALL THE POKER PLAYERS and MOST GANGSTERS and MOLLS do just that. THEY sit down and look down at the floor—in all seriousness. But none more serious than CELIA After what seems like an eternity:

CELIA: *(Still most intently looking down at the floor) Gee, Louie the Bean, my floor show ain't worth watching. There's very little action going on. This is like watching ants carry away my picnic lunch! Is anybody else's floor show more exciting? (SHE provides the lead-in for the following action)*

OPTIONAL: *At the director's discretion, a floor show could be put together and placed here. HERMIE would be the MC, introducing any of your crooners and divas who might sing...or an illusionist who might saw Celia in two (too much to hope for!) or several hoofers who would set the place to tapping...or a comic who might do some stand-up.*

HERMIE could also serve as a DJ for several moments, encouraging the guests to do some "social dancing," which would be the Charleston, but could also include a Conga line and even a tango.

This floor show—if presented—would showcase your troupe's musical, vocal, and/or terpsichorean talents and skills or whatever might prove fun and entertaining. This section could last 15-20 minutes.

INTERRUPTING THE FLOOR SHOW

LOUIE THE BEAN, who had begun playing poker somewhere in the evening, is now certain he's being cheated. HE jumps up, angrier than a hornet pulled from its nest!

LOUIE THE BEAN: *(Shouting) That's it, Benny the Worm!*

BENNY THE WORM: *(Who also found himself playing poker at some point in the evening—now quite dumbfounded) Huh?!*

LOUIE THE BEAN: You've cheated me for the last time!

BENNY THE WORM: Huh!?

LOUIE THE BEAN: Don't "Huh!?" me, you louse!

BENNY THE WORM: Them's fightin' words! Don't "You louse!" me! You're one cartridge less than a full clip!

LOUIE THE BEAN: You're hiding cards up your sleeve, you worm.

BENNY THE WORM: (*Issuing a challenge*) Think so, huh?

LOUIE THE BEAN: Yeah, I "think so, huh."

BENNY THE WORM: (*Urging Louie*) Look up my sleeve. Come on, look up my sleeve. See if I care.

LOUIE THE BEAN: Huh?

BENNY THE WORM: You think something's up there—

LOUIE THE BEAN: I know something's up there!

BENNY THE WORM: Then have a look-see. (*BENNY offers his "sleeve" to Louie, but only after HE'S pulled his arm way up his sleeve*)

LOUIE THE BEAN falls for the bait. HE "looks up" Benny's sleeve.

LOUIE THE BEAN: There's nothing there.

BENNY THE WORM: (*His arm still up his sleeve*) Thought you were so almighty sure I had something up my sleeve? Well, I do! (*And with that, BENNY'S arm comes flying down his sleeve, bopping Louie hard!*)

And with that—MAJOR FIGHT!

LOUIE THE BEAN and BENNY THE WORM do a fight worthy of the World Wide Wrestling Federation! They've got lots of exaggerated moves and huge pratfalls. The choreography for this fight is hilarious rather than violent, exciting and laughable rather than harsh and brutal. Go for the laugh!

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