

# SPYING ON A BUDGET

TEN MINUTE PLAY

By **Stephanie Muller**

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**SPYING ON A BUDGET**  
**By Stephanie Muller**

**SYNOPSIS:** The bad economy has everybody in a rut, even the world-renowned Super-Secret-Spy-Service, an American spy agency...which for some reason has a British boss. Agent Carl, the only spy left on the payroll, is forced to utilize three strange college interns to stop the evil plot of the insane, maniacal, and easily frustrated Dr. Death. Will the Super Secret Spy Service be able to stop the destruction of the state of Iowa? Will anyone really care if Iowa is gone? Hilarity ensues as we find out in this over-the-top drama perfect for middle-school and high-school students.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
*(THREE WOMEN, SEVEN EITHER)*

- BOSS (m/f) ..... The very uptight, very British, and very strapped-for-cash leader of the Super Secret Spy Service. A voice role only.
- CARL(m/f)..... A professional spy. If played by a female, change name to Carla.
- AMY (f) ..... A spy intern. Very peppy. A cheerleader.
- LANE (f) ..... A spy intern. Very smart. A nerd.
- JEN (f)..... A spy intern. Very dark and moody. Goth.
- DR. DEATH (m/f) ..... An over-the-top, easily frustrated super villain.
- PHIL (m/f) ..... An evil henchman. The smartest of the three.
- BOB (m/f) ..... An evil henchman. Not very bright.
- BILLY (m/f)..... An evil henchman. A ladies man.
- MRS. DEATH (m/f) ..... Dr. Death's overbearing mother with a Brooklyn accent. Either a voice role or stage role.

*The story opens with a spotlight on secret agent CARL. He reads a letter thoughtfully. The voice of the BOSS narrates the contents of the letter.*

**BOSS:** *(Voice over.)* Agent Carl, I hope this letter finds you well. I know that you were injured in your last mission infiltrating the royal family in England, but please realize that we in the Super-Secret-Spy-Service appreciate all your hard work on behalf of good, old-fashioned, American justice. While I am aware that you were promised three weeks leave of absence after your last mission, I am afraid that I must cut your vacation short. A spy's work is never done.

**CARL:** Oh, geez...

**BOSS:** You must infiltrate that hideout of the insane Dr. Death, for he has recently escaped from prison again, and unleashed a new doomsday threat to this country that requires our best and brightest spies. It's a threat so horrible that I fear I cannot properly describe the details in this letter. So I won't. But trust me when I say that it's pretty bad.

**CARL:** Wait, what?

**BOSS:** In any case, Dr. Death's new threat to our national security is not to be taken lightly. I feel that your mission is not one that can be done alone.

**CARL:** Bah. As if I need the help. A true spy works alone.

**BOSS:** Now, I know you must be thinking that a true spy works alone—

**CARL:** *(Taken aback.)* Okay, that was kind of creepy...

**BOSS:** But please trust me when I say that I would not partner you with just anybody. The members of the Super-Secret-Spy-Service are not to be underestimated, as you well know, Agent Carl.

**CARL:** Hmph. I guess it won't be too bad to go on a mission with partners. I've always wanted to work with Agent Bill the Barbarian. Boss says he once took down a terrorist with a pack of chewing gum and pure rage. I could even stand Agents Cecil, Kate, or Bryan. They're pretty tough themselves...

**BOSS:** Unfortunately, due to budget cuts, I've been forced to fire Agents Bill, Cecil, Kate, and Bryan.

**CARL:** Oh, for Pete's sake!

**BOSS:** But no worries. I have taken on a team of *highly qualified, very responsible*, and very much *unpaid* interns to assist you in your mission!

*Beat.*

**CARL:** You've got to be freaking kidding me.

**BOSS:** No, I'm not kidding you.

**CARL:** (*Genuinely freaked out.*) ACK! Stop doing that!

**BOSS:** The aforementioned interns are students at Cheap State University, and have absolutely perfect credentials. I would trust them with my life. Well, maybe not my life, but definitely with yours. They should be arriving at your home shortly with more details regarding your assignment. Good luck, Agent Carl, and Godspeed. (*Beat.*) This letter will self-destruct in five seconds.

*Five seconds elapse and nothing happens. CARL appears peeved.*

**BOSS:** Er, sorry. Again, we've had to make some cutbacks in the bad economy. Exploding letters aren't as cheap as they used to be. Could you be a trooper and throw this letter in the garbage for me? Thanks. Sincerely, Your Boss.

*Carl crumples the note and throws it aside. He pauses.*

**CARL:** Wait a sec, the American spy agency's boss is *British*?

*The lights go up to reveal CARL surrounded by three college-aged girls: AMY, LANE, and JEN. AMY is clearly a popular, cheerleader type. LANE appears to be the bookworm of the group. JEN, dressed in all black, appears to be the artsy, gothic one.*

**CARL:** (*Surprised.*) ACK! (*He takes on a defensive pose.*) Who the heck are you girls, and how did you get into this place?! I should warn you, I'm trained in Karate, Kung-fu, Judo, and ice hockey.

