

MURDER, MAY I?

By Eddie McPherson

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ISBN: 978-1-61588-417-9

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SYNOPSIS: Eric has fallen in love with a girl named Lucy who is not the sharpest tack in the drawer. Eric's mother, Geneva, disapproves of his new love interest and decides she'll do something about it. She'll murder her. However, Geneva's next-door neighbor and good friend, Janet, is on to her crime and decides to take matters into her own hands and murder Geneva. But, out of nowhere, Lucy shows up at their front door and Janet realizes she murdered Geneva for nothing. Oops! All audiences will enjoy this raucous comedy!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5-7 females, 4-5 males, 0-4 either)

GENEVA JONES SMITH (f).....	Eric's controlling mother. <i>(161 lines)</i>
ERIC JONES SMITH (m)	Tired of his mother butting into his dating life. In love with a dumb blonde. <i>(233 lines)</i>
JANET (f)	The Smith's next-door neighbor and Geneva's friend. She thinks she witnesses a murder. Nervous type. <i>(254 lines)</i>
LUCY (f).....	Eric's love interest who dresses like a bottle of Pepto Bimal. She's very, very simple. <i>(112 lines)</i>
PETER JEETER (m).....	Neighborhood meter reader who enjoys foreshadowing future events. <i>(16 lines)</i>
MRS. JEETER (f).....	Shows up, attempting to solve her own mystery in order to create a sub-plot to the play. <i>(14 lines)</i>

- PAUL (m) Janet's police-officer son who comes over to help solve the mystery of the disappearing mother. *(123 lines)*
- KELLY KING (f)..... Paul's abrasive and enthusiastic partner. She's anxious to use her homemade taser. *(50 lines)*
- GIRL/BOY SCOUT (m/f) Annoying little girl who arrives to pick up clothes for their annual clothes drive. *(7 lines)*
- MRS. BROOKES (f)..... Another neighbor who shows up looking for her husband's wheelbarrow. *(5 lines)*
- MR. BROOKES (m)..... Wants his wheelbarrow and wants it NOW. *(5 lines)*
- MS./MR. NOZEE (m/f) Shows up almost giving away the big plan. *(15 lines)*
- WILBUR/WILMA (m/f)..... Another neighbor who drops in and psychoanalyzes Janet. *(7 lines)*
- PIZZA GAL/GUY (m/f)..... Delivers a pizza. *(3 lines)*
- MR. BELLOWS (m)..... Buys Janet's house for five million dollars. *(3 lines)*
- MRS. BELLOWS (f) His wife. *(5 lines)*

CAST DOUBLING

One male can play: Peter Jeeter, Mr. Brookes, Wilbur, and Mr. Bellows

One female can play: Mrs. Jeeter, Girl Scout, Mrs. Brookes, Ms. Nozee, Pizza Gal, and Mrs. Bellows

DURATION: 75 minutes

SETTING: Geneva's Living Room

TIME: Present

SET

A simple living room set with a purse hanging on a coatrack and a free-standing lamp. Door leading to the front yard is stage left. Two doors are in the upstage wall. One goes to the den and the other to the rest of the house. The door to the kitchen is stage right. A sofa sits in the center and a small dining table is stage right next to the kitchen. A few other small tables set about. The room is decorated nicely.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The mirror Eric uses at the beginning of the play is invisible to the audience. When he looks at his reflection, he is actually looking over the heads of the audience. The homemade taser Kelly creates can be anything that looks thrown together (ex. batteries taped together with wires haphazardly wrapped around the batteries). The divining rod is a limb from a tree. The laugh box is just any small box with a button on it. The laughs from the box should come from the tech booth as sound effects.

At the end of Act Two, Scene 1, there is a plant in the audience, preferably a male.

SOUND OR MUSIC EFFECTS

- Thunder
- Various Barry Manilow (or other artist) tunes*
- Recorded laughter
- Loud noises like pots and pans clanging together (can be real or pre-recorded)

**This play contains suggestions for the performance of a musical work (either in part or in whole). Heuer Publishing LLC has not obtained performing rights of these works. The direction of such works is only a playwright's suggestion, and the play producer should obtain such permissions on their own through ASCAP, BMI or the U.S. copyright office.*

PROPS**ACT ONE**

- Candles
- Table cloth
- Dishes
- Pill bottle
- Yellow rubber gloves
- Glass of water
- A throw for the sofa
- Crossword puzzle
- Photograph
- Tray of cheese puffs
- Oven mitts
- Clipboard
- Lighter
- Remote control
- Five-dollar bill
- Playing cards
- Ice pack
- Blanket (possibly Buzz Lightyear)
- Thermometer
- Wallet
- Small 'laugh' box
- Tray of coffee cups
- White shirt with lipstick stain on the collar
- Homemade divining rod

ACT TWO

- A 'corpse' wrapped in a cloth and tied with a robe
- 2 handmade puppets
- 2 cell phones
- Banana
- Wheelbarrow
- Blanket
- Plate of cookies
- Pots and pans for offstage noise
- Wallet
- Two plastic swords
- Yo-yo
- Envelope
- Camouflage cap with netting on the front
- Rubber spider
- Handkerchief
- Stack of fake bills
- Ice cream cone
- White dress with purple stain at the bottom
- Flashlight
- Pizza box
- Broom
- Pictures on the walls that fall
- Handcuffs
- Suitcase
- Blonde wig
- Hand-held audio recorder
- Deed
- Five glasses of grape juice on a tray
- Thick envelope of money

DEDICATION

To my theatre students, you inspire me every day

DO NOT COPY

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE: ERIC and his mother, GENEVA, are standing in the middle of their living room. She is straightening his tie as he stands, looking nervous.

GENEVA: You are wasting your time on this girl.

ERIC: I am **not** wasting my time.

