

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

MURDER'S BAD BUT MONDAY CAN KILL YOU!

A Play in Two Acts

by

PAT COOK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

***** NOTICE *****

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalog and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT *THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES*. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.

For performance of any songs and recordings mentioned in this play which are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MCMXCVIII by
PAT COOK

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(MURDER'S BAD BUT MONDAY CAN KILL YOU!)

ISBN 0-87129-866-X

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the Play *must* give credit to the Author(s) of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author(s), if included in this book, may be used on all programs. *On all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

MURDER'S BAD BUT MONDAY CAN KILL YOU!

A Play in Two Acts
For 5 Men and 5 Women

CHARACTERS

- HARRY MONDAY. An overweight gumshoe,
a throwback to the Raymond Chandler/Sam Spade
characters of the 1940s.
- DR. JUNE HEIDLEBURG A psychiatrist and
mother confessor, around 40.
- OFFICER BROGAN. A typical police investigator,
a bit fed up with everything.
- MAXWELL LANSING. A patient with several egos,
late 30s, with a small grey moustache.
- CLARENCE VESPERS A slightly pompous
ex-congressman, around 50.
- KATHREN HALLIFAX Usually a librarian type,
sometimes quite a flirt, around 30.
- POLLY BOONE A young, seemingly innocent woman,
late 20s.
- CYNTHIA ANDOVER. A rather smug 30-year-old
who alternately lies and tells the whole truth.
- SIGMUND SPENCE. A lawyer with many secrets, 40s.
- DIANE D. TYLER A slightly bumbling IRS worker.
- JEFFREY STADTLANDER. A brief character, late 40s.
(Part is to be doublecast with SPENCE)

TIME: The present.

PLACE: The Restful Glen psychiatric annex living room.

This play may be done using the “Evidence Desk,” a table of clues set up near the stage or in the lobby for the audience to enjoy during intermission. The list of clues is located at the end of the script.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

SETTING: *The psychiatric annex of the Restful Glen Hospital.*

BEFORE LIGHTS: *Loud laughter. Then the LIGHTS come up, revealing JEFFREY, clad in a robe, lying on the couch and reading a large coffee-table-type book. He laughs again reading his book. He reaches back to his cup and sips his hot tea. He replaces the cup, licks his fingers and turns a page. He laughs even louder, licks his fingers and turns to the next page. He laughs again, this time his laugh turns into one long wheeze and he grows wide-eyed and falls to the floor, now dead. MAXWELL rushes into the room through the U door and sees the body. He steps back. CLARENCE rushes into the room through the L door. MAXWELL points at the body and tries to speak but cannot. He moves to the couch and looks down. He then moves to the body and feels the pulse.*

MAXWELL. It's Jeffrey, he's...he's dead!

CLARENCE (*deep Southern accent*). Daid? Whut do you mean, suh?

MAXWELL. Dead! I mean dead! DEAD dead.

CLARENCE. Oh no! Mikey! He's...he's daid too!

MAXWELL. Mikey? *(He stands up quickly.)* But ...you don't think... that could it be poison?

CLARENCE. I would not know anything about... *(He moves to the body.)*

MAXWELL. No...NO! *(He looks down and becomes child-like.)* I didn't do it! I swear, I didn't do it! Sure, I gave him my cereal. You know Mikey, he'll eat anything.

CLARENCE. And Terrence is gone as well. All three, daid. *(He looks down at the body.)* All three. You don't think that anyone... *(He gets a wild look on his face and smiles. He loses the accent.)* Mad, indeed, would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die. *(MAXWELL moves to him and puts a hand on his shoulder. Then, mimicking a trumpet, blows taps. After the first six notes, CLARENCE grabs him.)* We must tell Dr. Heidleburg!

MAXWELL. I don't wanna.

CLARENCE. We must! Three murders is far too many. *(He ushers MAXWELL out the U door.)*

(After they leave, the high-backed desk chair swivels around to reveal POLLY.)

POLLY. Sing a song of sixpence, pocket full of rye... *(She wrings her hands anxiously as the LIGHTS dim out.)*

(A solo saxophone plays a tune—mellow, sad and beckoning, as if a lost child is whining for its mother. After a few bars of the melody, we hear HARRY's voice.)

