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*Dramatic Publishing*

A Mystery Play in One Act

by

LeROMA GRETH

# Nightmare!



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(NIGHTMARE!)

ISBN 0-87129-084-7

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# Nightmare!

*A Mystery Play in One Act*

FOR TWO MEN AND FOUR WOMEN

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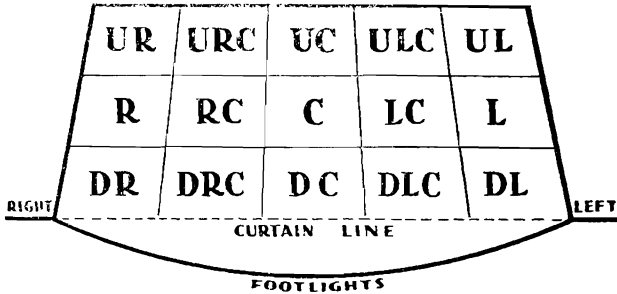
## CHARACTERS

PROFESSOR HOWARD KEELEY }  
IRMA KEELEY } *who are not what they seem*  
CORINNE KEELEY }  
BETH KEELEY . . . . . *who stumbles into a mystery*  
DORTHEA BARTON . . . . . *her college roommate*  
PIETRO MONTEZ . . . . . *from the Island*

PLACE: *The living room of the Keeley home in Florida.*

TIME: *The present. Early evening in late winter.*

## CHART OF STAGE POSITIONS



### STAGE POSITIONS

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

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

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## PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Venetian blind; drapes; bookcase and books; statuette; desk and chair; telephone, notebook and pen on desk; sofa; coffee table; two easy chairs and reading lamp between them; small wrapped package (to be thrown through window); pictures, bouquet of flowers, etc., as desired.

CORINNE: Love story magazine, pill and glass of water.

IRMA: Dish towel, cup of tea.

BETH: Small suitcase, bracelet.

DORTHEA: Small suitcase.

HOWARD: Pipe, snapshot in wallet.

PIETRO: Revolver.

## PRODUCTION NOTES

VENETIAN BLIND: This is the ordinary blind of that type, although somewhat worn and old-looking. The cords have been removed, and a rope looped over the slats holds the blind up. The rope goes through a hole at the top of the window and is manipulated on cue from backstage. To avoid actual injury when the blind descends on Pietro's head, gauge the distance the blind falls, and then have Pietro's head (as he looks out the window at that moment) just a fraction of an inch lower, so that the blind appears to hit Pietro's head.

PACKAGE: The package need not actually be thrown through the window, breaking the glass. As the package comes through the window aperture, a sound of breaking glass at that moment offstage will create the necessary illusion.

TEMPO: Nothing adds more to the polish of a production than the quick picking up of cues. Unless there is a definite reason for a pause, train your actors to come in with their speeches "on the heels," so to speak, of the preceding speeches. When a production lags, audience interest likewise will lag. It is always advisable during the last week of rehearsals to hold one or more sessions during which the actors merely sit around in a circle and go through lines only, with the express purpose of snapping up cues.

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# Nightmare!

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SCENE: *The pleasant living room of the Keeley home in Florida. The room is tastefully furnished with a mixture of old and some newer pieces. Directly U C, in the rear wall, a large picture window overlooks the ocean. A Venetian blind is on this window, but raised to permit a view of the ocean, sky and possibly a few palm trees. Drapes adorn the window at either side. There is a bookcase right of the window, against the wall, filled with books. On top of the bookcase is a large statuette of any design, but on the grotesque side, with no aesthetic appeal whatsoever. There is a desk D L. On the desk is a telephone, and in front of the desk a chair. A comfortable sofa faces the audience at R C, with a low coffee table in front of it. A group of two comfortable easy chairs with a lamp between them is at L C stage. The door to the front porch is in the L wall at center. An archway in the R wall, upstage, leads to the bedrooms, while a door in the R wall, downstage, goes into the dining room and kitchen. Pictures, a bouquet of flowers and other furnishings can be added, as desired.]*

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: *It is early evening in late winter. Outside the window, it is just starting to get dark. CORINNE KEELEY is sprawled on the sofa in an extremely uncomfortable-looking position, reading a love story magazine. She looks older than her fifteen years, and wears untidy bobby socks, loafers, dungarees and a sport shirt. She drops the magazine, sighs desperately, then picks up the magazine again and begins reading. IRMA KEELEY enters D R with a dish towel and pauses there. She is a pleasant, though rather plain, woman in her forties. She wears a house dress.]*

IRMA [*sharply*]. Just what do you think you're doing?

CORINNE [*lowering magazine and giving another loud sigh*].  
Reading.

IRMA. Honestly! You and those "love" stories.

CORINNE. They're educational.

IRMA [*dryly*]. Oh, very!

CORINNE [*sitting up*]. How else am I going to find out about  
romance?

IRMA [*moving to right end of sofa*]. What I'd like to find out  
is who's going to help me with those dishes?

CORINNE [*settling back again*]. Oh, those!

IRMA. Yes, those! Come along.