GENEVA: She isn't right for you.

ERIC: She's perfect for me.

GENEVA: Mothers are good judges of character.

ERIC: How can you judge her when you haven't met her?

GENEVA: You won't bring her around. I think you're ashamed of me.

ERIC: Ridiculous.

GENEVA: I showed Janet a picture of this girl you like, and she agrees that she's ugly.

ERIC: What does Ms. Janet know?

GENEVA: She knows beauty. She was Miss Pumpkin Pie back in the day.

ERIC: Lucy is beautiful to me.

GENEVA: Honey, she is sooooo dumb.

ERIC: Mother.

GENEVA: If dumb were dirt, she'd be an acre.

ERIC: If you say one more—

GENEVA: That girl thinks Cheerios are doughnut seeds.

ERIC: (*Angry.*) That's it... I can fix my own tie. And Lucy is coming over tonight and that is that.

GENEVA: (*Crosses to the dining table.*) Look at this dreadful table.

ERIC: What do you mean?

GENEVA: It's all **so** cliché.

ERIC: (*Stepping back and looking at himself in the mirror.*) It's romantic.

GENEVA: It has engagement written all over it.

ERIC: What's wrong with that?

GENEVA: (*Shocked.*) Eric Indiana Jones Smith, do you plan to marry this girl and leave me all alone? You would do that, wouldn't you? You're an evil child.

ERIC: I'm thirty-four years old. Don't you think it's time I move out and make a life of my own?

GENEVA: *(Puts hand to chest.)* Oh my. *(Knees buckle.)* I can't breathe. My heart has quit. My arteries have hardened. My kidneys have stopped doing whatever kidneys do.

ERIC: *(Rushes to her.)* Mother, are you alright? Here, sit down. *(ERIC helps GENEVA into the chair.)* Where's your medicine?

GENEVA: In my purse, get it for me, dear. *(Points to the purse hanging on a coat rack by the door.)*

ERIC: *(Rushing over and digging through her purse, pulling out a pair of yellow rubber gloves, looking under them, finding the pills.)* Here they are. *(Rushes to GENEVA.)* It says take two.

GENEVA: What time is it?

ERIC: Six-fifteen.

GENEVA: What time is the hussy getting here?

ERIC: Lucy is getting here at six-thirty.

GENEVA: Ohhhhhh! *(Throws her head back on the chair.)*

ERIC: Here, take your lung, heart, artery and kidney pill.

ERIC hands GENEVA a glass of water off the end table next to the chair. GENEVA takes the pill and washes it down with a sip of water.

GENEVA: Thank you, dear. *(Throws her feet up on the sofa and starts to cover herself with a blanket.)*

ERIC: *(Putting the pill bottle back in her purse.)* What are you doing?

GENEVA: Getting comfortable until my pill takes effect. I'll just work my crossword puzzle. *(Picks up a crossword puzzle from a table.)*

ERIC: Mother, go to your room, please.

GENEVA: Why?

ERIC: Because Lucy thinks you're dead. *(Throws his hand up to his mouth.)*

GENEVA: What did you say?

ERIC: I couldn't very well tell her I lived with my mother. I was desperate, so now I must see it through. Pleeeeeaaaaase?

GENEVA: *(Throws down her crossword puzzle.)* A mother knows when she's not wanted. *(To a lady in the audience.)* Are you a mother? It can be painful, can't it? *(To another.)* And what about you?

ERIC: Mother, let the ladies watch the play in peace. I smell my cheese puffs. *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

GENEVA: *(To the second lady.)* I like that dress. I'm glad someone in the audience has good taste in clothes. *(Gives the first lady a dirty look.)*

JANET: *(Sticking her head in the door.)* Knock, knock.

GENEVA: *(Crosses to the front door.)* Janet, what are you doing here?

JANET: I want to borrow a cup of sugar.

GENEVA: No, you don't. You were wanting to sneak a peek at Eric's girlfriend.

JANET: *(Entering the room.)* Is she as ugly as her picture?

GENEVA: I don't know.

JANET: She isn't here yet? *(Sees the table.)* Look at that beautiful table. So romantic.

GENEVA: *(Dripping with sarcasm.)* Yes, just peachy. *(Secretively.)* Janet, *(Motions her away from the kitchen.)* did you see that movie on Lifetime last week?

JANET: Which one?

GENEVA: It was called "I Murdered My Son's Girlfriend by Accident while Wearing Rubber Gloves and Now I'm in Jail and the Food is Awful."

JANET: I missed that one. What's it about?

GENEVA: In the movie, a little floozy tries to take her boyfriend away from his dying mother, leaving the poor mother all alone, and then the mother decides to get rid of the girl—

JANET: Then what happened?

GENEVA: It's coming on again tonight. You should walk over and watch it with me.

JANET: I have a client coming over later to look at the house, but it shouldn't take long.

GENEVA: I can't believe you're actually selling the house you raised your son in?

JANET: They gave me an offer I couldn't refuse.

GENEVA: Word is they've offered you five million dollars for that hovel.

JANET: Shhhh, do you want the whole world to hear?

GENEVA: Then it is true.

JANET: Apparently, it's a National Landmark.

GENEVA: To think Margo Mitchell lived in the house next to mine.

JANET: Sure did. Here's a picture of her standing on the front porch over fifty years ago.

GENEVA: *(Taking the picture and looking at it.)* The woman who wrote *Blown with the Breeze* grew up next door. *(Sighs, then beat.)* I just had a terrible thought.

JANET: What?

GENEVA: If you move... if you move...

JANET: You'll miss me?

GENEVA: I'll have to buy my own internet service.

JANET: Thanks a lot.

GENEVA: *(Realizing.)* Oh... uh and I'll miss you *too*. Are you coming over to watch the movie or not?

