

THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE MANX

By Marty Matthews

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SYNOPSIS: In a city of never-ending crime, the beautiful Lola Appletree enters the office of private eye Sam Steel, hoping he can find her missing boyfriend. Sam and his bumbling partner, Max Mooney, eagerly jump on the case but everything seems to lead back to a mysterious Manx. With a host of suspects such as mobster Big Tony Gallo, Peg the Pirate, Irish Mike, and the kind-hearted Gertie, our private eyes have a tall order on their hands. With nods to traditional film noir style in both dialogue and artistic design, this play is sure to please every audience.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 females, 10 males, 1 either)

SAM STEEL (m)	Private Eye. (130 lines)
LUCY (f)	Sam's secretary. (10 lines)
LOLA APPLETREE (f)	Femme Fatale. (51 lines)
MAX MOONEY (m)	Sam's partner. (80 lines)
CHUCK (m)	Police detective. (18 lines)
OFFICER VALENTINE (m)	Police officer. (18 lines)
SULLY (m)	Coroner. (8 lines)
GERTIE (f)	A person experiencing homelessness. (18 lines)
HOWARD APPLETREE III (m)	Lola's father. (10 lines)
DOCTOR (m/f)	Howard Appletree's personal physician. (18 lines)
PEG THE PIRATE (f)	Murder suspect. (28 lines)
IRISH MIKE (m)	Murder suspect. (31 lines)
BIG TONY (m)	Mafia leader. (38 lines)
PAULIE (m)	Big Tony's nephew. Waiter at the Cat's Paw Restaurant. (12 lines)
TINA TUTTLE (f)	Skateboarding witness. (15 lines)
TAMMY TUTTLE (f)	Skateboarding witness. (12 lines)
MYRA MERTON (f)	Head of Triple M. Appraisals. (20 lines)

MILLY MARLIN (f)Appraiser for Triple M.
Appraisals. (9 lines)
MARVIN MAITLIN (m).....Auctioneer for Triple M.
Appraisals. (6 lines)

DURATION: 70 minutes.

TIME: Present day.

SETTING: Crime infested city.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Sam Steel's Office
SCENE 2: Alley behind The Cat's Paw Restaurant
SCENE 3: The Cat's Paw Restaurant
SCENE 4: Vanderkilt's Antiques and Oddities Store

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: Vanderkilt's Antiques and Oddities Store
SCENE 2: Sam Steel's Office
SCENE 3: The Cat's Paw Restaurant
SCENE 4: Sam Steel's Office

SET

To be true to the genre of film noir, the play is staged entirely in black and white. If possible, installing a working ceiling fan over the stage is a nice touch. The internet is a valuable resource for information about film noir.

There are four basic sets. These can be easily achieved by creating two reversible backdrops and placing different props, signs, and pictures on stage. If your budget is limited (or non-existent), scavenge large pieces of cardboard from furniture stores or other sources. Paint a picture on each side of the cardboard, which can easily be switched between scenes by the stagehands. Try to avoid using paper backdrops, as they are difficult to manage on stage and are easily damaged due to their lack of rigidity.

SET 1 – Sam Steel’s Office

Backdrop: office wall with frosted glass door

On stage: office desk, two chairs, intercom on desk

SET 2 – Alley behind The Cat’s Paw Restaurant

Backdrop: alley wall

On stage: body on a gurney, dumpster, chalk outline on wall

SET 3 – The Cat’s Paw Restaurant

Backdrop: interior restaurant wall

On stage: three tables with chairs

SET 4 – Vanderkilt’s Antiques and Oddities Store

Backdrop: interior store wall

On stage: sales counter, shelves of goods

SOUND EFFECTS

- gunshots
- police sirens
- Max’s music
- Sam’s music

SAM’S MUSIC NOTE: The lead character, Sam Steel, has many moments where he/she steps away from the other characters in the scene to deliver a monologue to the audience. During these moments “Sam’s Music” plays and he/she is spotlighted. Choose a slow jazz piece for Sam’s music as would be typical of the genre. Again, the internet has many examples of film noir music.

SCENE CHANGE NOTE: Feel free to play music between scenes to keep the audience engaged. Make sure set changes are completed as quickly as possible to keep the flow of the production going.

COSTUMES

All costumes are entirely in black and white, with the two exceptions. All additional costume specifics listed in script are below:

LOLA APPLETREE – Bright red dress.

