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*Dramatic Publishing*

A Full Length Play

# **the prime time crime**

OR

WHAT ARE CHARLIE'S DEVILS,  
KOJACKET, A KUNG SOO PRIEST  
AND TONY BORROTA DOING AT  
SHROPSHIRE MANOR AND DOES  
THE PHANTOM KNOW THAT THIS  
IS NO ORDINARY BUZZARD?

By

William Gleason



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(PRIME TIME CRIME)

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PRIME TIME CRIME  
*A Full-Length Comedy*  
 For Seventeen Men and Eight Women, Extras  
 One Male Offstage Voice

C H A R A C T E R S

JIVE EDDIE	.....	<i>a kidnapper</i>	
BALLERINA	.....	<i>a victim</i>	
ARISTOTLE	.....	<i>detective</i>	
CRACKER	.....	<i>detective</i>	
KOJACKET	.....	<i>detective</i>	
SORBINA	[ ]	<i>three female detectives known</i>	
NELLIE			] .....
DILL			
BORIS	.....	<i>Russian spy</i>	
NOBORINSKI	.....	<i>the same</i>	
KANE	.....	<i>master in the martial art of kung soo</i>	
ABLE	.....	<i>his ancient Chinese mentor</i>	
BOY	.....	<i>suicidal in nature</i>	
BORROTA	.....	<i>unorthodox detective</i>	
MARIE SHROPSHIRE	.....	<i>who has pet buzzard</i>	
	.....	<i>principal heir to</i>	
	.....	<i>Shropshire fortune</i>	
ABIGAIL	.....	<i>aged matriarch of Shropshire family</i>	
DAVID JAMES	.....	<i>an old friend</i>	
TONY	.....	<i>a distant cousin</i>	
VIVIAN	.....	<i>his wife</i>	
ARTHUR	.....	<i>a distant cousin</i>	
KATHRYN	.....	<i>his wife</i>	

(continued on following page)

Cast of Characters  
(continued)

CHIVES . . . . . *the family butler*  
CONSTABLE DANNER . . . . . *local magistrate*  
REGGIE . . . . . *distant cousin*

POLICEMAN  
OFFSTAGE VOICE OF "CHARLIE"  
SECURITY GUARD (no lines)  
MEN (who attack Kane)

TIME: Present

PLACE: Shropshire Manor

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ACT ONE

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SCENE ONE: The curtains are closed and the following vignettes take place in front of the curtain. As the houselights dim, up-tempo music begins to play. The music continues until the houselights are completely out and then is interrupted by the shattering sound of gunfire. We hear two shots in quick succession followed by a woman's scream. We then hear men's voices offstage. The first yells, "Give it up! You haven't got a chance!" The second yells, "Let the girl go!" At this point JIVE EDDIE backs onstage holding a young BALLERINA hostage around the waist with his upstage arm and a gun in his downstage hand. They have entered from stage R. The girl wears a ballet tutu and dance slippers and continues to move with style and grace in spite of her situation. As he pulls the girl onstage, JIVE EDDIE yells to his pursuers, who are still unseen.)

JIVE EDDIE. You turkeys come any closer and Jive Eddie's gonna do a number on this toe dancer. (BALLERINA gasps and he pulls her back.) You do what Jive Eddie says, baby, or I mess up your feet . . . dig?

BALLERINA (with a delicate flutter of the arms and extension of the downstage foot). Please! Dancing is my life. (Another flutter.)

(ARISTOTLE, a pudgy detective, warily enters R followed by CRACKER, another detective. They face JIVE EDDIE with their guns drawn. ARISTOTLE is breathing with some difficulty.)

ARISTOTLE. Give it up, Jive Eddie.

CRACKER. Let the girl go and we'll talk about it.

JIVE EDDIE. We got nothin' to talk about, Porky.

The girl stays with me. I got no plans to go to the big house. Now move back or I let her have it.

ARISTOTLE. I got news for you, Jive Eddie.

Nobody kidnaps a prima ballerina in this town and gets away with it . . . a mezzo soprano maybe, but a prima ballerina . . . never!

CRACKER. I wish you'd consider the sociological implications of your action. It's people like you that give scientific determinism a bad name.

JIVE EDDIE. Don't start layin' that sociopolitical jive on Jive Eddie. I want a plane, two million dollars, a numbered Swiss bank account, a literary agent, and I want them now.

ARISTOTLE. No deal. The Police Commissioner has stated flatly that the most we can offer a psychotic kidnapper is a Greyhound Bus, one million dollars and a ghost writer. (The BALLERINA does another flutter of arms and foot extension.)

JIVE EDDIE (thinking). How about a ghost writer and a literary agent?

CRACKER. That depends on if you've ever had anything published.