**AMY:** Um, hi? We're, like, the new interns. The Boss sent us. Duh. Oh, and just an FYI? It's not really spy-ish for you to be leaving your door unlocked like that. We totally just walked in, no questions asked. Like, aren't you people supposed to have bear traps rigged in your houses or something?

**CARL:** Oh, no. No, no, no, no, no. This can't be happening.

**AMY:** Anyway, I'm Amy. In case you couldn't tell, I'm captain of my college's cheerleading squad and homecoming queen, so feel free to throw me into any social situation! I'll, like, hard-core flirt with that Dr. Death freak and make him forget all about trying to destroy America!

**LANE:** Yeah! By the by, thanks a bunch for taking us on for the internship, Agent Carl! This sort of real-world experience will look great on my resume when I apply to Harvard medical school in a few years! A 4.0 and perfect MCAT at age 19 are good, and all, but there's nothing quite like an internship with a group of deadly spies to really STICK IT to all those other Ivy-league applicants! And don't you worry, I'll be an asset to the team, too! I can use my IQ of 567 to trick Dr. Death into walking right into prison, where he belongs!

**JEN:** *(Stoic and deadpan.)* Yeah. And I can write an angsty poem.

**LANE:** What will that do against Dr. Death, Jen?

**JEN:** Nothing. It'll just be an angsty poem. Because I'm angsty.

**CARL:** Now hold on just a second, here, ladies. I don't know what the Boss told you, but I am NOT taking a bunch of preppy college girls to infiltrate the hideout of a mass super villain. You'll just get in my way, and we'll all end up getting killed.

**AMY:** B-B-But, like, what about our internship?!

**CARL:** Go be lifeguards like normal co-eds. I work alone. Now go on! Skedaddle!

**LANE:** If my calculations are correct, Agent Carl, I think you'll find that you have to take us with you.

**CARL:** And why's that? You think I can't function without a preppy cheerleader, a supernerd, and some weird emo thing?

**JEN:** Hey!

**CARL:** Trust me, girls, I have a feeling I'll be fine without a bunch of cheap caricatures shadowing my every move.

**LANE:** Well, I don't know about that. See, the Boss made sure to tell only us the full details of Dr. Death's evil plot! Remember? You won't exactly get very far without us. I'd say your probability of success would drop about 97 percent.

**JEN:** Yeah. You'll die without us. Like all the characters in my short stories.

**CARL:** W-what?! *(To himself.)* Dang it, they're right. The Boss must have planned for this. I don't fully know what Dr. Death is planning, let alone anything about the layout of his hideaway. And I doubt these girls will just come out and tell me. *(The girls start to fiddle with their phones.)* Girls don't do anything for free. *(To the girls.)* Alright, fine. You can come with me. But you have to promise to do whatever I say, alright? You're all spies, now. This isn't some waitress job. We're dealing with very real, very life-threatening situations here, and—HEY, PUT YOUR PHONES AWAY!

*Lights out.*

*Lights up on DR. DEATH sitting in a chair on stage right and reading a newspaper. She looks up and glares impatiently at her three minions, PHIL, BOB, and BILLY, who are looking rather singed and beaten up.*

**DR. DEATH:** "Breaking News: President of the United States saved from Freeze Ray murder plot. Dr. Death's minions foiled by Buttons, the brave St. Bernard puppy." ARE YOU FREAKING KIDDING ME?! I don't even know where to start with you buffoons. I should fire you all on the spot! I give you a simple task, ONE SIMPLE TASK, go and kill the president of the most powerful country in the world, and as usual you three manage to SCREW IT UP. How, I ask you, HOW do you numbskulls always seem to find a way to RUIN every evil plot I devise?!

**PHIL:** Well, to be fair, Dr. Death, doesn't the captain take some blame for the sinking ship, too?

**DR. DEATH:** What in the bloody heck is that supposed to mean?!

**PHIL:** You know, like, if a math teacher gives a test, and all of his students fail...maybe the teacher wrote too hard a test.

**DR. DEATH:** ONE MORE METAPHOR OUT OF YOU AND YOU DIE.

**PHIL:** Look, we may have dropped the ball when you asked us to assassinate the president, but couldn't it be that some of the fault in this situation lies right... *(He pokes DR. DEATH'S nose.)* here?