MAX MOONEY – coat.

GERTIE – tattered clothes, fingerless gloves, old hat, yellow dress (final scene)

PEG THE PIRATE – peg leg, belt with sword

PAULIE – waiter attire

MYRA MERTON – watch

PROPS

- mug (SAM)
- notepad and pen (MAX, VALENTINE)
- picture in frame (MAX)
- shopping cart (filled with various items) (GERTIE)
- statue of a cat (GERTIE)
- oxygen mask & tank (HOWARD)
- tray of dishes and cutlery (PAULIE)
- jar of Q-Tips
- jar of toenails
- flashlight (LOLA)
- box (containing notebook and photos)
- folding table
- three folding chairs
- desk lamp
- two skateboards (TINA, TAMMY)
- coffee pot
- magnifying glass (MILLY)
- tray of drinks (PAULIE)
- napkins
- paper and pens (MYRA)
- tray of drinks and plates (PAULIE)

DEDICATION

Dedicated to the staff and students of Percy Centennial Public School in Warkworth, Ontario. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm our productions over the years.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT START: *Sam Steel's Office. SAM is sitting behind his desk. Everything on the set is in black and white, including all clothing. A ceiling fan slowly turns. SAM'S thoughts are heard on the speakers as he sits. Main lights dim. Spotlight on SAM. SFX: SAM'S music plays.*

SAM: *(Recording of SAM'S voice.)* It was a lousy morning, in a lousy city, in a lousy office. *(Looks around, surprised at the voice he hears. He takes a drink from a mug.)* And this coffee is *tres* lousy, as the French say. It's always hot in the city. Luckily I have my trusty ceiling fan. Things have been slow—real slow. No work for two weeks now. Yeah, 57 days of nothing. Somehow it feels longer than two weeks. It has a way of gettin' on a guy's nerves. Apparently I'm even starting to hear voices. *(Looks around again.)* My name is Sam, Sam Steel. I'm a gumshoe, a private investigator, a private eye. If you have a problem I can solve it. No questions asked. That's how this city works. Asking the wrong questions could get a guy killed—or worse.

Main lights up. Spotlight off. Music ends. Sam's secretary, LUCY, enters.

LUCY: Sam, there's a woman here to see you.

SAM: Is it a new case Lucy?

LUCY: I think so. She seems distraught.

SAM steps to the front of the stage and speaks to the audience.

SAM: I got my education on the streets, so I'm no wordsmith. I have no idea what distraught means, but I figure the only way to find out is to meet this dame. *(Turns to LUCY.)* Send her in, sweetness.

LUCY: OK Sam.

LUCY exits, then returns with LOLA APPLETREE. LOLA is wearing a bright red dress, the only color in the scene. She rushes to SAM, throwing her arms around him. LUCY exits.

LOLA: Oh Mr. Steel! Please help me!

After a few seconds SAM breaks the embrace and strides to the front of the stage to speak to the audience. LOLA falls heavily to the floor.

SAM: She swept into the room like a thousand roses on a warm summer day. A dazzling light on the darkest of nights. If this is what distraught is, I'm all for it. Of course I will help her. It's what I do.

SAM turns back to LOLA who is getting up from the floor.

SAM: Of course I will help you Miss...

LOLA: Appletree. Lola Appletree. Please call me Lola.

SAM: OK Lola. Before you start, I'll get my partner Max Mooney in here. He should hear your story, too. *(Presses a button on the intercom on his desk.)* Lucy? Send Max in here will you?

Moments later MAX MOONEY enters the office. His eyes light up when he sees LOLA. SFX: music begins to play and MAX starts dancing around LOLA in an attempt to catch her attention. Moments later the music ends as MAX continues to eye LOLA.

SAM: We have a new client, Max. This is Lola Appletree.

MAX: She certainly is.

MAX leans on the desk in an attempt to look cool. His hand soon slips off the edge and he tumbles awkwardly to the floor.

SAM: Please ignore my partner, Miss Appletree. Now what brings you to us today?

LOLA: *(Overcome with emotion, begins to cry and, at first, has difficulty speaking.)* This is very hard for me you understand. *(Pauses to compose herself.)* It's my boyfriend. He's been missing for three days. I'm afraid... *(Pauses.)* I'm afraid something has happened to him.