JANET: OK. That will give me a good reason to pop back in to get a good look at Quasimodo – I mean, Eric's date.

JANET and GENEVA laugh. ERIC reenters with a tray of cheese puffs.

ERIC: *(Faking politeness, sarcastic.)* Mother, I can see you're still here. Oh look, and you have company. How nice.

JANET: I was just leaving. I have a million things to do. Bye, Geneva. *(Throws GENEVA the OK sign.)*

ERIC: *(Noticing.)* What was that for?

JANET: *(Holds up the OK sign again.)* That means I'm bringing the doughnuts. *(Runs out the front door.)*

ERIC: Well, that's **one** meddler out of the way. *(Turns, staring at GENEVA, crossing his arms.)*

GENEVA: A house doesn't have to fall on me.

GENEVA throws her nose up in the air and exits to the back hall. ERIC is visibly nervous. He crosses back to the mirror and checks his reflection but doesn't like what he sees.

ERIC: Yuck.

Doorbell.

ERIC: Coming! *(ERIC rushes to the door and opens it. There stands PETER holding a clipboard.)*

PETER: Evening.

ERIC: Can I help you?

PETER: I'm here to read your meter.

ERIC: (*Shrugs.*) OK.

PETER: Just didn't want you to see me prowling around the backyard, thinking I was a burglar.

ERIC: OK, thanks for letting me know.

PETER: Say, do you guys have a sub-plot going for this play?

ERIC: (*Cutting his eyes to the audience.*) Uh, play? What play?

PETER: If you didn't, I thought maybe I could provide you one.

ERIC: Uh, so, goodbye, sir. (*Tries to close the door.*)

PETER: Here's my card in case you ever have any questions about your meter, or if you ever need a search warrant or anything.

ERIC: Search warrant?

PETER: (*Leans in to him.*) Just helping you out with a little foreshadowing. You know, for later in the play.

ERIC: (*Looks awkwardly at the audience.*) Play? Uh, what play?

PETER: That's right, we're not supposed to know we're in a—

ERIC: (*Getting the scene back on track.*) So, let me read your card here. (*Reading the card.*) Peter Jeeter, the— (*Chokes on a laugh.*) Is this a joke?

PETER: Is what a joke? Are you making fun of my name?

ERIC: Not at all, Peter Jeeter, the meter reader. (*Laughs.*)

PETER: Just for that, I'm placing a curse on this house. Abracadabra. Beetle Juice! Beetle Juice! Beetle Juice! Something bad is going to happen in this house tonight. That makes for a good sub-plot, don't you think?

PETER winks at ERIC, sticks his nose in the air and exits. ERIC shuts the door. There's an instant knock at the door. There stands LUCY. She's a pretty blonde with a constant smile pasted on her face. She holds a small bouquet of flowers.

ERIC: Now, that's what I've been looking for. (*ERIC leans in for a kiss, but LUCY looks behind her.*)

LUCY: You were looking for something?

ERIC: (*Wants to be suave so badly.*) Just a pucker, some sugar, a little smack on the cheek!

LUCY: *(Pause.)* You lost all that outside? Come on, I'll help you look.

ERIC: *(Deflated.)* Never mind. Come in.

LUCY: Here, I brought you this. *(Hands ERIC the bouquet of flowers.)*

ERIC: I think the guy is supposed to give the flowers.

LUCY: Oh. *(Giggles.)* I keep forgetting how it works. OK, you give it to me.

ERIC: *(Hands LUCY the flowers.)* Here you go.

LUCY: *(Takes it and smells it.)* Oh, Eric. They're my favorite.

GENEVA giggles behind the hall door.

ERIC: *(Turns.)* Shut up.

LUCY: OK.

ERIC: No, not you. I mean not nobody—uh. Won't you come in?

LUCY: *(Enters the room, looking around.)* This is a very nice place you have here.

ERIC: Can I have your coat?

LUCY: Bless your heart, don't you have one of your own?

ERIC: I mean can I hang it **up** for you?

LUCY: OK.

LUC giggles, removes her coat, revealing she is wearing all pink. She hands ERIC her coat and he hangs it on the coat rack.

ERIC: *(Ringing his hands.)* You look great. I like the scarf.

LUCY: Thanks. I bought a different scarf last week, but it was too small, so I swapped it for this one.

ERIC: *(Pauses for a second, then laughs, pointing at her.)* You're telling a joke.

LUCY: *(Wide-eyed.)* OK. How many monkeys does it take to change a lightbulb?

ERIC: *(Playing along.)* I don't know. How many monkeys **does** it take to change a lightbulb?

LUCY: Three.

ERIC: *(Waits, then.)* Uh... three?

LUCY: That's right.

ERIC: Why three?

LUCY: Why three **what**?

ERIC: Why does it take three monkeys to change a lightbulb?

LUCY: (*Shrugs.*) I guess it was a big bulb, how should I know?

ERIC: (*Rubbing the back of his head.*) Ooooookay.

LUCY: Isn't this fun? Where are we going tonight?

ERIC: I have a surprise. I cooked dinner. (*Steps aside and presents the table.*)

LUCY: (*Claps hands, excited.*) Oh, isn't that so very cheap of you?

ERIC: I beg your par—

LUCY: I love a man who doesn't swander his money.

ERIC: Swander?

LUCY: Swander means you don't throw your money away.

ERIC: (*To himself.*) Oh, squander.

LUCY: What?

ERIC: (*Closes his eyes and breathes.*) You were saying?

LUCY: Well, take the last guy I dated. I knew him a whole three months (*Holds up two fingers.*) before I found out he still lived with his mother. How pathetic is that?

GENEVA giggles behind the door.

LUCY: Who's that?

ERIC quickly lights a lighter and holds it in front of her face.

LUCY: Oooooooo.

ERIC: Uh – I was about to light the candles. Makes for a more romantic ambiance.