CORINNE. I want to read—

IRMA. You were glad enough to help eat the dinner. Now come  
help me clean up! [*Crosses and goes out* D R. CORINNE  
*groans with disgust, rises, carefully places her precious  
magazine on coffee table and starts* D R.]

[*At that moment, HOWARD KEELEY enters through the archway*  
U R, *very comfortable in smoking jacket and bedroom  
slippers. He is a mild-mannered man in his late forties.*]

HOWARD [*moving to her*]. Well! How are we doing?

CORINNE [*shrugging*]. Okay, I guess.

HOWARD. Delicious dinner—but I ate too much.

CORINNE. Uh-huh.

HOWARD. You'd better get out some books and do homework.

CORINNE [*groaning*]. Ohhhhhhhh! [*Goes out* D R. HOWARD  
*looks after her, smiling and shaking his head. Then his  
smile fades; he quietly moves* U C *to window and worriedly  
looks out. Next he goes to desk* D L, *looks over it for a  
second, then takes notebook and pen and patters* D R, *where  
he exits. Everything so far is very casual and homelike.*]

[*The stage is empty for a few seconds; then BETH KEELEY and  
DORTHEA BARTON enter* L. *Each carries a small suitcase  
which she places just inside the door. BETH is eighteen, an  
attractive, warmhearted girl. DORTHEA is the same age, viva-*



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*cious and somewhat aggressive Both girls wear lightweight suits or dresses, suitable for traveling.*]

BETH [*flinging out her arms*]. Well, this is it!

DORTHEA [*looking about*]. Wow!

BETH [*moving L C, looking lovingly about*]. Like it?

DORTHEA [*following*]. Ummm! I wish my folks had a house in Florida. [*Going to window U C.*] With a view of palm trees and ocean—no less!

BETH [*running to bookcase U R C*]. Oh, they brought along Aunt Hettie's old statue! [*As BETH runs in front of window. Venetian blind descends with a clatter, nearly striking DORTHEA on the head. She moves away from window, holding her head. BETH moves to her.*] Dotty! Are you hurt?

DORTHEA. No, but—— Whew! It just missed!

BETH. I'm terribly sorry!

DORTHEA [*turning to glare at blind*]. Wasn't your fault.

BETH. But it was. I should have remembered. Mother brought that Venetian blind from the old house. It's worn out. Whenever anybody runs, jumps, or anything like that—near it—down it comes!

DORTHEA [*as BETH returns blind to its original position*]. Anyhow, you ought to feel at home with that thing around.

BETH [*laughing*]. I do! Honestly, Mother just won't throw a thing away! [*Goes back to bookcase and indicates statuette.*] Look at this.

DORTHEA [*moving to bookcase, making a face*]. Ugh. What is it?

BETH [*holding it up*]. A monstrosity Aunt Hettie gave Mom when she and Dad were married. Mom's *hated* it all these years, but do you think she'll throw it away? No! [*Puts it back.*]

DORTHEA [*trying to look on the bright side*]. Who knows. It might come in handy one of these days.

BETH. I doubt it. [*Comes down right of sofa as DORTHEA moves to window.*]

DORTHEA [*at window, glancing out*]. Umm! I'm going for a dip first thing in the morning.

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BETH. Me, too. I just couldn't wait until spring vacation to see the place. Mother's letters almost drove me crazy. [*Picks up love story magazine from coffee table.*] Corinne! That kid sister of mine is always reading these awful magazines. [*Going to one of the chairs at L C.*] Mom got a new chair. . . . Oh, but everything else is the same! It's so good to be home.

DORTHEA [*who has come C*]. Yeah. That's the only trouble with going away to college. You kind of miss your folks—and everything.

BETH. I'm sure you'll love my family.

DORTHEA. I hope your parents won't be angry—after all, we are cutting classes to make this flying trip.

BETH [*joining her at C*]. Don't worry about them. They never get angry. We're the most normal, sedate people you'll ever meet. Mother says schoolteachers should set a good example for the rest of the community.

DORTHEA [*reprovingly*]. Your father's a college professor, not a schoolteacher.

BETH [*cheerfully*]. Well, that's what Mom calls him.

DORTHEA [*glancing D R*]. Somebody's coming!

BETH [*quickly*]. Sit on the sofa; I'll sit over here—very casually. [*BETH sits in a chair L C while DORTHEA sits on sofa.*] Will they ever be surprised to see me!

[*HOWARD enters D R, taking a pipe out of his pocket. He stops short D R and stares in dismay when he sees BETH.*]

HOWARD [*recovering, shoving pipe back into his pocket and coming C*]. Beth! When did you get home? [*BETH rises and stands as if frozen at L C, staring at him. HOWARD calls.*] Irma! Corinne! Beth's home! [*Crosses to BETH and embraces her. She does not respond but looks dazed.*]

[*IRMA and CORINNE rush in D R and come to them. DORTHEA rises and watches, smiling.*]

IRMA [*bugging her*]. Beth! Oh, Bethie!

CORINNE [*also bugging BETH*]. What're you doing here?