SAM: This city has a way of makin' things happen to rubes who find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

MAX: Ain't that the truth. What's your boyfriend's name Lola?

MAX begins taking notes as LOLA speaks.

LOLA: Tom Vanderkilt.

MAX: Does Vanderkilt have any enemies? Anyone you feel might be connected to his disappearance?

LOLA: Whatever do you mean?

SAM: Is there anyone who would want to fit Tom with a pair of cement overshoes and introduce him to the fishes in the East River?

LOLA: Of course not! Tom is a peaceful man. He deals with antiques.

SAM: I see. And where might we find this... Aunt Tikwitty is it? I'd like to speak to her.

LOLA: *(Shakes her head in amazement.)* Antiquity is not a person. It means Tom buys and sells antiques for a living.

SAM and MAX exchange glances of surprise.

MAX: Is that really something people do?

LOLA: Of course.

MAX: Were these antiques valuable?

LOLA suddenly becomes nervous.

LOLA: Sometimes, I guess.

SAM: What was Vanderkilt's last known whereabouts, Lola?

LOLA: He was meeting a client at *The Cat's Paw*. I never saw him after that.

MAX and SAM: *(Together.)* The Cat's Paw?!

LOLA: Yes, that's right.

MAX: The Cat's Paw is no tearoom for grannies, Miss Appletree. It's owned by Big Tony Gallo, one of the city's most dangerous men.

SAM: A man known to have crafted a few pairs of cement shoes in his time. I think we know where to start our investigation, Max.

LOLA: But Tom is a nice man.

SAM: Funny thing about nice men in this city... they have a way of attractin' bad people. Like wolves to a three-legged deer. Does your boyfriend have all his legs, Lola?

LOLA: Yes, he does.

SAM: Then maybe he has a chance. Then again, maybe he doesn't. I think we have all we need to know for now, Miss Appletree. We'll be in touch when we have some information for you.

LOLA: *(Taking SAM'S hand.)* Thank you. Please find him, Sam. I don't know where else to turn.

SAM: Of course we will. Max will show you to the door.

MAX steps forward, tripping over the chair and tumbling to the floor. He pops quickly to his feet, brushes himself off, and leads LOLA offstage. SAM is left alone on stage. He steps to the front and speaks. Main lights dim. Spotlight on SAM. SXF: SAM'S music plays.

SAM: Where are you Tom Vanderkilt? What business did you have at The Cat's Paw? I've got a bad feeling in my stomach about this. Sure, it might be the triple bean burrito I had for breakfast, but I don't think so. I think there is more to this puzzle than meets the eye. I just have to find the right pieces.

SAM slowly exits. Spotlight off. Music ends.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

AT START: *Alley behind The Cat's Paw Restaurant. A body lies on a gurney, a chalk outline on the wall. OFFICER VALENTINE is taking pictures of the crime scene, while the coroner, SULLY, inspects the body. SAM and MAX approach the detective in charge of the scene, CHUCK.*

SAM: Whatcha got here, Chuck?

CHUCK: Looks like a homicide. Found John Doe here stuck to that wall with a spear through his chest. Can't see how it could be an accident.

SAM: A spear? Ouch. Tough way to die.

CHUCK: Can't think of too many good ways to die. What brings you guys down here?

SAM: Workin' a missing persons case.

CHUCK: You think this might be your guy?

SAM: The thought had crossed my mind, Chuck. Mind if we take a look?

CHUCK: Be my guest. I'm sure he won't mind.

SAM: Max, check this stiff's mug with the picture the dame gave you. See if we have a match.

MAX: Sure thing, Sam.

MAX pulls a picture (still in a frame) from the pocket of his coat. As he steps toward the body on the gurney he stumbles, falling on the dead body. In a panic, he tumbles to the ground, along with the body and the gurney. SAM and CHUCK continue to talk at the front of the stage, oblivious to what is happening behind them. VALENTINE and SULLY come to MAX'S aid, struggling to get the body back on the gurney. Just as they get it in place CHUCK and SAM turn around. MAX acts casual, smiling at them with one elbow resting on the gurney.

CHUCK: (*Gesturing toward MAX'S arm.*) I'll ask you to be careful there, Max. I'm extending you and Sam a professional courtesy by letting you examine the body. It is a crime scene after all.