HARRY. Murder. That's right, I said murder. Not much of a word, is it? Six letters, two syllables, sounds like you're mumbling, but it sure gets your attention. The Friday afternoon bridge club gets together and nobody thinks anything about it...but if one of them trumps another one with a real club, suddenly everyone's playing heads-up. A businessman goes to the same old nine-to-five, who cares? He punches out his timecard AND his boss, people start worrying about their Christmas bonuses. Congress meets and argues, you don't even read about it in the papers. But if one congressman filibusters another one into the trunk of his car? Well, okay, you STILL don't care. But I have to care. Murder is my business. Three murders, somebody says, when I get a call from the Restful Glen Hospital. Name's Monday. Harry Monday. I'm a private eye. Don't you just hate voice-overs?

(LIGHTS come up in the room. The body has now been removed. MAXWELL enters through the U door and looks around.)

HARRY. That's me. I was called in to... wait, that ain't me.

(MAXWELL looks around and then crosses over to the desk and goes through the drawers. CLARENCE enters through the L door.)

HARRY. Yes, I was called in so I...hang on, that's not me, either.

(CLARENCE sees MAXWELL and smiles. CLARENCE then moves to the U door and exits. KATHREN enters through the L door and looks at MAXWELL.)

HARRY. That SURE ain't me! Hey, I'm in here somewhere! *(KATHREN moves to MAXWELL.)* From here on, you're on your own.

KATHREN. Find anything? *(MAXWELL raises up and slams a drawer. He pulls his hand up, wringing it in pain.)*

MAXWELL. Ow!

KATHREN *(undulates toward him)*. Widdle boy catch his widdle hand in where it shouldn't be?

MAXWELL. Just looking for that thing that says what we're having for lunch.

KATHREN. We eat around noon, can't you wait?

MAXWELL. I wadn't doin' nuthin'.

KATHREN. Here, let me help you. *(She reaches over the desk. MAXWELL jumps out of the chair and moves to the center of the room.)*

MAXWELL. Nah ah, stay away from me!

KATHREN. I'm not going to hurt you, Maxwell. *(She slowly moves toward him.)* It IS Maxwell, isn't it?

MAXWELL. That's for me to know and you to find out. *(He sticks out his tongue.)* You don't count, you're not in the club. No girls allowed, no girls allowed!

KATHREN. Oh, but that's not true, Maxwell. I'm allowed anywhere. I can go anywhere. I am the wind.

MAXWELL. Well, then blow. *(He laughs a child-like titter.)*

(HARRY enters through the R door.)

KATHREN. Now, Maxwell...

MAXWELL (*moving away from her*). You stay away from me!

HARRY. Oh, playing a little keep-away. Used to play that when I was a kid.

KATHREN (*turns to him*). Really? How did you play?

HARRY. I'd go looking for girls and they'd keep away. Game lasted until I was thirty-two. Name's Monday, Harry Monday, and I'm a private investigator.

KATHREN. What?

HARRY. You know, a private eye, a shamus, a gumshoe. I'm looking for the head doc.

KATHREN. The head doc? (*She moves to him and looks him up and down seductively.*)

HARRY. Yeah, the chief medic, the main man, the big cheese.

KATHREN. Right.

HARRY. The sergeant at arms, the major-domo, Captain Crunch.

KATHREN. I got it!

HARRY. Sorry. Sometimes I get started on one of those things and I can't get off.

KATHREN. Head doc, huh? (*She looks at MAXWELL.*) Maybe you want to see Dr. Atwill.

MAXWELL (*straightens up and takes on a very aloof demeanor*). Dr. Roman Atwill, at your service. Have you come to inquire about some insurance claim or other? I'm really very busy.

HARRY. No, I just need to get a little information. A little data, little info, the poop, the scoop, the scuttlebutt, the... (*KATHREN shoots him a look.*) I'll stop now.

MAXWELL. Well, I'm afraid that would come under the bailiwick of our receptionist, she handles all the correspondence, litigation and any other sorts of data regarding our little operation here.

HARRY. Not so fast, skeezix, I need to talk to everyone.

KATHREN. Hope you brought a lunch.

MAXWELL. Yes, we regard our patients' privacy as our prime directive, and I'm afraid I cannot allow any interlopers such as yourself to invade their inner psyches, as it were.

HARRY *(after a slight pause)*. As it were what?

MAXWELL. But before I show you to the door, I assure you everything is well in hand.

HARRY. Well in hand? I got a call saying there's been three people murdered out here.

KATHREN. Maxwell?

MAXWELL *(blinks and looks at her)*. Huh?

KATHREN. I'm it and I'm counting to a hundred. And...
GO!

MAXWELL *(a little child)*. Hide your eyes! Hide your eyes! *(He rushes over to the couch and looks back.)*
You're peeking!