**DR. DEATH:** EXCUSE ME?!

*She grabs PHIL'S finger and attempts to break it.*

**BOB:** He didn't mean nothin' by it, boss! Honest!

**BILLY:** It's just that it's not exactly easy to go out and kill the commander-in-chief, you know? We had to get past the C.I.A, the security cameras, the first lady...it was a real hassle! And we didn't exactly have a lot of instruction on how to do it. You just kind of said "BWA HA HA, GO KILL THE PRESIDENT," and then kicked us out to go do it. We were so tired after trying to sneak into the White House that when we finally GOT to the Oval Office with the freeze ray, the dog caught us completely by surprise.

**BOB:** He was jus' so cute! I had to pet him!

**BILLY:** Little did we know he had a biting habit...

**DR. DEATH:** NO EXCUSES, FOOLS! The president may have escaped the clutches of my freeze ray, but I have an even more sinister plot up my sleeves, a plot so BRILLIANT that even you three idiots, a.k.a the WORST HENCHMEN EVER, can't screw it up.

**BOB:** What is it?

*DR. DEATH pulls out a small, crudely-made device with a large, red button on it.*

**DR. DEATH:** THIS! BWA HA HAAAA!

*CARL, AMY, LANE and JEN slowly sneak onstage. They are crudely via very crudely-made paper bags over their heads. It's pretty dumb. In any case, they are doing a very bad job of spying.*

**CARL:** Shh! Don't let them hear us. A spy must become one with his surroundings.

**AMY:** But, like...how are these stupid bags going to help? I mean...we're kind of behind the bad guys. Like, seriously...RIGHT behind them. Two feet away. How are they not hearing us right now?!

**CARL:** DON'T QUESTION THE LOGIC, AMY.

**AMY:** But—

**CARL:** Shut up and let me spy!

**DR. DEATH:** This button is the key to the destruction of this country. It is the ultimate doomsday device! One touch of this baby and the entire state of Iowa will go up in flames.

**CARL:** (*Apathetic, in one breath with no pauses.*) Oh-no-not-Iowa...

**LANE:** Hey! That's not very nice of you. We three live there, you know.

**JEN:** (*Sarcastic.*) Yeah. It's just great.

**BOB:** Durr...why Iowa, Dr. Death?

**DR. DEATH:** I figured it was the state everybody would miss the most.

**PHIL:** What the heck made you think that? Trust me, I'm from there, and I can tell you that there's nothing but corn and—

**DR. DEATH:** IN ANY CASE! Once Iowa is taken care of, the country will be in such a state of panic that they will bend to my will! I will send a message to the government telling them to send me ten billion dollars! And if they refuse? Well, I'll just make a few more of these babies and blow up state after state! It's brilliant! Brilliant, I say! BWA HA HAHAHAAAAHA HA!!!

*The voice of MRS. DEATH, DR. DEATH's overbearing Brooklyn mother, shouts from offstage.*

**MRS. DEATH:** (*Voice over.*) Madeline Marie Death, what have I told you about laughing maniacally after eight o'clock?!

**DR. DEATH:** Mom! I told you not to call me that when I'm working!

**MRS. DEATH:** If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times! Evil is not a lucrative career path!

**DR. DEATH:** Not in front of my evil henchmen, Mom, geez! You're making them lose respect for me!

**MRS. DEATH:** Respect for what? A 30-year-old high school dropout who keeps an evil lair in her mother's basement? Why couldn't you have gone to law school like your brother?

**DR. DEATH:** Mom, I told you! I had a really cool evil lair off in Manhattan, but the bad economy drove me bankrupt and I had to move home! Seriously, I was really successful!

**MRS. DEATH:** Sure you did, Madeline. Sure. Did you take out the garbage like I asked you to?

**DR. DEATH:** Geez. Mom, I'm trying to blow up Iowa right now. I'll take out the trash when I'm done.

*There is an awkward pause as DR. DEATH tries to ignore the sniggers and smirks of PHIL, BOB, and BILLY.*

**LANE:** Poor Dr. Death. Her mom reminds me of my parents when I get an A- on a test.

**CARL:** Well...all the psychologists say that evil people get their problems from their mothers.

**JEN:** Mothers are dark cesspools of agony and despair. They make me want to wear black and read about vampires.

**AMY:** Okay, Jen, you're dark and moody. We GET it.

**DR. DEATH:** M-moving right along...here's where you three buffoons come in. I've received word that the U.S. government is sending in a team of their top spies to take me down. It will be your job to prevent that from happening. Track them down, capture them, kill them, do whatever you have to do to ensure that the Super-Secret-Spy-Service stays out of my way!

*CARL jumps out from behind his plant.*

**CARL:** You're too late, Dr. Death!

**DR. DEATH:** W-What?! Oh, you've got to be freaking kidding me!  
How did you get here so fast?

**CARL:** What can I say? I'm very efficient.

**AMY:** Plus, you're not exactly in a secure location. Your mom kind of just let us in.

**JEN:** You're a pretty sucky villain.

**DR. DEATH:** THE DAY I'M MOCKED BY AN EMO—(*She composes herself.*) Never mind. This isn't the first time you pathetic spies have attempted to foil my evil plans! And this time, I've come prepared for anything!