MAX lifts his elbow from the gurney.

MAX: Don't worry, Chuck. Careful is my middle name.

SAM: Funny. I thought your middle name was Muriel.

CHUCK and VALENTINE snicker at the mention of MAX'S middle name.

MAX: How many times have we had this conversation? There are certain things that we don't speak of. One of those things being my middle name. The other, that unfortunate incident in Mexico last year involving some tainted water, a sombrero, and a clogged toilet.

CHUCK and VALENTINE chuckle once again.

SAM: Yes, well I don't recall that conversation. So is the stiff Tom Vanderkilt?

MAX: Yeah. It's definitely Vanderkilt.

SAM: Are you sure?

MAX: Trust me. I got a real close look at him.

SAM: So now the question is, who did this to him?

CHUCK: You're welcome to talk to Officer Valentine. She was second to me on the scene and took down all the details.

SAM: Thanks, Chuck. We'll do that.

CHUCK speaks briefly to VALENTINE, then exits. VALENTINE crosses to SAM and MAX.

SAM: What can you tell us about this mess, Valentine?

VALENTINE: Not much I'm afraid. Got an anonymous tip that there was a body in the alley beside The Cat's Paw. When I got here I found him (*Gestures toward the body.*) skewered like a pig on a spit. Had a spear shoved through his chest so hard he was stuck to the wall.

SAM: Tell me about the spear. Not the usual way of takin' care of a guy.

VALENTINE: True. First time I've seen that. I don't know much about spears, but it looked old—like an antique.

SAM and MAX exchange glances.

VALENTINE: Sully is our coroner at the scene. What do you know, Sully?

SULLY: He's got some bumps and bruises on him. Looks like he was roughed up a little.

SAM: Sounds like some rube was lookin' for information before he sent him over.

SULLY: Could be. Cause of death was definitely the spear. I'd say he's been dead a few hours.

MAX: How can you be sure?

SULLY: His watch was broken at 9:05.

VALENTINE: Sully is the best there is. Thanks, Sully.

SULLY: Sure, sure.

SULLY exits.

MAX: Anything else interesting or unusual?

VALENTINE: His pockets were all turned out.

MAX: He was mugged, then.

VALENTINE: No, I didn't say that. All his jewelry was still on and I found a hundred in bills on the ground beside the body.

SAM: Somebody was lookin' for something specific. The question is—did they find what they was lookin' for?

MAX: An eye witness would be handy.

VALENTINE: Well, we have one of those—sort of.

MAX: Sort of?

VALENTINE: Gertie over there says she saw the whole thing.

VALENTINE points toward the side stage where GERTIE enters pushing a shopping cart filled with various items. She is wearing tattered clothes, fingerless gloves, and an old hat.

VALENTINE: The problem is, it's hard to know what's true and what isn't. Gertie's not all there. Got a few screws loose. Elevator doesn't reach the top floor. She's a few toppings short of a pizza pie.

SAM: OK, we get the picture. Mind if we talk to her?

VALENTINE: Be my guest. The only thing you'll get from her is a headache.

VALENTINE exits. SAM and MAX approach GERTIE.

SAM: Hello, Gertie. I'm Sam. Sam Steel. This is my partner Max Mooney. We'd like to ask you a few questions about what happened in the alley earlier tonight.

GERTIE is looking around like she didn't hear a word SAM said. She acts like she might be hearing voices.

GERTIE: Looks like rain don't you think?

SAM: *(Looks skyward briefly.)* Yes, maybe. About what happened, we...

GERTIE: Rain'll make yer garden grow.

Rain'll make the river flow.

Rain'll make yer spirits low.

That's what good old Gertie knows.

MAX: OK then. Let me give it a try, Sam. (*Speaking extremely slowly.*)

Gertie, did you see anyone in the alley tonight?

GERTIE: Of course Gertie did. Lots of people. Big party behind The

Cat's Paw! (*Laughs hysterically.*) Peggy the Pirate and the

Leprechaun was there! Darth Vader and the Princess too! Big party!

(*Laughs again.*) Everyone looking for the kitty. (*Begins walking*

around the alley calling for a kitty.) Here kitty, kitty, kitty. Here kitty,

kitty, kitty.

MAX: The Leprechaun? The dame's obviously delusional.