LUCY: I rode in one of those once.

ERIC: You rode in one of what?

LUCY: Ambiance. When I broke my leg. It was so much fun.

ERIC: (*To the audience.*) She thinks I said ambulance. Bless her little heart.

LUCY: Who are you talking to?

ERIC: (*Pointing.*) The audience.

LUCY: (*Looks out.*) Oh, heeeeeeey. (*Waves.*)

ERIC: Don't wave, honey, we're not supposed to know they're there.

LUCY: Oh. (*To audience.*) You're dead to me.

ERIC: Shhhhhh. No more foreshadowing. But back to the table. You like?

LUCY: (*Flirty.*) Eric Indiana Jones Smith, I can see right through you.

ERIC: (*Flirty right back.*) If you can see right through me, you're missing a lot. (*Nervous laugh.*) Won't you have a seat?

LUCY: (*Sitting on the sofa.*) Ooooo, your sofa sure is nifty.

ERIC: Thanks. And speaking of nifty, that is really some outfit you're wearing.

LUCY: (*Stands excitedly and twirls.*) Thank you, I made it myself. I just love pink, don't you?

ERIC: Very nice. You remind me of a beautiful, tall bottle of Pepto-Bismol.

LUCY: Oh, Eriiiiiic.

ERIC: I haven't seen that much pink on a girl since that Valentine's Day party in third grade.

LUCY: (*Sitting.*) I remember third grade. Those were the toughest four years of my life.

ERIC: Oh, I forgot. I have a surprise for you. (*ERIC picks up a remote and pushes a button causing a Barry Manilow song to play. Or other type of artist/song.*)

LUCY: (*Clapping.*) I loooove this song.

LUCY stands and begins swaying to the music. ERIC watches her for a second, not sure what he should do next.

LUCY: Come over and dance with me.

ERIC stands and slowly moves over to her, standing about three feet away, and awkwardly dances with her. GENEVA peeps through the hall door and is surprised at what she sees. She does not approve. GENEVA rushes in, standing between them, grabs the remote from ERIC and turns off the music.

ERIC: (*Embarrassed.*) Mother!

LUCY: Mother?

ERIC: What is the meaning of this?

LUCY: Did you say mother?

GENEVA: Yes, he did. (*Nose-to-nose with LUCY.*) I am Eric's mother.

Do you have a problem with that?

LUCY: I thought you were dead.

GENEVA: (*Crossing arms.*) I am very much alive.

ERIC: (*To himself.*) I'm dead.

LUCY: (*To ERIC.*) You're dead?

ERIC: Just a figure of speech, honey.

LUCY: (*To ERIC.*) So, if you're alive, (*Turns to GENEVA.*) And you're alive ... (*Lightbulb moment.*) Eric, you live with your mother?

ERIC: Uh... no, no, no! She lives with me. She's old and feeble.

GENEVA: (*Hands on hips.*) I am not old and feeble.

ERIC: See how delusional she is? (*Turns to GENEVA, scolding.*) I have half a mind to put you back in the home.

GENEVA: That does it. (*Turns sharply to LUCY.*) I must ask you to leave before I do something drastic.

ERIC: (*Steps in front of LUCY.*) Don't you dare threaten the girl I plan to marry.

GENEVA: Marry?

LUCY: (*Clasps her hands together.*) Marry?

ERIC: (*Hands LUCY the lighter.*) Go play with this.

LUCY takes it and crosses upstage, lighting it over and over.

ERIC: Mother, you have crossed the line. Gone too far. Overstepped your bounds. And other stuff I'm too mad to think of right now. I am packing my bags and leaving tonight, and I'm taking Lucy with me.

GENEVA: You can't. I will be left all alone.

ERIC: It's time I live for **me**, Mother. Me, me, me!

GENEVA: But, Eric, my dear, dear son. Don't you understand? Your girlfriend's cheese is slowly sliding off her cracker.

ERIC: There's more to life than brains, Mother. Lucy loves me.

GENEVA: The girl doesn't know which end is up. (*Shouts over to LUCY.*) Hey, bimbo, where do birds come from?

LUCY: (*Not taking her eyes off the lighter.*) Bird seeds.

ERIC: Mother, that's enough.

LUCY: I smell something funny.

GENEVA: She's right. Your apple turnovers are burning.

ERIC: No! (*Runs to the kitchen.*)

LUCY: *(Crosses to GENEVA.)* I made an apple turnover once.

GENEVA: You? How on earth would someone like **you** make an apple turnover?

LUCY: Well, I took this apple, see, and pushed it down a hill. *(Holds up the lighter.)* Did you see this flame thingy? *(Lights it.)*

GENEVA: *(Runs over and grabs the lighter.)* Give me that.

LUCY: You scared me.

GENEVA: Don't think I don't know what you're up to. You're nothing but a buttinski.

LUCY: No ma'am, I'm a Presbyterian.

GENEVA: You listen to me, and you listen to me, good.

LUCY: Hold on. *(Pulls a pair of glasses out of her pocket and puts them on.)* OK, ready.

GENEVA: Do you know what I am going to do, little floozy? *(Locks the kitchen door.)*

LUCY: My name's Lucy, not flucy.

GENEVA: *(Putting on the pair of yellow rubber gloves from her purse.)* It's time for a girl-to-girl talk.

LUCY: Before or after you wash dishes?

GENEVA: These are **not** for washing dishes. *(Starts slowly moving toward LUCY.)*

LUCY: *(Starts backing away from GENEVA who is inching closer to her.)* They're not?

GENEVA: Stand still, Pink Panther.

LUCY: I told you my name is Flucy... I mean Lucy. *(Tries to open the front door, but it's locked too.)*

GENEVA: You see, a mother bear will do anything to protect her cub. *(Takes LUCY'S coat off the coat rack and throws it over her arm, then presses a button on the remote as Barry Manilow continues his earlier song. She throws the remote onto the sofa.)*

LUCY: I'm sorry, but I don't feel much like dancing.

