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*Dramatic Publishing*





A PLAY IN ONE ACT

# The Potman Spoke Sooth

BY  
DAVID FULK



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY



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(THE POTMAN SPOKE SOOTH)

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THE POTMAN SPOKE SOOTH  
*A Play In One Act*  
For Six Men and Two Women  
A Voice

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C H A R A C T E R S

COLONEL WINTHROP WIGGINS  
BEATRICE WIGGINS  
MILES, the butler  
DETECTIVE SERGEANT GALLAGHER  
POLICEMAN  
DIRECTOR  
LADY IN THE BOOTH  
VOICE

PLACE: *The sitting room of a well-furnished English country house.*

TIME: *Present.*

## THE POTMAN SPOKE SOOTH

SCENE: The sitting-room of a well-furnished English country home. In armchairs, drinking tea and reading newspapers: COLONEL WINTHROP WIGGINS and his wife, BEATRICE. They are a distinguished-looking couple in their sixties. MILES, the butler, is busy tidying up the room.

BEATRICE: Dreadful evening.

WIGGINS: Quite.

BEATRICE: Worst snowstorm I've seen.

WIGGINS: Highly irregular this time of year. (Pause. They turn pages) Here, have you read the news of this killer running about loose?

BEATRICE: The Peanut Murderer?

WIGGINS: That's the one.

BEATRICE: Shocking.

WIGGINS: Claimed his eighth, ninth, and tenth victims just last night.

BEATRICE: Oh dear.

WIGGINS: A lot of gore involved, of course. Meat cleavers, pools of blood, severed limbs...

BEATRICE: There ought to be a law. (WIGGINS looks at her quizzically) About printing such things.

WIGGINS: Ah. (Pause. They turn pages)

BEATRICE: More tea, Miles?

MILES: Yes, madam.

BEATRICE: Winthrop dear, if you don't mind my saying so, you seem to have acquired a morbid fascination for murder and blood and the like since your retirement from the service.

WIGGINS: Well, you know...sheltered life in the army.

BEATRICE: I make no complaints, of course. But surely you can understand my consternation at the development.

WIGGINS: Surely.

BEATRICE: I merely call it to your attention, without in any way attempting to chastise. Thank you, Miles. (MILES hands her tea)

WIGGINS: You've a right to state your opinions. Constructive criticism is a healthy thing. It's always to be appreciated.

BEATRICE: I thoroughly agree.

WIGGINS: Like your habit of disappearing for hours at a time, for example. I take note, I perhaps suspect a liaison of some sort, and I make casual mention. But by no means do I complain or attempt to incite conflict.

BEATRICE: It's only proper.

WIGGINS: After all, what is it I want out of life? Merely to live peacefully in my retirement, to enjoy the good life here in my country home with my wife, without disturbance or strife.

BEATRICE: A highly commendable philosophy.  
(The doorbell rings. MILES goes to answer)  
Oh, oh. Who could that be?

WIGGINS: Peddlers.

BEATRICE: In a blizzard? (MILES opens the door. DETECTIVE SERGEANT GALLAGHER enters, wearing snowshoes. He brushes snow off himself)

GALLAGHER: Brrr! Obnoxious weather we're having.

WIGGINS: Who is it, Miles?

GALLAGHER: Do forgive me for intruding, Colonel Wiggins. Mrs. Wiggins. (WIGGINS and BEATRICE stand) Detective Sergeant Gallagher, Scotland Yard.

BEATRICE: Oh!

WIGGINS: Police?

GALLAGHER: No need for alarm. Just making a routine check.

WIGGINS: Come in, Sergeant. Have a seat.

GALLAGHER: Thank you. (He goes toward a chair)

BEATRICE: Would you care to remove your snowshoes, Sergeant?

GALLAGHER: (Looks at his feet) Oh, of course. How stupid of me. (Begins removing his snowshoes)

WIGGINS: Did you find the driving difficult?

GALLAGHER: I didn't drive, actually. All roads are completely impassable. We are, in effect, isolated from civilization here.

BEATRICE: How frightful!

GALLAGHER: But the Yard never rests, Mrs. Wiggins. I donned my snowshoes and trekked cross-country the full five miles from the station-house. (He hands his snowshoes to MILES) There we are. (They go to sit)

WIGGINS: Tea for the Sergeant, Miles.

GALLAGHER: No, thank you, Colonel. I shan't be but a few minutes.

WIGGINS: What seems to be the trouble?

GALLAGHER: Well, there's no sense beating about the bush, as they say, so I'll get right to the point. I don't mean to frighten you, but it seems there's a killer loose in this part of the country. Went on a spree just last night. Chopped up three ladies with a meat cleaver.



BEATRICE: Goodness!

GALLAGHER: They call him the Peanut Murderer. You may have heard about him.

WIGGINS: Indeed! The one who always leaves a pile of peanut shells by his victims.

GALLAGHER: That's the one.

BEATRICE: It's disgusting.

WIGGINS: But fascinating nonetheless!

GALLAGHER: As you might presume, I've been assigned to the case; and as a devoted Yarder I shan't rest until the rogue is captured and brought to justice.

WIGGINS: Good show!

BEATRICE: But surely, Sergeant, you don't suppose the culprit is to be found here.

WIGGINS: Yes, by gum, I'd hate to have my peaceful retirement disrupted by such a scandalous eventuality.

GALLAGHER: There's no need for concern. As far as I can tell, you're in no immediate danger; but if you don't mind, I think we ought to have a quick look about the house. Just routine, of course.

WIGGINS: By all means!