As GERTIE continues to call for the kitty in the background, SAM steps to the front of the stage to speak to the audience. Main lights dim. Spotlight on SAM. SFX: SAM'S music plays.

SAM: It's a tough gig to make it in this city. The weak end up like

Gertie—or worse. Only the strong survive here. There's a word for

that I suppose, but my name ain't Webster or Oxford. I'm just a lowly

P.I. scratching for a clue to solve this mystery. Funny thing about

life, one bad break and any of us could end up like Gertie, scratching

through alleys for survival, our existence reduced to what can be

crammed into a shopping cart. It ain't fair, it's just the way it is.

SAM walks back to MAX. Main lights up. Spotlight off. Music ends.

SAM: Let's go, Max. We're done here. It's time to pay a visit to Big

Tony.

SAM and MAX begin to leave, but GERTIE races up to them, yelling a warning.

GERTIE: (*Yelling.*) Beware the Manx, detectives!! Beware the Manx!!
If you follow her trail it will only lead to death!
The Manx has a curse upon its paw.
Crimson blood drips from its claw.
A body fell under the shadow of the law.
That's what good old Gertie saw.

MAX: Valentine was right. She does give you a headache. Come on Sam, let's get out of here.

MAX exits. SAM waits a moment, looking at GERTIE like he is considering what her rhyme means, then exits. When they are gone, GERTIE reaches into her cart and pulls out the statue of a cat.

GERTIE: (*Petting the cat.*) There you are, kitty. The bad men are gone. Gertie will look after you.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

AT START: *The Cat's Paw Restuarant. There are three tables. BIG TONY sits at the one in the middle. To his left we see a table with IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE. To TONY'S right we see LOLA, her father HOWARD APPLETREE III, and his DOCTOR. PAULIE is quietly serving tables throughout the scene. Spotlight on LOLA'S table.*

HOWARD: (*Breathing heavily through an oxygen mask between words.*) How could you let this happen, Lola? We need the Manx. In the wrong hands it could ruin our family.

LOLA: I'm sorry, father. How could I have known that Tom would betray us?

HOWARD: Indeed. He did display a surprising amount of courage for a geeky antique dealer.

LOLA: Although in the end...

HOWARD: He was no match for someone's spear. (*Attempts an evil laugh, but lapses into a coughing fit.*)

DOCTOR: Easy now, Mr. Appletree. We've talked about this before. Evil laughter is a young man's game. You don't have the lung capacity for it anymore.

As DOCTOR tends to HOWARD, the spotlight switches to the table with IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE.

PEG THE PIRATE: I can't believe we let the treasure slip through our hands like that.

IRISH MIKE: The luck of the Irish wasn't with us. That's for sure.

PEG THE PIRATE: Be that as it may Irish Mike, we need to find that cat. It be worth millions to us if we do.

IRISH MIKE: I know it, Peg. But where did Vanderkilt put the bloody thing? He didn't have it on him when he was killed. As my da used to say—"there's somethin' dodgey goin' on here, Mikey. Best keep your noggin' about ya."

PEG THE PIRATE: Maybe the scurvy dog buried the treasure somewhere. If he did, then I'll bet you a hundred doubloons that he left a map to find it. All we need to do is find the map, follow the directions to where X marks the spot, and dig up the treasure. Easy as walkin' the plank, my Irish mate.

IRISH MIKE: I'm doubtin' that's the way it went down. And what in the name of Liam Neeson is a doubloon anyway?

PEG THE PIRATE: *(Without her pirate accent.)* The doubloon was a two-escudo or 32 reales gold coin weighing 6.77 grams. Doubloons were minted in Spain, Mexico, Peru, and Nueva Grenada. The term was first used...

IRISH MIKE: All right, all right. I'm sorry I asked. We'll start lookin' for the Manx as soon as I get some chips and a bevvie. I'm so hungry I'm as weak as a salmon in a sandpit. Now where's that plonker of a waiter?

As IRISH MIKE looks around for the waiter, the spotlight shifts to the center table where BIG TONY sits. MAX and SAM enter.

SAM: Let me do the talking Max. In a city full of bad people, Big Tony is the leader of the band.

MAX: You got it, Sam. You won't even know I'm here.

MAX promptly stumbles and crashes into the waiter, PAULIE, who is carrying a tray of dishes. PAULIE goes down in a shower of plates and cutlery.

