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Dramatic Publishing

IF IT'S MONDAY, THIS MUST BE MURDER!

by
PAT COOK



Dramatic Publishing

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IF IT'S MONDAY, THIS MUST BE MURDER!

A Mystery Comedy

For 8 men and 5 women to portray 14 roles

CHARACTERS

- LINUS HARCOURT a mousey bookkeeper
MRS. POMEROY a large woman, widowed
GREENSKEEPER at the golf course, in his 20s
HARRY MONDAY a cliché of a private eye,
a hard-boiled man with chiseled features
BILLIE JEAN HODECKER an ambitious, naive woman,
mid-20s
SERGEANT BROGAN a policeman with no sense of humor
STELLA FONTAINE . . . a seductive but determined woman,
late 20s
CECIL DEBORUS a pompous man in his 40s.
He wears arrogance like a medal
GLAMIS LUDLOW . a rather spooky woman, into astrology,
mid-40s
DAVID SOAMES a Wall Street-type ad man, late 30s
FREIDA MAE BRISTOW a dithering woman,
works crossword puzzles, late 40s
GEORGE a general factotum at Shady Meadows, 30s
ANITA FAY MARTOON Freida's twin sister,
they're never seen together
MESSENGER from Western Union
(If not using double casting, can be played by a woman)

TIME: The present (or can be done in the 1940s).

PLACE: Shady Meadows Country Club.

A NOTE ABOUT CASTING

This play can be performed casting an actor or actress to each part, the exception being FREIDA and ANITA who are played by the same actress. Or, the following casting may be used, enabling 9 actors and actresses to portray 14 roles.

Actor #1 HARCOURT, GEORGE and MESSENGER

Actor #2 GREENSKEEPER and DAVID

Actress MRS. POMEROY, FREIDA and ANITA

The rest is traditional casting.

Also, a SCENE OF THE CRIME is provided. This consists of a Lost and Found Department at Shady Meadows. It can be set up in the lobby or near the stage and allows the audience to look at “forgotten” clues. It is not imperative to the play and can be excised if needed. If, however, it is used, it is simply a table on which rest several items (see Production Notes in the back of script for the list of items).

The main thing is to have fun and help the audience have fun as well. With that in mind, happy sleuthing!

Pat Cook

ACT ONE

SCENE: *The lobby of the Shady Meadows Country Club.*

AT RISE: *A solo light comes up in one part of the room. HARCOURT is standing, yelling out at the audience.*

HARCOURT. Look, you! Look, you! I knew there was some hanky-panky going on with the books but I had to be sure. So, you want to know what I did? Oh, I was very clever. I *had* to be clever to catch you. I told you I sold my shares. That's right! It was all a lie. I had to do something to get you off my back! Oh yes, I know all about how you've turned things around, who you *really* are! So you see, I *have* you right where I want you. And I'm going straight to the authorities. And there's not a thing you can do about it. You hear me? Nothing you can do about it! (*Sound of two gunshots. HARCOURT grows wide-eyed.*) Well, there's that. (*He falls to the floor. Blackout.*)

(*A solo light comes up on the reception desk. MRS. POMEROY is leaning against the desk, chatting, holding a glass.*)

POMEROY. Well, when Buffy first came down from the university I was simply *beside* myself. I mean, here I was with an afternoon tea to host and he just up and arrives. Of course, I had to introduce him as my gardener. Well, he'd

forgotten his white slacks. What else could I do? (*She finishes the drink.*) Oh, my dear, you *must* try this new concoction. It will *kill* you! (*She smiles and slowly falls to the floor, frozen smile and all. Blackout.*)

(*A solo light comes up at the sofa. The GREENSKEEPER stumbles through L door and over to the couch, gasping. Finally, he falls over the couch and exposes a two-foot tee flagpole sticking out of his back with a golf flag on it proclaiming hole 6.*)

GREENSKEEPER (*looking up, almost a whisper, weakly.*)