JIVE EDDIE. Nothing published, but I'm working on a collection of short stories. (CRACKER and ARISTOTLE confer in secret.)

BALLERINA. There's not much of a market for short stories these days.

JIVE EDDIE. That's why I have to kidnap people . . . to supplement my income. (To detectives.) Well?

ARISTOTLE. We'll have to check with the Commissioner. Can you give us a few minutes?

JIVE EDDIE. Five minutes. (CRACKER runs off R.)

BALLERINA. Do you mind if I go through my positions?

JIVE EDDIE. Go ahead. But one false step and it's all over. (She begins to go through various ballet steps, while he holds her.)

ARISTOTLE. Inspector Kojacket ain't gonna like this. He gave you a break once, you know.

JIVE EDDIE. Some break!

ARISTOTLE. It was a start. He went out on a limb for you.

JIVE EDDIE. He lied, baby. He said Medical School would be easy!

ARISTOTLE. If you applied yourself.

JIVE EDDIE. That's easy for you to say. You never had to sit through a pathology lab session. That sucker lied to me!

(KOJACKET enters L. He has an all-day sucker in his downstage hand that he licks as he saunters toward Jive Eddie's back.)

ARISTOTLE. What about the Fulbright Scholarship? Are you going to tell me that he lied to you about that?

JIVE EDDIE (disgustedly). Demographic Analysis! You call that a break? He knew I was into "Dreams and the Integration of the Psyche" as espoused by Jung!

ARISTOTLE. If you ask me, it's just intellectual nit-picking!

JIVE EDDIE. I have my standards.

KOJACKET (who has moved up behind JIVE EDDIE; casually licking the sucker). Who loves ya, baby?

JIVE EDDIE (freezing as he recognizes the voice). Kojacket! (He turns toward KOJACKET with his gun ready, but KOJACKET coolly hits the gun with his sucker and it falls to the ground.

KOJACKET steps on the gun and smiles.)

KOJACKET. If I didn't know better, Eddie Baby, I might think that you were about to point that gun at me. Please! Tell me it isn't so!

JIVE EDDIE. Not this time, Kojacket. You'll never



take me alive. (He starts to run. KOJACKET casually grabs him and flips him back to ARISTOTLE, who pins his arms behind his back.) KOJACKET. Silly boy. You should know by now that running doesn't solve anything. Like my old Greek mama used to say . . . "Zorba . . ." (Aside to BALLERINA.) . . . She used to call me Zorba . . . "Zorba . . . I never want to see you run unless it's in a marathon."

ARISTOTLE. What should I do with him, Inspector?

KOJACKET. Book him, baby. Book him. (Licks his sucker and smiles lewdly at the dancer.)

JIVE EDDIE (as ARISTOTLE drags him off L). Hey! No hard feelings, huh? I'll take the Fulbright Scholarship. (They are gone.)

BALLERINA (after a flutter). How can I ever thank you? You rescued me just in time for the second act.

KOJACKET. One look at those legs, baby, is thanks enough for me. (He kisses her hand.) Now you make like a little bird and flutter back onstage for me. We wouldn't want to disappoint all those ballet freaks.

BALLERINA. I'll never forget you, Zorba Kojacket. (She flutters off R.)

KOJACKET. *Ciao*, baby. (Smiles lewdly.) I love it.

(CRACKER enters R.)

CRACKER. Inspector! I got a message for you from the Chief! (Hands KOJACKET a letter.)

KOJACKET (reading it quickly, then putting it away). Interesting.

CRACKER. What's it all about, Inspector?

KOJACKET. It seems I've been assigned to special duty. There's a phantom on the loose at Shropshire Manor.

CRACKER. The Phantom of Shropshire Manor! I thought that was just a legend.

KOJACKET. Not so, baby. About a hundred years ago, there was a mysterious Phantom that terrorized the old Shropshire Manor. Killed off a bunch of the family. It was a famous case at the time. They never solved it. Well, it seems that the Phantom is back. Looks like a case for Inspector Kojacket.

CRACKER. Can I go with you?

KOJACKET. No way, baby. I'm gonna take this Phantom on head to head.

CRACKER. If anyone can catch him . . . you can, Inspector.

KOJACKET (smiling, licking his sucker). Tell it like it is, Cracker . . . (As they go R.) . . . Tell it like it is. (They exit R.)

(Music comes up again. After the music plays a few beats, SORBINA and NELLIE enter stage R wearing bathing suits. They strike a pose and throw their heads back in a sensuous manner at the same time. SORBINA carries a hammer and NELLIE carries a saw. As they speak they are constantly posing as a Vogue model might. The music fades out.)

SORBINA. Where's Dill? We haven't got much time.

NELLIE. She's still brushing her hair. You know how particular she is about her disguises.