SAM: So much for the quiet approach.

SAM and MAX approach BIG TONY'S table.

BIG TONY: Well look what the cat dragged in! Sam Steel! I see you still know how to make a grand entrance.

MAX and SAM sit down.

BIG TONY: *(Calls out.)* Paulie! Get that mess cleaned up and bring my friends some drinks.

PAULIE: Right away, Uncle Tony.

SAM: We're sorry about that, Big Tony.

BIG TONY: Fuhgettaboutit. My nephew needs to be more careful. He's interested in being part of the family business you know. I believe in workin' your way up from the bottom. That's the way I did it. Builds character. Don't you agree, Mooney?

BIG TONY gives MAX a slap on the shoulder, knocking him from his chair to the floor. BIG TONY looks at PAULIE, snaps his fingers, and points to MAX. PAULIE rushes over and helps MAX back into his chair.

BIG TONY: You gotta hit the gym more often, Mooney. You're as weak as a schoolgirl.

MAX: I'll think about it.

BIG TONY: I'll think about it! *(Laughs.)* This guy kills me, Sam.

BIG TONY slaps MAX on the shoulder, again. He falls to the floor. PAULIE helps him up.

SAM: He is a bit of a hazard. We're more concerned with who killed Tom Vanderkilt last night.

BIG TONY: Yeah, I heard about that. Such a tragedy when a young life ends. Now you're not suggestin' that I had anything to do with that are you, Sam? Because if you are insinuatin' something of that nature, our friendly conversation may turn unfriendly. We don't want that now do we?

SAM: I'm not suggesting anything. Funny thing though about people who hang out with you Big Tony. They often end up swimming with the fishes while strapped to a pair of cement overshoes. Sure, they could have stepped in wet concrete just before taking a relaxing dip in the harbor, but somehow I find that unlikely.

BIG TONY: *(Laughs softly.)* Heh, heh. I tell you what, Sam. If those stories are true, and I'm not saying they are, to end up like that a guy would really have to do somethin' to get on my bad side, and I can't recall Tom Vanderkilt ever crossin' Big Tony.

SAM: OK. Maybe you offed him and maybe you didn't. We do have it on good authority that Vanderkilt had dinner here last night.

BIG TONY: *(Pauses for a moment.)* That may be true. It gets pretty busy in here in the evening. It's possible he was here. *(Turns to PAULIE.)* Paulie, get over here!

PAULIE: What's up, Uncle Tony?

BIG TONY: You know that guy who was killed in the alley last night?

PAULIE: Yeah, I saw it on the TV this morning.

BIG TONY: Of course you did. Was he in here last night for dinner?

PAULIE: *(Stops to think a minute.)* I mighta saw a guy in here who mighta been him. Havin' dinner wit' someone else he was. But I couldn't tell who that someone mighta been either.

SAM: How convenient.

BIG TONY: Like I said, it gets busy in here in the evenings. Paulie can't be expected to remember every face.

SAM: Of course not.

BIG TONY: Besides, many of our patrons prefer to eat in anonymity. And we here at The Cat's Paw respect their right to privacy.

SAM: I see. Thanks for your help, Big Tony.

SAM and MAX begin to stand, but BIG TONY puts a hand on each of their shoulders and pushes them back down.

BIG TONY: I tell you what though boys. All a reasonably bright gumshoe would have to do is look around. You never know who you will see at The Cat's Paw.

BIG TONY and PAULIE exit. Spotlight off. Main lights up.

IRISH MIKE: C'mon Peg. If some muppet gets to that statue before us there'll be wigs on the green, I tell you.

PEG THE PIRATE: Arggh. I'm with you matey. Let's run old Jolly Roger up the flagpole and set sail.

PEG THE PIRATE and IRISH MIKE exit. MAX and SAM look at each other in wonderment.

MAX: Am I losing it or was that a leprechaun and a pirate?

SAM: Just like Gertie said.

LOLA, HOWARD, and DOCTOR rise to leave. HOWARD is breathing heavily—like Darth Vader.

LOLA: Let's go, father. We need to get you home to bed.

DOCTOR: That's right, Mr. Appletree. You know how too much excitement affects your breathing. Keep inhaling that oxygen now.

Again, MAX and SAM exchange a glance.

MAX: Darth Vader perhaps?