Fore. (*He falls behind the couch. Blackout.*)

HARRY'S VOICE (*in darkness*). I never could get the hang of Wednesday. It always just seemed to hang around in the middle of the week with no place to go. It's the kinda day when you're short of change and the meter just ran out. Or when secretaries sneak peeks at their bosses private files and the bosses watch them do it, just to have something to hold over their heads. Or the kind of day when you go home and find out you now have a dog. On this particular Wednesday I had just finished lunch at my favorite cafe when I get a call to go out to the Shady Meadows Country Club. There had been a little unpleasantness over there, making the place look like Julius Caesar's bachelor party. However, at the time, I had some disagreement over the bill with the cafe manager so I had to wash a few dishes. I knew it would be at least another two hours...(*Sound of dish crashing to the floor*)...three hours before I could put in an appearance at Shady Meadows. Oh, yeah. Name's Monday. Harry Monday. I'm a private eye. It was around three...

ORIENTAL VOICE. Wha' you do? Wash dishee. Wash dis-
hee.

HARRY'S VOICE. Hey, do you mind? This is a voice-over.

ORIENTAL VOICE. No no. No dishee, no voice over.
(Sound of another dish crashing to floor.) Ooooh! Oy vey!

(Lights come up. There is no one around. HARRY enters through R door and looks around.)

HARRY'S VOICE. Anyway, it was around three o'clock
when I got out to the Shady Meadows Country Club and...

HARRY *(looks up)*. I'll take it from here.

HARRY'S VOICE. Sorry.

(BILLIE JEAN enters through U door.)

BILLIE JEAN. Oh. You must be...?

HARRY. That's right. Monday. Harry Monday. I'm a private
eye.

BILLIE JEAN. Billie Jean Hodecker. I'm the manager here.
I'm the one who called you in.

HARRY. Saw my advertising, huh?

BILLIE JEAN. In a way. I read your name and number on the
bathroom wall.

HARRY. That's it.

BILLIE JEAN *(pulls him over to one side)*. Mr. Monday, I
need someone on my side.

HARRY. Hey, I don't play tennis. I tried once but my trench
coat kept getting caught in the net.

BILLIE JEAN. Mr. Monday...there were three murders here
last night.

HARRY. Let me guess. They were caught wearing white after Labor Day. *(He takes out his pad and pencil.)* Maybe I better write this stuff down.

BILLIE JEAN. Just don't look too obvious.

HARRY. Hah?

(SERGEANT BROGAN enters through U door.)

BROGAN. There you are, Miss Hodecker.

BILLIE JEAN *(whispers to HARRY)*. Just follow my lead.

HARRY. I'll be on you like a cheap suit.

BILLIE JEAN. Huh?

HARRY. Yours to command. *(Puts the pad and pencil away.)*

BROGAN. Now, Mr. Harcourt was the club secretary, is that about right? *(He sees HARRY.)* Monday! You cheap, sleazy, half-witted, lying, overweight jerk!

HARRY *(hurt)*. Overweight?

BILLIE JEAN. You know each other?

HARRY. Sergeant Brogan and I go way back. Oh, you'll have to forgive him. His father wanted a son.

BROGAN. Get out of here, Monday! This is an official criminal investigation!

BILLIE JEAN. Sergeant Brogan, please!

BROGAN. I should've known something was turning sour when it started clouding up this morning.

BILLIE JEAN. That's no reason to lash out at one of our new members.

BROGAN. I'm sorry, ma'am, but rainy days and Monday always get me down. *(He realizes.)* New members?

HARRY. New members? *(He turns to BROGAN.)* New members! Have you gone deaf as well as blind?

BROGAN. Since when have you joined the Bridge and Horsey set?

BILLIE JEAN. Why, Uncle Harry has wanted to join for years.

BROGAN. Uncle Harry?

HARRY. Uncle Harry? (*He turns to BROGAN.*) Uncle Harry!

BROGAN. You never had no brothers nor sisters. And you ain't been married, either.