GENEVA'S backing LUCY to the upstage right door.

GENEVA: It's just you and me now.

LUCY pushes the hall door open and exits, running as GENEVA slowly follows her out and slams the door shut. We hear a scream offstage. ERIC bangs on the kitchen door.

ERIC: *(Offstage.)* Mother! Mother, what's going on in there? Open this door! Do you hear me?

GENEVA calmly reenters, pulling off her gloves and puts them in her purse. She turns off the music, crosses to the kitchen door and unlocks it. ERIC runs in wearing two oven mitts.

ERIC: Mother, what's going on?

GENEVA: *(Smiling.)* What do you mean, dear?

ERIC: I thought I heard a scream. *(Moving to the center of the room, looking around.)* Where's Lucy.

GENEVA: Eric, Mother tried to warn you. *(Crosses and straightens ERIC'S tie.)* She just wasn't right for you, dear.

ERIC: *(Rushes to the front door, opens and shouts through it.)* Lucy!

GENEVA: You might as well face it. She's gone.

ERIC: Wh – what do you mean?

GENEVA: Gone, vamoosed, ran away.

ERIC: But why? What did you say to her?

GENEVA: I told her the truth. I told her that you live with me. That you're my baby.

ERIC: Mother, why did you do that?

GENEVA: To protect you from that horrible, horrible girl. She asked me to give you this before she ran out. *(Holds up a folded piece of paper.)*

ERIC: *(Throws off the mitts and reaches for it.)* What is it? *(Opens and reads it.)* Eric, I didn't know how to say this to your face, or even to your feet, but I can't date a man who lives with his mother. Goodbye forever. Love, Lucy. PMS, I'm having a real bad day. *(To GENEVA.)* You just weren't happy 'til you got what you wanted.

GENEVA: You'll thank me some day.

ERIC crosses to the table and blows out the candles, then sits and slumps onto the sofa. GENEVA crosses and places her hands on his shoulders as JANET slips unnoticed through the front door and starts tiptoeing toward the hall door.

GENEVA: She didn't deserve you, son. No girl does.

JANET bumps the table, making a noise.

GENEVA: Hello, Janet.

JANET: Oh, hello. I didn't want to bother—

GENEVA: His date? Too late for that. She's gone.

JANET: Gone? But I thought you said six-thirty.

ERIC: *(To himself.)* I can't believe she left me.

GENEVA: Eric, Mother will go clean up the kitchen and then you and I will drive to a nice restaurant and have a quiet meal.

JANET: *(To GENEVA.)* What about our movie?

GENEVA: Another time, OK Janet? A son needs his mother at a time like this.

JANET: *(Holds up a bill.)* Oh, here's that five I owe you.

GENEVA: Just slip it in my purse, will you? *(Exits to the kitchen.)*

JANET: Poor Eric. What happened? *(Takes GENEVA'S purse off the coat rack as she talks.)*

ERIC: Mother ruined my only chance for happiness.

JANET: *(Hands on hips.)* What did she do?

ERIC: She told Lucy she was alive after I told her she was dead.

JANET: She didn't.

ERIC: She did.

JANET: So, what happened?

ERIC: Lucy left.

JANET: *(Looking around.)* She certainly didn't stay long.

ERIC: It doesn't take long to deliver a Dear John letter.

JANET: It makes no sense. Why would a girl get dressed up in a bright pink outfit and show up for a date just to deliver a note?

ERIC: Wait, how did you know she was wearing a pink outfit?

JANET: *(Confessing.)* Eric, I'm sorry. Your mother gave me permission to wait in the front yard until your date arrived. I didn't—

ERIC: (*Puts his hand up to stop her.*) That's OK. But, you said you were waiting in the front yard. When she came out of the house, did she seem upset? Was she crying?

JANET: She never came out the front door. She must have gone out the back.

ERIC: We're having the back porch rebuilt. She would have fallen twelve feet to the ground.

JANET: (*Opens GENEVA'S purse she's been holding to put in the money.*) That's odd... if she didn't go out the front door and she didn't go out the back door... (*Pulls out the yellow gloves.*) Then where in the world could she have— (*Looks at the gloves with wide eyes.*) Oh my.

ERIC: What's wrong?

JANET: Nothing, nothing at all. (*Stuffs the gloves back inside the purse.*)

ERIC: (*Stands and moves to the hall door.*) I'm not feeling well. I think I'll lie down. (*Exits.*)

JANET makes sure he's gone, then she pulls the gloves back out and looks them over, then stuffs them back in the purse.

JANET: (*Speaking to herself.*) What was the name of that movie? "I Murdered my Son's Girlfriend by Accident While Wearing Rubber Gloves and Now I'm in Jail and the Food is Awful." (*Pause.*) She didn't. She couldn't.

Doorbell.

JANET: (*Answering the door.*) Yes?

MRS. JEETER: Is my husband here?

JANET: Who's your husband?

MRS. JEETER: Peter Jeeter, the meter reader.

JANET: I don't think so.

MRS. JEETER: I found his shirt at home with lipstick stains on the collar and I am bound and determined to find out who he's been seeing behind my back, under my nose. (*Leans in.*) How's that for a sub-plot to this play you're in? (*Points to the audience.*)

JANET: (*Cutting her eyes to the audience.*) I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about.

MRS. JEETER: (*Clears throat and overacts.*) I need you to do something for me.

JANET: Like what?

MRS. JEETER: Pucker up.

JANET: I beg your—

MRS. JEETER: You heard me, pucker up, woman!

JANET shrugs and puckers her lips. MRS. JEETER holds the lipstick stained shirt up next to JANET'S lips to compare.