SAM stands and speaks to the audience. Main lights dim. Spotlight on SAM. SFX: SAM'S music plays.

SAM: It seems crazy old Gertie isn't so crazy after all. Sure, she speaks in rhyme, lives on the streets, and carries everything she owns in a shopping cart, but still.... (*Thinking. Beat.*) It seems some more ingredients just fell into our pot, and I don't like the way this tastes.

MAX and SAM exit. Spotlight off. Music ends.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

AT START: *Vanderkilt's Antiques and Oddities. IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE have just broken into the store.*

PEG THE PIRATE: Do you think the scurvy dog hid the Manx in his own store, Irish Mike?

IRISH MIKE: I don't know Peg, but if we don't find the Manx, then we may at least find a clue as to where it is. Stop your blatherin' and get searchin'. Quiet as a mouse now.

PEG THE PIRATE and IRISH MIKE begin searching the store for clues to the missing Manx. They tiptoe into the store, but PEG THE PIRATE'S peg leg is very loud as she walks.

IRISH MIKE: You call that quiet?

PEG THE PIRATE: Excuse me, Captain Perfect, but I can't very well help it. It was no picnic getting my foot bit off by a crocodile, you know. Left me with this blasted peg leg. Mighty tough to tiptoe now.

IRISH MIKE: That's not what happened to your foot you nutter. That was Captain Hook's hand in *Peter Pan*.

PEG THE PIRATE: I'm the nutty one? That's the worst Irish accent I've ever heard. You're from Dublin, Alberta you scalliwag!

IRISH MIKE: Don't go scraggin' on Mother Dub now, or we'll have a row about it!

PEG THE PIRATE: All right, all right. Everybody calm down. Let's just look for the statue.

IRISH MIKE: You're right, Peg. We need to stay focused.

PEG THE PIRATE and IRISH MIKE continue their search.

PEG THE PIRATE: Do you think any of this other stuff is valuable?

IRISH MIKE: I don't know. Most of it looks as useless as a chocolate teapot.

PEG THE PIRATE: Arggh. Here's something interesting, Irish Mike.

PEG THE PIRATE holds up a large jar.

IRISH MIKE: What is it Peg?

PEG THE PIRATE: The card says it's a collection of Donald Sutherland's used Q-tips.

IRISH MIKE: Oh dry up you sprog! Why would anyone collect those? It's a crock it is!

PEG THE PIRATE: See for yourself.

IRISH MIKE walks over to check out the contents of the jar.

IRISH MIKE: That's the most disgusting thing I've ever seen. The plonker had a lot of colds by the look of it.

As IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE inspect the Q-tips, LOLA, HOWARD, and DOCTOR enter through the auditorium aisle. LOLA is carrying a flashlight.

PEG THE PIRATE: Did you see that? Someone's coming!

IRISH MIKE: Keep your alans on Peg. No need to panic. Get down on your hunkers and hide. Be dogwide though boyo! If we're snared rapid, hit your pedals, and be away with ye!

PEG THE PIRATE steps toward the audience.

PEG THE PIRATE: *(To audience.)* I don't speak Irish very well, but I did understand the hide part.

IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE hide. LOLA, HOWARD, and DOCTOR climb the steps to the stage. HOWARD is really laboring.

DOCTOR: As your personal physician, Mr. Appletree, I'd like to go on record as saying that this is a bad idea. You are still recovering from a breathing fit. The last thing you need to be doing is skulking around in a murder victim's antique shop.

LOLA: I have to agree father. You really should be at home in bed.

HOWARD: Nonsense. I'm as fit as a fiddle. Why I don't feel a day over thirty. *(Breaks into a coughing fit.)* I'll prove it. You want to race? First one to the counter. Go!

LOLA and DOCTOR stroll leisurely to the counter. HOWARD takes two faltering steps, collapses to his knees, and crawls the rest of the way. He immediately grabs the oxygen mask from DOCTOR.

LOLA: Thirty huh?

HOWARD: *(Breathing heavily.)* You... cheated. You... had... a... head... start.

LOLA: Sure we did. Why don't you stay here and rest while the doctor and I search the place.

HOWARD nods and waves them off as he continues to breathe through the oxygen mask. LOLA and DOCTOR begin searching the store, while PEG THE PIRATE and IRISH MIKE stay hidden. After a few moments searching, DOCTOR holds up a large jar.