HARRY. It's one of those things like Big Brothers of America. I'm a Big Uncle.

BROGAN. You're a big something, I'll give you that.

HARRY. Look, don't mind me. (*To BILLIE JEAN.*) I need to make a phone call, dear. (*He crosses to the reception desk, picks up the phone and dials.*)

BILLIE JEAN. Now. Sergeant Brogan. You were saying?

BROGAN. Hah? Oh. This Harcourt guy.

BILLIE JEAN (*so HARRY can hear*). Linus Harcourt, the club secretary?

HARRY (*into the receiver*). Western Union? Let me speak to Johnson. (*He talks quietly to someone.*)

BROGAN. Yeah. How long had he held that position?

BILLIE JEAN. Oh, for four years now. I have no idea why anyone would want to murder him. (*She strolls near HARRY.*) Or why anyone would want to murder Mrs. Pomeroy or our greenskeeper either, for that matter.

BROGAN. Nothing that might tie them together? Other than belonging to Shady Meadows, that is?

BILLIE JEAN. Nothing I can think of. Odd, though, that they were murdered in three different ways. The greenskeeper stabbed, Mrs. Pomeroy poisoned and Harcourt shot.

BROGAN. And no one heard anything? Other than Monday over here.

HARRY (*hanging up the phone*). Hey, I'm not listening. Oh, wait. I guess I was.

BROGAN. I guess you was, too. Look, Monday, it don't take a mind reader to see what you two are up to.

HARRY. No, you'd need a mind for that!

BROGAN. You want me to run you in right now for obstructing justice?!

HARRY. Hey, you just try and...

(STELLA enters through U door wearing pink sunglasses and seductively walks between HARRY and BROGAN.)

STELLA. Excuse me, boys. *(She eyes them both as she passes and slowly exits out L door.)*

BROGAN *(to BILLIE JEAN)*. How do you join this club?

HARRY. Hey, is she a suspect, I hope, I hope?

BILLIE JEAN. Stella Fontaine? No. She's innocent. *(HARRY and BROGAN look at the door. Then at each other. Then at BILLIE JEAN.)*

HARRY and BROGAN. Nah *ahhhhhh!*

HARRY. She reminds me, I need to rotate my tires.

BROGAN. Look, Miss Hodecker, we...*(He looks back at HARRY after his comment and then resumes.)*...we'll be in and out of here till this thing gets solved. *(Turns to HARRY.)* And I'll especially keep an eye on you. You ain't no member.

HARRY. Hey, I got a lot of upper class. I know the rules of society, you know. *(To BILLIE JEAN.)* My dear, which way to the golf field?

BILLIE JEAN. Oh, through that door. *(She points to L door.)* There's a pro shop just outside the door where you can buy some clothes and rent golf equipment. George will help you.

HARRY. Out of my way, flat foot. *(He crosses to the door.)* I am a bit rusty at the game. It's been a long time since I held a golf bat.

BROGAN. All right, I'm leaving. But I'm keeping an eye on you, Monday! Miss Hodecker, I'll be back soon as I check with the lab boys.

HARRY. Maybe they'll give your mop and bucket back.

BROGAN. You dirty...*(He exits, mumbling, out R door.)*
HARRY crosses back to BILLIE JEAN.)

BILLIE JEAN. Who'd you need to call?

HARRY. Buddy of mine at Western Union. Had him send me a wire.

BILLIE JEAN. Had him send *you* a wire?

HARRY. Yeah, old trick of the gumshoe trade, kid. You never know when you're gonna need one. Question for you. Why the cover?

BILLIE JEAN. You mean you being my uncle? *(She turns away from him.)* Mr. Monday, things look pretty bad for me right now. I've only been working as manager for two days. And, the thing is, I've really been doing a great job. Except for...

HARRY. Three people getting murdered?

BILLIE JEAN. I mean, I'm a pretty smart cookie. Got a lot of great credentials. Good references. Solid background. And now, what with those...