**LANE:** So, wait, is nobody even going to question the stupid paper bag thing?

**CARL:** It's called suspension of disbelief, Lane. Have your English professor explain it to you.

**DR. DEATH:** You have interfered for the last time, Agent Carl! I'll send you back to the Super Secret Spy Service headquarters in a body-bag! No, scratch that...in a box! Because there's no way I'm spending the extra money sending a body-bag in the mail. Unless you weigh a bunch, because then I'd have to send you in a bunch of separate, smaller boxes to save on the cost of an oversized—

**CARL:** YEAH. OKAY. I GET IT.

**DR. DEATH:** In any case, my evil henchmen will destroy you in an instant! Henchman #42, rip out his throat!

*Beat. DR. DEATH glares impatiently at BOB. There seems to have been a miscommunication.*

**BOB:** Er...my name is Bob, boss...

**DR. DEATH:** (*Whiny and exasperated.*) Guysssss! I thought we went over this! You have to take on numbers instead of names so we don't all get close and develop personal relationships with each other! It's rule #1 in the *Guide to Taking Over the World for Dummies*.

**PHIL:** But that doesn't make a lot of sense. If you don't call us by our names, we'll just get confused. Everything will run twice as slowly as it already is.

**DR. DEATH:** Shut up, #56!

**PHIL:** Actually, I'm #65.

**DR. DEATH:** Look, I don't care, just shut up and do your job!

**PHIL:** Which is...?

**DR. DEATH:** Kill the spies!

**BILLY:** I'll take out the hot girls. You two focus on the old man.

**CARL:** I'm not old...

*A silly, over-the-top fight scene takes place. CARL easily kung-fu's PHIL and BOB into submission. Meanwhile, BILLY is thwarted by the intern girls. The end result should be DR. DEATH and CARL glaring at each other from opposite ends of the stage, with the intern girls atop a tackled BILLY downstage center. PHIL and BOB are kneeling at CARL'S feet.*

**DR. DEATH:** Darn it! You buffoons can't do anything right, can you?!

**CARL:** HA! Nice work, girls. I've got to say, I'm impressed.

**LANE:** Don't mess with Cheap State, baby!

**BILLY:** *(Breathless and injured.)* W-Wait a minute...did you say Cheap State?

**LANE:** Yeah. We're Iowa girls!

**BILLY:** No way. I totally went there a few years back!

**AMY:** Like, no way!

**PHIL:** *(Also injured.)* Yeah...we all did. In fact, that's how we all ended up working here together. We were all graduating theatre majors and looking for some work experience, so CSU put us in touch with this awesome internship committee and—

**AMY:** No. Way. You guys are interns, too?!

**BOB:** Not anymore. We started out that way...

**PHIL:** But then the bad economy hit, and Dr. Death over here had to fire most of his best henchmen.

**BOB:** Now we work for minimum wage. It's pretty dull, but way better than flipping burgers.

**CARL:** *(To DR. DEATH.)* Seriously? You got stuck with a bunch of greasy twenty-somethings, too?

**DR. DEATH:** Yes, and it's absolutely terrible. The recession has ruined everything! I've lost my secret lair, my bloodthirsty henchmen, my room at the Ritz! Frankly, I'm not even sure that this stupid button thing will even work.

*He presses the red button.*

**CARL:** NO!!!

*Beat. Nothing happens.*

**DR. DEATH:** See?! Nothing! I can't even afford proper doomsday weapons anymore. I just made this stupid thing out of old cans and a Gameboy! It's impossible to wreak havoc in these conditions.

**CARL:** Dr. Death, I completely understand. I'm pretty much the only agent left at the Super Secret Spy Service, too. My boss won't even give me super-cool, high-tech spy gadgets anymore. I got stuck hiding behind a bunch of paper bags.

**LANE:** That explanation does not even come CLOSE to closing that gaping plot hole.

**CARL:** So not the time, Lane.

**DR. DEATH:** Look, I'm sorry, but this is just absolutely ridiculous. I'm clearly not on my game right now, and neither are you.

**CARL:** I totally agree. Maybe we can call a truce until the country gets back on its feet again?

**DR. DEATH:** That sounds like a splendid idea. But just you wait, Agent Carl! The second the economy picks up and I move out of my mother's basement, you, your stupid interns, the state of Iowa, and eventually the WORLD will go up in flames! BWA HA HAAAA!

**CARL:** Bring it on, Dr. Death. Bring it. Because where there's a mass-murdering, fear-mongering super villain, there's always a mega-foxy-awesome-super-secret spy to save the day.

**JEN:** As long as good and evil have some extra cash to burn.

**BOB:** Amen.

*Lights down.*

*CURTAIN.*

**THE END**