DOCTOR: Unless I'm mistaken, this seems to be a jar of toenails.

LOLA: That must fall under the oddities section of Vanderkilt's Antiques and Oddities. Tom was a strange man.

LOLA and DOCTOR continue their search. Meanwhile, HOWARD has found a box under the counter and is examining its contents. DOCTOR notices HOWARD'S interest in the box.

DOCTOR: Are you OK, Mr. Appletree?

LOLA: Did you find something, Father?

HOWARD: As a matter of fact, I have found something. Something very interesting.

DOCTOR: Can I take a look?

HOWARD: No, I don't think so, Doctor. You see, this box contains a notebook with the details of a certain someone's whereabouts over the last two months. It also contains photos of that certain someone with an accomplice.

LOLA: What does this mean, Father?

HOWARD: I believe I have discovered who killed Tom Vanderkilt.

DOCTOR: Whoever killed Tom must have the Manx. Tell us. Who is it? Who is the killer?

HOWARD: You won't believe it when I tell you. I can hardly believe it myself. It's...

At this point PEG THE PIRATE and IRISH MIKE spring from their hiding places.

PEG THE PIRATE: Hand over that treasure chest old-timer, or you'll answer to my cutlass! *(Draws a sword from her belt.)*

IRISH MIKE: Do it old man, before someone gets hurt!

HOWARD: Who in blue blazes are you clowns? Someone must have left the front door of the mental institution open tonight.

IRISH MIKE: Ooooh! Listen to the funny man, Peg. Just hand over the box ye eejit.

LOLA: Don't do it, Father! We'll handle them.

PEG THE PIRATE: Arrgh! I don't think so me matey. Irish Mike and I will make short work of you lubbers!

DOCTOR: Bring it on wackos!

A fight breaks out. IRISH MIKE and DOCTOR square off, while LOLA and PEG THE PIRATE battle. It isn't much of a fight. The moves include slap fighting, pulling ears and noses, noogies, and toe pulling. HOWARD remains uninvolved and eventually tries to sneak off with the box. At this point the combatants back away from each other, exposing HOWARD'S attempted escape.

PEG THE PIRATE: Arrgh! The scurvy dog is trying to sneak off with the photos.

Lights blackout. SFX: gunshots. A few seconds later the lights come back on and HOWARD is lying on the stage. The box is missing.

IRISH MIKE: Someone offed the old man, and the box is gone!

LOLA: Father! Nooo!!

DOCTOR runs to HOWARD'S side.

LOLA: You didn't need to kill him, you brutes. He was a harmless old man.

IRISH MIKE: Whoa! Don't have a canary, lady. We didn't kill him. I swear it on my da's grave I do.

PEG THE PIRATE: Your dad's not dead. He runs a Dollarama out in Dublin.

LOLA: They have Dollarama's in Ireland?

PEG THE PIRATE: No, but they have plenty of them in Alberta.

LOLA: What??

IRISH MIKE: Never you mind. Point is, it was one of you plonkers who killed him.

LOLA: Why I have never been so insulted.

DOCTOR: Wait! He's still alive!!

EVERYONE turns their attention to DOCTOR.

LOLA: It's a miracle!

PEG THE PIRATE: He can tell us who killed Vanderkilt!

DOCTOR helps HOWARD to sit up. Just as he is about to speak the lights blackout. SFX: gunshots. The lights come back on and HOWARD is once again on the floor. Everyone is frozen in place. IRISH MIKE is checking himself for bullet holes. DOCTOR leans over HOWARD'S body, listening for a heartbeat.

DOCTOR: Well, he's dead now.

SFX: police sirens.

IRISH MIKE: Put your pedals on, Peg. Time to hit the bricks.

IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE run offstage, down the steps, and through the audience heading for the back doors. IRISH MIKE stops at the center of the audience and looks back. PEG THE PIRATE is well behind.

IRISH MIKE: Hurry up, you loafer!

PEG THE PIRATE: I'm going as fast as I can considering my left leg is basically half of a broom handle!

IRISH MIKE and PEG THE PIRATE continue down the aisle and exit out the back door of the audience.

DOCTOR: We have to go, Lola. We can't be found at the murder scene.

LOLA: Goodbye, Father.

LOLA and DOCTOR exit.

END OF ACT ONE

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