HARRY. ...Three people getting murdered?

BILLIE JEAN *(leaning on HARRY)*. I graduated at the top of my class. Most likely to succeed. Voted class favorite. Had all kinds of offers. But nobody ever told me how to handle...

HARRY *(sympathetically)*. ...Three people getting murdered. Are we coming to the end of this?

(CECIL enters through U door.)

CECIL. Miss Hodecker! *(BILLIE JEAN suddenly moves and HARRY almost falls down.)*

BILLIE JEAN. Yes sir, Mr. DeBorus?

CECIL. It's happened again. *(He limply holds his hands out.)*

BILLIE JEAN. What?

CECIL. I am all wet.

HARRY. You can say that again.

CECIL. Again, there are no towels in the washrooms. *(He looks at HARRY.)* Ooh, who're you?

HARRY. Me? Oh, I just finished cleaning out the gutters. *(He vigorously shakes CECIL's hand.)* How're you doing there, pal? Sorry about that, I forgot my gloves.

CECIL *(horrified, looks at his hand)*. I don't like you. *(He turns to BILLIE JEAN.)* Miss Hodecker!

BILLIE JEAN. I'll get you some towels right away. *(She exits through U door. CECIL looks at HARRY. HARRY smiles and circles CECIL)*

CECIL *(after a pause, nervously)*. What?! What is it?

HARRY. Oh, nothing. It's just that you remind me of my ex-partner.

CECIL. Oh? What's he like?

HARRY. He's dead.

CECIL *(glares at HARRY)*. Go away.

HARRY. Hey, that's a great manicure. Who does your nails?

CECIL. Oh, a wonderful woman by the name of Maxine Smoot. *(He takes out one of his cards and a pen.)* Here. This is where she works. *(He writes on back of the card.)*

HARRY. Can I tell her you sent me?

CECIL *(hands HARRY the card)*. Don't you dare.

(BILLIE JEAN re-enters with towels.)

BILLIE JEAN. Here you are, Mr. DeBorus. *(She hands the towels to CECIL.)*

CECIL. Well, *now* I have to wash up all over again.

HARRY. Well, make sure you wash up *all over!*

CECIL. Oh! *(He exits through U door.)*

HARRY. Who's that wriggler?

BILLIE JEAN. That's Cecil DeBorus.

HARRY *(quickly)*. Cecil DeBorus?

BILLIE JEAN. He's president of the country club.

HARRY. Did he know the victims?

BILLIE JEAN. Mr. DeBorus? Oh, I doubt very much if he's our killer.

HARRY. I don't know. When he looked at me there was murder in his eyes.

BILLIE JEAN. He'd be a good one to have on your side.

HARRY. Big fish in a little pond?

BILLIE JEAN. Something like that. Also, he's the biggest gossip at the club.

(GLAMIS enters through R door and sees HARRY.)

BILLIE JEAN. Of course, you have to know how to get around him.

HARRY. I see. Like all big fish, you have to know how to play him. *(GLAMIS circles HARRY as if feeling the air around him, rubbing her fingers together. He watches her.)*

BILLIE JEAN. Exactly.

HARRY *(after a pause)*. Lose your castanets?

GLAMIS. No. Don't speak. I feel...I feel an energy. Yes, an energy emitting from you.

HARRY. I got a sardine sandwich in my pocket.

GLAMIS *(gets right in HARRY's face)*. You're a Virgo, aren't you?

HARRY. I'd answer that but I'd get thrown out of the club.
(*GLAMIS again feels HARRY's "aura." He turns to BILLIE JEAN.*) She hasn't had her ticket validated in a loooooong time, has she?

BILLIE JEAN. This is Glamis Ludlow. She's very big into astronomy.

GLAMIS. Astrology, my dear.

BILLIE JEAN. What's the difference?

GLAMIS. Astronomy is the study of very large bodies.

BILLIE JEAN (*indicates HARRY*). Well?