MRS. JEETER: Not a match. You're off the hook. Just wait 'til I find the guilty scoundrel. I vow to remain in this play until the lipstick mystery is solved. (*Winks at JANET.*)

JANET: Get out!

MRS. JEETER: (*Turning to leave.*) Peter Jeeter, I'm on to you and your wicked ways!

MRS. JEETER exits as JANET slams the door behind. GENEVA reenters, drying her hands on a hand towel.

GENEVA: Now, which restaurant would you like mother—? (*Sees JANET.*) Oh, Janet, you're still here. Where's Eric?

JANET: He told me to tell you he's not hungry. Geneva, I thought you said Eric's date left.

GENEVA: That's right.

JANET: I didn't see her leave out the front door.

GENEVA: (*Taking the candle off the table and setting it on a small table in the back of the room.*) Then she must have left out the back door.

JANET: She couldn't have. There isn't a back porch.

GENEVA: (*Taking the dishes from the table and stacking them.*) Oh, that's right. (*Thinks.*) Then she had to have left out the front door. After all, we only have the two doors, now don't we? (*Sets the dishes on the table and removes and folds the table cloth.*) I don't care how she left just as long as she left. She will never be able to take my son away from me.

JANET: Why is that?

GENEVA: *(Shrugs.)* Because she's gone forever. If you'll excuse me, I'll go check on my Eric.

GENEVA exits to the hall. JANET rushes to the phone and dials it.

JANET: Paul? It's me. What do you mean who? Your mother. I know you told me never to call you at the station, but this is important. Listen to me, I'd like to report.... a murder.

Thunder sounds and this startles JANET, causing her to plop down onto the sofa, sitting on the remote which causes a Barry Manilow song to blast as the lights fade to a Blackout.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT RISE: *ERIC is asleep on the sofa. There's an ice pack on his head and a Buzz Lightyear blanket wrapped around him. A thermometer sticks out of his mouth. GENEVA and JANET play cards at the table. JANET looks nervous.*

GENEVA: *(Looking rather bored, laying down her hand of cards.)*
Fourteen.

JANET: Eighteen. I win again.

GENEVA: I'm getting tired, isn't it past your bedtime?

JANET: *(Shuffling the deck of cards.)* The night is still young.

GENEVA: It's eleven-thirty.

JANET: *(Looking toward the front door.)* Time flies when you're waiting for... having fun. *(Fake smile.)*

GENEVA: I need to check on Eric. *(Stands and crosses to him.)*

JANET: You should let him rest.

GENEVA: *(Shakes him wildly.)* Eric, are you asleep, dear?

ERIC: *(Jolts awake.)* Huh? Mother, did you say something?

GENEVA: Poor thing, can't you rest?

ERIC: I was resting, Mother.

GENEVA: (*Feeling ERIC'S forehead.*) You still feel a little warm. (*Pulls the thermometer from ERIC'S mouth.*) Ninety-eight point zero. Poor thing. I need to help my poor, sick son to his bed.

The doorbell rings.

GENEVA: Now, who could that be at this hour?

JANET: Who knows. Could be anyone. I'll get it.

JANET runs to the door and flings it open. There stands PAUL and KELLY.

JANET: Well, look who's here. What a surprise.

PAUL: What do you mean surprise? You called me an hour—

JANET: (*Interrupts.*) And you brought your partner with you. Well, isn't this a nice surprise? Come in, come in!

GENEVA: Janet, why is your police officer son showing up at my house at 11:30 at night?

PAUL: (*To GENEVA.*) Mother called me and—

JANET: (*Interrupts.*) I told him that we were still up playing cards and he should stop by and say hello.

PAUL: Mother, what is this all a—

JANET elbows PAUL in the side.

PAUL: Ouch.

KELLY elbows him from his other side.

PAUL: Ouch! Oh, this is my partner, Kelly King.

KELLY: (*To ERIC, gruff.*) What you lookin' at? Huh? You never saw a woman cop before? Let me see your license?

ERIC: My license? For what?

KELLY: Don't make me rough you up.

ERIC: (*Pulling out his wallet.*) OK, OK. (*Shows KELLY his license.*)

KELLY: You're wearing glasses on your ID and you're not now. Looks like I'm going to have to give you a ticket.

ERIC: Officer, I have contacts.

KELLY: I don't care who you know, I'm still giving you a ticket.

Recorded laughter is heard.

ERIC: (*Looking around.*) Where did those laughs come from?
 (*Sarcastically, breaking the fourth wall.*) Sure wasn't from the audience. Are you guys awake out there? I'm going back to sleep.
 (*He does.*)

KELLY: It's my laugh box. When I say something funny, I press this button for instant laughs. Watch, I'll show you. Knock, knock. Who's there? Calder. Calder who? Calder police—I've been robbed. (*Presses a button on the box and laughter pours out.*)

PAUL: (*To KELLY.*) That's enough, we're just here for a friendly visit.

KELLY: (*Points at both ladies.*) I'll run you both in if you mess with me. Got it?

PAUL: It's OK, Kelly.

KELLY: I ain't no pushover.

PAUL: It's OK.

KELLY: Give me one minute and I'll ruff 'em up?

PAUL: (*Holding her back.*) No need for that.

JANET: Won't you sit down?

GENEVA: But—

JANET: (*To GENEVA.*) Don't apologize for being a lazy host, Geneva. I know it's just a matter of time before you were going to offer to make a pot of coffee.

GENEVA: Coffee? But I—

JANET: Make mine decaf...after all it *is* eleven-thirty, isn't it? (*Ushers GENEVA to the kitchen.*)

GENEVA: I really don't think—

JANET: That's a good host, I've always said that Geneva Candice Geraldine Ramona Jones Smith is the best host in our little neighborhood. (*She pushes her out to the kitchen then turns quickly to the room.*) I'd like to report a murder!