SORBINA. We've got to talk to Charlie about this obsession she has with her hair. She has to learn that Charlie's Devils are a team.

NELLIE. Don't be too hard on her. She's still learning.

(DILL enters, licking her lips and throwing her hair back. She also wears a bathing suit, and she carries a hammer. She stops and poses.)

DILL. Sorry I'm late. I had to buff my teeth. (Dazzling smile.)

NELLIE. Let's hope our disguises fool them. Now remember -- we're construction workers.

SORBINA. Right! We have to act like we're building something so we'll be inconspicuous.

DILL. But there's nothing around here. (Looks around.)

NELLIE. She's right, Sorbina. There's nothing around here to work on.

SORBINA. Well then . . . (Thinks.) . . . we'll just have to act like we're on our lunch break. That should work.

DILL. But it's almost midnight.

NELLIE. She's right, Sorbina. It's too late for a lunch break.

SORBINA. I guess you're right, Nellie. Quick. Take these tools and run back to our car and get us some different disguises. Something that will work at night.

(NELLIE grabs tools, runs off R and runs back on with three wine bottles.)

SORBINA. That was fast!

NELLIE (passing out bottles). Three winos shouldn't attract too much attention.

DILL (giggling). This is fun. I like the constant challenge of detective work.

SORBINA. Great idea. They'll never suspect us. Now remember, we've got to catch them in the act. When Boris hands Noborinski the microfilm, we make the bust.

NELLIE. I'm not so sure about our disguises, Sorbina.

SORBINA. Why not? Winos stay up late. It's a perfect cover.

NELLIE. But not in the middle of a nuclear power plant.

DILL. I think she's right, Sorbina. They might suspect something.

SORBINA. Okay. (Thinks.) Go get us something

more apropos.

(NELLIE runs off R and runs back on with three wires. She passes them out.)

SORBINA. What are these for?

NELLIE. Isn't it obvious? (She sticks the wire in her ear.) If we look like Geiger counters, they won't even take a second look.

SORBINA. Brilliant!

DILL. Don't we make a team! (They all throw their hair back and pose, then break into disgusting giggles.) Wait! I hear something.

NELLIE. Quick! Look like a Geiger counter. (They all stick wires in their ears and start saying "Tick-tick-tick.")

(BORIS enters R. He wears an overcoat and a floppy hat that covers his face. He is very cautious and looks around as he moves toward the girls. NOBORINSKI enters L and crosses downstage of the girls, then stops. He doesn't look at them. He also is wary and is dressed like BORIS. BORIS crosses to him.)

NOBORINSKI. A thousand gypsies startle the summer night with their eerie and cacophonous wailings.

BORIS (after a look around). You ain't nothin' but a hound dog, said the spider to the fly.

NOBORINSKI. That ain't no lady . . . it's my wife.

BORIS. Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

NOBORINSKI. Mickey Mouse!

BORIS. Guy Lombardo!

NOBORINSKI. A bird in the hand . . .

BORIS. Might be construed as messy.

NOBORINSKI. Love.

BORIS. Hate.

NOBORINSKI. Fire.

BORIS. Ice.

NOBORINSKI. Desire . . .  
BORIS. Under the elms.  
NOBORINSKI (embracing BORIS). Comrade!  
BORIS. We haven't much time.  
NOBORINSKI. You picked a perfect spot for the exchange.  
BORIS. Yes. Nothing here but -- (Looks at girls.)  
-- Geiger counters.  
NOBORINSKI. Do you have the microfilm?  
BORIS. Yes. (He hands envelope over.) The secret of the Ranadtriopticonovibrascope is ours at last.  
NOBORINSKI. I thank you. Mo mother thanks you . . . and the party thanks you. You have done our country a great service.  
BORIS. Now I must away to bigger things.  
NOBORINSKI. You mean . . . ?  
BORIS. Yes . . . In a matter of weeks I should have films on the electric toothbrush.  
SORBINA (crossing in with others). Not if Charlie's Devils can help it! (The men try to run but the girls catch them.)  
BORIS. How could I have been so blind!  
NOBORINSKI. I thought they were Geiger counters!  
DILL. Not so, evil person. Just Charlie's Devils in disguise.  
SORBINA. Here comes Security.

(A GUARD moves in with a gun and motions the two bad guys off.)

SORBINA (to GUIARD). They're all yours.  
BORIS (as he exits). So much for my promotion.  
(The three go off L.)  
CHARLIE (voice only, preferably on offstage microphone). Nice work, Devils.  
NELLIE. It's Charlie. (They pose.)  
SORBINA. Got something else for us, Charlie?  
CHARLIE. Haven't I always?  
DILL. Will I have time for a quick shampoo and

rinse?