HARRY. Hey! Large heavenly bodies. Planets and stuff.

GLAMIS. Oh, you're familiar with the sciences. I can tell we shall have a warm and giving relationship. Give me your hand. (*HARRY holds out a hand.*) Yes, yes, you have an extremely long lifeline.

BILLIE JEAN. See there, Uncle Harry. You're going to have a very long life.

HARRY. Well, my hand will, anyway.

GLAMIS. Oh, this is simply too much. (*She closes his hand.*) The signs point directly to...well, never mind. Of course, I don't expect you to understand it all.

HARRY. Really? Then tell me. If you're into astrology, then how can you relate this exercise in palmistry to the zodiacal science when, in fact, it is more closely akin to phrenology and, in fact, has nothing to do with cosmic alliances?

GLAMIS (*coldly*). You're *not* a Virgo!

HARRY. Not so loud!

BILLIE JEAN. Glamis, this is my Uncle Harry. He's joined our little group here.

GLAMIS (*glaring at BILLIE JEAN*). Yes, well, *we do* have three fresh openings, don't we?

HARRY. Ooh, I *like* you.

GLAMIS. Of course. Miss Hodecker. *(She exits through L door.)*

HARRY. Does she know the 60s are over? Did *she* know the victims?

BILLIE JEAN. Look, everyone here knew the victims. Wait, I know! Around six we're having a little get-together. Sort of an emergency committee meeting, you know. How the club's going to deal with all the bad publicity, that sort of thing. You can meet the rest of the suspects, I guess you would call them, at that time. Till then, why don't you look over the grounds? Get the feel of the place. Play a couple of rounds of golf. The pro shop...

HARRY. Just out the door, I know. Okay, kid, it's your dime.

BILLIE JEAN. Huh?

HARRY. You're the boss.

BILLIE JEAN. Oh. Right. I'll just go and make sure that Mr. DeBorus doesn't have any more reason for complaints.

HARRY. I don't think he *needs* reasons.

BILLIE JEAN. You may be right. By the way, how'd you know so much about astrology?

HARRY. I once worked security at the White House.

BILLIE JEAN. Oh! *(She exits through U door. Lights fade out on the club. A solo light comes up DL and HARRY walks into it.)*

HARRY *(addressing the audience)*. So. How do you like the Shady Meadows Country Club set? You've seen them all before. Frozen smiles in glass houses. Varicose veins in plaid shorts. A place where old polyester goes to die. A joint where murder becomes polite conversation along with stock market tips and neighborhood values. I felt as out of place there as a ham at a Bar Mitzvah but I had a job to do. Yeah, kids, it's all part of the game. Stakes are high.

And you're playing for keeps. Just ask those three stiffs down at the morgue. You won't get an answer. Trust me on that one. So, I knew if I was going to crack this baby I had to fit in. Even if it killed me. *(He winks.)* Told you the stakes were high. Well, as they say, when in Rome... *(Lights fade on HARRY.)*

(Lights come up on stage. GLAMIS and STELLA are sitting on the couch. CECIL is standing near the couch with BILLIE JEAN next to him. DAVID stands next to the fireplace, flipping a charm in the air and catching it. FREIDA is near him working a crossword puzzle. The group is chattering among themselves.)

CECIL. All right, everyone, may I have your attention? Everyone? *(They grow quiet.)* Thank you. Now. I have called this meeting in order that we may judge what damage has been done to Shady Meadows' reputation and see what steps we might pursue in order to repair it.

FREIDA *(raises a hand)*. Your Honor?

CECIL *(long suffering)*. Mr. President. Freida, you address me as Mr. President.

FREIDA. Whatever. Why don't we just change the name of our little ol' club?

CECIL. Anyone else?

FREIDA. Well, why not?

DAVID. Freida, a rose is a rose is a rose.

FREIDA. Isn't that a bouquet? What does *that* mean?

BILLIE JEAN. He means that changing the name wouldn't do any good. We're still the same club and still in the same location.