PAUL: I got that part on the phone.

KELLY: We got that part on the phone, woman. I've got a few questions for you.

PAUL: (*To KELLY.*) I got this.

KELLY: (*Salutes.*) Right.

PAUL: Who exactly was murdered?

JANET: A sweet, dumb blonde dressed like a cone of strawberry ice-cream. (*Crosses quickly and points to ERIC.*) And **his** mother did it.

PAUL: Calm down and tell us what you're talking about.

KELLY: Tell us what you're talking about and make it quick or I'll use my homemade taser on you. (*Holds it up. See Production Notes.*)

PAUL: Uh, Kelly. (*As to a child.*) You might want to put that away.

JANET: Well, Eric had a date tonight with this lovely, tall pink girl. Once she arrived, I waited in the bushes out front. (*Runs and points to the front door.*)

PAUL: Why were you spying in the bushes?

JANET: I wasn't spying yet. Just waiting. Once the date got under way, Geneva and I were to pretend to watch a movie in the den, but that was just an excuse for my being here. You see, Eric here hasn't had the best of luck with women—

ERIC: (*Offended.*) Excuse me? (*They look at him.*) What? So, I'm a light sleeper.

KELLY: (*Holding up her taser.*) Hey, don't interrupt the funny-looking lady. (*To JANET.*) Go ahead, funny-looking lady.

PAUL: Kelly!

KELLY: Right! (*Salutes.*)

JANET: You see, it all started with Geneva watching a Lifetime movie called *I Murdered my Son's Girlfriend While Wearing Rubber Gloves by Accident and Now I'm in Jail and the Food is Awful*. It's about a mother who puts on yellow rubber gloves and kills her son's true love by strangulation. While hiding out in the front yard, I witnessed *Eric's* date go inside the house, but never saw her come out. When I finally entered the house, *Eric's* date was gone, and she couldn't have left out the back way because there's no back porch and she would have fallen to her death. That's when I found these. (*Holds up the rubber gloves.*)

PAUL: (*Taking the gloves.*) What are these?

JANET: They're the same type of gloves the mother in the movie used to kill her son's girlfriend.

ERIC: (*Jumps up.*) Wait a minute, Janet. Do you really believe my mother would stoop to murdering a simple-minded girl just to get her out of the way?

KELLY: *(Pointing to the kitchen.)* That's all I need to hear. That old bitty is going to jail. *(Heads to the kitchen, but PAUL grabs her elbow.)*

PAUL: Calm down, Kelly.

KELLY: *(Puffs out her cheeks and exhales.)* Calming down, sir.

JANET: Don't you all see? Eric's date never came out of the house. I found rubber gloves in Geneva's purse. The woman didn't like the girl her son was dating... just like the movie.

PAUL: This all happened tonight?

JANET: That's right.

PAUL: If the girl was murdered, her body will still be here in the house.

ERIC: Hold your horses, all of you. You're talking about my mother, here. Besides, you can't search our house without a warrant.

KELLY: *(Goes nose-to-nose with ERIC, holding her taser up to his face.)* I have a question for you. Where were you between four and six?

ERIC: Kindergarten. *(Presses the button on the laugh box KELLY'S holding, and laughter erupts.)*

PAUL: Come on, Kelly. We'll obtain a search warrant and come back.

JANET: But what if she hides the body while you're out?

PAUL: Good point. Keep an eye on things, Mother.

JANET: Roger.

PAUL: Roger? Has anyone told you that you watch too much television?

KELLY: Where will we find a search warrant this time of night?

ERIC: Wait, I know. *(Runs to the door and opens it.)* Peter Jeeter!

PETER: *(Quickly appears at the door.)* You called?

ERIC: This all-night search warrant place you were talking about earlier.

PETER: Yeeees?

ERIC: Do you have the location?

PETER: Is the sky blue? Is the Pope Catholic? Does my breath smell of spoiled cabbage?

ERIC: Yes, yes and YES!

PETER: *(Holds up a business card.)* Here you go.

ERIC: Thanks.

PETER: You're welcome.

JANET: *(To PETER.)* By the way, your wife's looking for you.

PETER: That shirt is NOT mine! (*Runs out as JANET slams the door.*)

ERIC: (*Handing the card to PAUL.*) Here you go.

PAUL: (*Reading the card.*) Lurch Torrent's Search Warrants. Open all night. Located next to Sax Thurmis the Taxidermists? (*Looks around.*) OK, where's the director? These jokes are getting ridiculous.

ERIC: Just keep going, this act is almost over. (*Back into character, clearing his throat.*) You're wasting your time. And to prove it, I will search the house and show all of you there is **no** dead body. (*Exits to the hall.*)

PAUL: Mother, do not let Ms. Jones Smith out of your sight. And no one, I repeat **no** one leaves this house.

KELLY and PAUL exit quickly.

JANET: (*Shouting after them.*) Don't worry about a thing, son. I'm not going anywhere. (*To herself.*) Not until I get a full confession out of the murderer, anyway.

GENEVA enters with a tray of coffee cups and a pot.

GENEVA: Here we are, nice fresh pot of... where did everyone go?

JANET: (*Giving GENEVA a hard look.*) I knew that would be the first thing you'd say. (*Mocking.*) Where'd everyone go?

GENEVA: What are you talking about? Where **did** everyone go?

JANET: There you go again.

GENEVA: (*Setting down the tray.*) Why won't you answer my question? And why are you acting like that detective in *I Murdered My Son's Girlfriend While Wearing Rubber Gloves by Accident and Now I'm in Jail and the Food is Awful*?

JANET: Because I know something, even though you don't know that I know.

GENEVA: You mean I don't know?

JANET: That I know? No.

GENEVA: What do you know that I don't know you know?