CHARLIE. I'm afraid that will have to wait, Dill.  
I need you girls to drive out to Shropshire Manor.  
Seems the legendary Phantom has returned and  
is playing havoc with the Shropshire family.

SORBINA. What's our cover?

CHARLIE. You'll just have to play it by ear,  
Sorbina. I have complete faith in your ability  
to handle it. Well, keep in touch and let me  
know how things are going.

DILL. Charlie? . . . Charlie? He's gone.

NELLIE. I wonder how he does that?

SORBINA. Does what?

NELLIE. Talks to us like that.

SORBINA. Who cares? Well . . . let's get our  
stuff together and head for Shropshire Manor.  
It's time to solve another case.

DILL. All for one. (Strikes a pose.)

NELLIE and SORBINA. And one for all. (They  
pose, then all break into giggles and exit R.)

(Music comes up again for several beats. This  
time the music has an oriental feeling to it. As  
the music plays, KANE enters in his karate out-  
fit, walking slowly in a crouch and moving his  
hands in a choreographed karate sequence. He  
moves from stage R toward stage L and continues  
his slow dance as the music fades. Suddenly he  
cocks his head to one side as if he hears some-  
thing and then smiles. He stands upright and  
folds his hands across his chest. From both  
sides of the stage, men charge him carrying  
sticks, knives, clubs, forks, etc. He responds  
with a karate yell and tosses them about in  
various directions. After he has thrown or  
kicked them all at least once, they regroup and  
charge him at the same time, completely surround-  
ing him and hiding him from the audience.  
Suddenly we hear another yell and all of the  
attackers fall to the floor. KANE stands alone

and bows. ABLE, his ancient Chinese mentor, crosses in from R. He walks with the aid of a long stick. He approaches KANE and smiles.)

ABLE. Very good, Grasshopper. You have learned well.

KANE (in a quiet, contemplative voice). Float like butterfly . . . sting like bee.

ABLE. Remember, Grasshopper. The force of the ancients is like the fury of the winds. The cosmic order of the vastness inherent in the water lily. To poach the muffin is to disinherit the beatitude of totality. Organic consumption and a certain quantity of fiber leads to regularity. Riposte?

KANE. Tell me this, Ancient One . . . What have the lima bean and the warrior in common?

ABLE. I know not.

KANE. Neither are found in the nose. (Smiles and says quietly.) Ha ha.

ABLE. The time has come, Grasshopper. The test of Karma. Are you ready?

KANE. Am I ready! Was Buddha a Buddhist?

ABLE. Very well. (Holds out stick.) The time for initiation has come. Try to remove the stick, Grasshopper. (He bows.) Let's see if you know your Kung Soo. (KANE bows, then strikes a stance.)

KANE (moving cautiously toward the old man).

The hummingbird deceives the eye. (He jumps and the old man parries.)

ABLE (moving over the bodies of those fallen).

The owl is old but wizened by experience. (He whacks KANE on the shin.) Does that hurt?

KANE (jumping back). Only when I meditate. (He lunges and the old man parries.)

ABLE. Remember, Grasshopper. The fox is subtle, yet in his subtleness is effective.

KANE (pointing). Your shoe's untied! (The old man looks, and KANE yanks the stick away.)

ABLE (laughing). Very good, Grasshopper.

KANE (beating ABLE until he is knocked down on the ground). He who whacks hardest, whacks last. (He finishes ABLE.) Well . . . do I pass? Have I earned my Kharma?

ABLE (moaning). Yes, Grasshopper. Your skill is worthy of the masters.

KANE (helping ABLE up). Does that mean I don't have to eat any more bamboo shoots?

ABLE. I have come with a message from the high llama. (Takes out scroll.) You and I must travel to a distant land.

KANE. You mean we have to leave Hollywood? Who's gonna water my plants?

ABLE. It seems our skills are needed to apprehend a phantom. It is a mission worthy of our training.

KANE. Try and explain that to my bougainvillea. Still . . . the opportunity to hunt a phantom should not be taken lightly.

ABLE. We must leave soon. It is a long and perilous journey.

KANE. We're taking the freeway?

ABLE. Come, Grasshopper. You have earned your Kharma, now you must put it to good use.

KANE. Very well, Ancient One. I will go with you.

ABLE (as they walk off R). The river runs, and in running . . . runs on.

KANE. Verily. (They have gone.)

(Music begins to play again. It is up-tempo music again. A BOY enters L and pantomimes as if he is balancing on the ledge of a very high level of a building. His back is up against the imaginary wall and his hands are outstretched and pressed against the wall. He looks down, then throws his head back and sobs, covering his eyes. He is petrified.)

BOY. So high! (Sobs and looks down.) Look at them! Just waiting for me to jump!