HARRY. Huh?

KATHREN. Cover your eyes.

HARRY. Uh...sure. *(He covers his eyes along with KATHREN. Through his fingers he sees MAXWELL crouch behind the sofa and giggle.)* This guy dispenses drugs?

KATHREN. I'm afraid we played a little prank on you. He's not really a doctor. *(She holds HARRY's face in her hands.)* You don't mind, do you?

HARRY. Hey, I'm tough, I can take it.

KATHREN. I thought you might like to get to know me better. (*MAXWELL looks up. She turns to him.*) Fifteen, sixteen, seventeen! (*He ducks back down again. She looks back at HARRY.*) After all, I have all sorts of information.

HARRY. Yeah? What's the capital of Idaho?

KATHREN (*breathlessly*). Boise.

HARRY. Say, you ARE good. Makes me want to rush right out and buy a potato.

KATHREN (*takes off HARRY's hat*). We don't have to just talk business now, do we?

HARRY. Depends. My business or your business?

KATHREN. Well, let's just put it this way: Whenever I talk, I MEAN business.

HARRY. I'll just bet YOU'RE not a doctor either, are you?

KATHREN. No, but I love to PLAY doctor. And I'm very good at that, too.

HARRY. Yeah, I bet you have a black belt in it. But I still need to see the guy in charge.

KATHREN. Well, if you must, you must. (*She moves to the U door and then looks back.*) You'll save my place, won't you?

HARRY. Oh sure. You'll recognize it by the heavy breathing.

KATHREN. Until then. (*She blows him a kiss and then looks at MAXWELL.*) A hundred. THERE you are! (*She points at him.*)

MAXWELL (*jumps up*). No fair, you peeked! You peeked! No fair! (*KATHREN smiles and exits out the door. MAXWELL gallops over to the card table and begins dealing two hands of cards.*)

HARRY. What kind of a hospital IS this, anyway? *(He looks at MAXWELL and then moves to him. MAXWELL looks at one hand and plays a card. He then moves to the next chair and looks at that hand. There he plays a card and moves to the first hand.)* Everybody else get eliminated in the finals? *(No response.)* Who's winning?

MAXWELL. He is.

HARRY. Of course. What're you playing?

MAXWELL. Crazy Eights.

HARRY. Good choice.

(CLARENCE enters through the L door, as if deep in thought. HARRY crosses to him.)

HARRY. Excuse me, are you the man in charge?

CLARENCE. Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary, over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore. *(He shoots HARRY a look.)* What do you think?

HARRY. Got a nice rhythm but you can't dance to it.

CLARENCE *(hand to his chest)*. I call it "The Raven."

HARRY. Oh, you're raving all right, but I don't think...

(KATHREN enters through the U door, she has put on a sweater.)

HARRY. Never mind, she's more my speed. *(He crosses to her.)* There you are. Did you find the chief? *(CLARENCE exits out the U door.)*

KATHREN. Are you speaking to me? *(HARRY smiles as he puts an arm around her waist.)*

HARRY. Oh, playing hard to get now, huh. (*KATHREN pulls away and slaps his face.*) Yep, I know the symptoms.

KATHREN. How DARE you! (*She puts on a pair of glasses and moves to the couch. She takes a magazine off the sofa table and sits.*)

HARRY (*rubs his face*). I should've picked up a program when I came in. (*He looks at MAXWELL.*) Don't go away, I may sit in a hand.

MAXWELL. You can't, you're not in the club.

HARRY. It's okay, I got my face stamped. (*He looks at KATHREN.*) Maybe she thought I was someone else?

MAXWELL. We're ALL somebody else.

HARRY (*after a slight pause*). That's a shame. If I was me I'd be standing right here.

(*CYNTHIA enters through the L door.*)

CYNTHIA. Did someone come in? (*She sees HARRY.*) May I help you?

HARRY (*moves to her*). Yeah, I got a call to come here. I'm a private eye.

CYNTHIA. Sure, you are. (*She pats his shoulder.*) You have the hat and everything.

HARRY. Yes, and it's almost paid for.

CYNTHIA. And a trench coat. Let's see... Phillip Marlowe?

HARRY. Harry Monday.

CYNTHIA. No. Sam Spade?

HARRY (*frustrated*). I'm starting to forget.

CYNTHIA. Oh? We had a guy here last year that was a memory expert. He could teach you to recall anything.

After a week with him, I could read three or four pages of whatever he put in front of me and then recite it verbatim. He was great.

HARRY (*pad in hand*). Yeah? What was his name?