JANET: Oh, you know.

GENEVA: No. I mean I don't know if I know, you know?

JANET: What do you not know?

GENEVA: What you know.

JANET: This is getting old. I'll just **tell** you what I know.

GENEVA: No!

JANET: Stop it.

GENEVA: Sorry.

JANET: I know your dirty little secret, so don't deny it.

GENEVA: (*Acting nervous.*) What... What secret?

JANET: The secret you're harboring in that evil little head of yours.

GENEVA: Wait a minute, you know about that? You... you know... what... I did?

JANET: That's right, Geneva, and I'm afraid I can't let you get away with it.

GENEVA: But, it was an accident. I didn't mean to do it.

JANET: An accident? Likely story.

GENEVA: You must believe me... it just happened... I was clumsy and... the next thing I knew...

JANET: The next thing you knew it was a done deed.

GENEVA: Yes, yes!

JANET: You're an animal! And to think I called you my friend (*Begins to put on the rubber gloves.*)

GENEVA: Why are you putting on my gloves? Are you going mad?

JANET: I can't let you get away with it, Geneva.

GENEVA: OK, OK, I told you I did it. The least you can do is forgive me.

JANET: I can't forgive you. Not for this. (*Moves toward her.*) Do you remember the sequel to your favorite movie? It's called *I Killed the Neighbor Who Killed Her Son's Girlfriend by Accident and Now We're Both in Jail and the Food's Not Half Bad*.

GENEVA: No, you don't mean it. I'm innocent.

JANET: Too late, for you have already confessed. I'm coming for you, Rose.

GENEVA: My name's Geneva.

JANET: Sorry, that was another play I was in. I'm coming for you, Geneva. I'm going to make you pay for what you've done.

GENEVA screams and throws up her hands and exits to the den as JANET follows her out, gloves on, hands up in the air as though she plans to choke GENEVA. There's an offstage scream. After a few seconds, JANET returns cool and collected, slight smile, pulling off the gloves, just as GENEVA did before. When she gets to the center of the room, ERIC runs in.

ERIC: What was that?

JANET: *(Still smiling.)* What was what, dear?

ERIC: I heard a scream.

JANET: I thought I saw a rat. Did you find dear, dead Lucy?

ERIC: No. And I called for her all through the house.

JANET: Lucy can't answer you because your mother murdered her.

ERIC: Stop saying that. My mother might be controlling, conniving, selfish and a terrible dresser, but she's no murderer! *(There's a bang at the door. ERIC runs to the door.)* Lucy? *(He opens the door.)*

MRS. JEETER: *(Holding up the shirt with the lipstick stain.)* Pucker! *(ERIC does. She lifts the shirt up next to his face.)* You're clear.

ERIC: Thank you.

MRS. JEETER: You're welcome. *(Exits.)*

JANET: *(To ERIC.)* Why don't we let the professionals decide if your mother is a murderer or not.

Doorbell rings.

ERIC: Come in!

PAUL and KELLY enter. PAUL holds up a piece of paper.

PAUL: We have a search warrant.

JANET: It's about time. Search the house top to bottom, but don't pay attention to that wheelbarrow in the den covered with a blanket. That's mine.

PAUL: *(To KELLY.)* You start in the kitchen, I'll go to the back of the house.

KELLY: Right, boss. Here, use this. *(Hands him what looks like a homemade divining rod.)*

PAUL: What's this?

KELLY: A divining rod.

PAUL: Don't you use that to search for water?

KELLY: Not these. These are especially made to search for murdered bodies. I got them on Amazon.

PAUL: I am a p-r-o-fessional and won't resort to hokey magic.

KELLY: What do **you** use?

PAUL: Harry Potter wand.

PAUL pulls it quickly from his shirt pocket. KELLY pushes the button and we hear laughter as ERIC takes a bow.

ERIC: Stop it! I don't like what's going on here tonight. But whatever you've come to do, do it and get it over with.

KELLY'S divining rod wiggles about in her hands then points to the kitchen. With her arms straight out, KELLY seems to be led through the kitchen doors by the divining rod.

KELLY: Hey, boss – I think I got something. *(Runs through the kitchen doors.)*

PAUL: *(To audience, rolling his eyes, sarcastically.)* Women. *(To a lady in the front row.)* Sorry, ma'am, not you. Just women in general. *(To another.)* Oh, and not you either, ma'am. Or... any other woman in the audience. *(Pulls at his collar and grins awkwardly.)*

ERIC: *(To JANET.)* Where's Mother?

JANET: Murdering an innocent young dumb blonde is a terrible thing and must be dealt with harshly. You agree with that, don't you, Eric?

ERIC: *(At wit's end.)* Read my lips! My mother did **not** murder anyone!

JANET: She confessed to me, Eric. Right here in this very room, your mother confessed that she murdered your date after getting the idea from a Hallmark movie.

ERIC: You mean Lifetime.

JANET: There's **no** difference!

The doorbell rings.

ERIC: Thank goodness. Mother must have locked herself out by mistake again. (*ERIC opens the door and there stands LUCY.*)
Lucy?

LUCY: Hello, Eric, I brought these for you. (*Holds out the small bouquet of flowers.*)

JANET: (*Shocked, wide-eyed, can hardly speak.*) Lucy?

ERIC: Well, Janet, what do you have to say for yourself now?

JANET is frozen and can't speak. KELLY bursts through the kitchen door, arms stretched out as the divining rod leads her, running across the room straight to LUCY, divining rod pointing only an inch from LUCY'S nose.

KELLY: Found her!

"Looks Like We Made It" by Barry Manilow blares as KELLY smiles, LUCY looks dumbfounded, ERIC swallows a lump, and JANET looks out to the audience, wide-eyed, frozen as the lights fade to a slow Blackout.

INTERMISSION

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By Eddie McPherson

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