CYNTHIA. ... Uh...

HARRY. Look, has somebody been murdered here, or not? (*Everyone else in the room gasps and stares at him.*)

This is like a mind game, right, and somebody's playing keep-away. I used to play it myself until I was thirty-two and I think this is where I came in.

MAXWELL. He's not in the club, he's not in the club!

CYNTHIA. That's all right, Maxie, you go back to your game with your friend.

HARRY. Do YOU see his friend?

CYNTHIA. No, and neither does he. (*She moves to the desk.*)

HARRY. Well, can the Doc see me? (*He moves to her.*)

CYNTHIA. Sure, fat guy like you, you'd be hard to miss.

HARRY. Oh, you must be the camp counselor.

CYNTHIA. I'm a patient here. (*She looks through a calendar.*)

HARRY. Yeah, well, I'm running out of patience.

CYNTHIA. So are we. (*She closes the book.*) If you need any facts in the case, you come to me. I'm always extremely honest. That is, when I'm me.

HARRY (*leans in*). Who are you when you're not you?

CYNTHIA (*also leans in*). Her.

HARRY. No!

CYNTHIA. Right. Tell me, do you beep when you back up?

HARRY. Maybe I should talk to her.

CYNTHIA. Who?

HARRY. Who you're not.

CYNTHIA. That's me.

(JUNE enters through the U door, looking at her notebook. She sees HARRY. He continues talking to CYNTHIA.)

HARRY. Look, lady, somebody got on the blower last night and put me on the scent. They gave me the label to this place and crackles a C-note over the phone. Now, has somebody been iced or not? I'm tired of cooling my heels and I'm getting off this merry-go-round posthaste. Is any of this sticking?

JUNE *(appreciating it)*. Amazing. A genuine throwback to the forties. *(HARRY turns and sees her.)* Extremely proficient in the use of the jargon and complete with costume.

HARRY *(moves to JUNE)*. Well, before you pin me with the rest of your butterflies, are YOU the head doc around here?

JUNE. Don't you mean head shrink?

HARRY. No, thank you, all my hats fit this one. And while it's still hitting on all the pistons, just what kind of cafe are you running here?

JUNE. Such melodramatic metaphors. I haven't run across a case like yours since I was at the university. *(She takes his arm.)* You're going to make quite a study. *(She moves him to the U door.)*

HARRY. Hey, what's with the bum's rush?

JUNE. Now, you come with me and we'll have a session right away. We have a nice room just for you.

HARRY. Shove in your clutch, lady, you are too many for me.

JUNE. What?

HARRY (*stops*). Hey, I'm not part of the landscape, you know. I'm a private eye.

CYNTHIA. Notice the hat.

HARRY. Shut up.

JUNE. Right this way, Mr. ...

HARRY. Monday, Harry Monday.

JUNE. Of course. I don't know who recommended you but I think I can help you. You'll fit right in.

HARRY. Here? In a rest home?

JUNE. Psychiatric clinic. This is what we do. This is our racket, I believe you would say. We deal with people of your sort.

HARRY. And just what is my sort?

JUNE. Dissociative behavior. Come, I have someone I want you to meet. You might be of some help.

HARRY. You mean you think that I'm... ?

JUNE. One of us? Sure. Everyone here suffers from the same thing you have.

HARRY. And, just for the peanut gallery, what is that?

JUNE. Multiple personalities.

HARRY. Wait. Everyone here has ... multiple personalities?

JUNE. And you're going to fit right in.

(She escorts him to the U door just as CLARENCE enters.)

HARRY. Why didn't I bring my gun? Look, toots, I ain't got time for the runaround.

JUNE. You'll get away from everything and just relax. No phone calls, no mail...

HARRY. Maybe you ain't tuned in to the right frequency.

JUNE. And no creditors.

HARRY (*thinks a moment*). I'll go with you. (*They exit.*)

CYNTHIA (*to KATHREN*). I think he's going to be trouble. He's the real article, I'm afraid.

KATHREN. Such a callous oaf. Just comes in here and throws out some line and thinks he can have his way with us. Such a brute, a beast and... (*She looks up and slowly takes off her glasses. She smiles wickedly.*) I wonder if he's much of a dancer.

CLARENCE. Gaily bedight, a gallant knight in sunshine and in shadow. Had journeyed long, singing a song, in search of El Dorado.

MAXWELL (*jumps up and points to his imaginary friend*). You're cheating! I'm not gonna play with you no more! (*He slaps at the air as the LIGHTS dim out.*)