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*Dramatic Publishing*

# **THREE MURDERS AND IT'S ONLY MONDAY!**

by

**Pat Cook**



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(THREE MURDERS AND IT'S ONLY MONDAY!)

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# THREE MURDERS AND IT'S ONLY MONDAY!

A Comedy Murder Mystery in Two Acts  
with one intermission and a trombone player  
For Five Men and Four Women  
(To portray 14 characters)

## CHARACTERS

CAPTAIN MANDRAKE ..... an old ship's captain  
DANNY O'DONNELL ..... an old ventriloquist  
TRAMP ..... a hobo  
HARRY MONDAY ..... a private eye  
DR. MORRISSEY ..... a 40-year-old man  
BEATRICE SMITH ..... the doctor's aide  
TARA DILLAISE ("Dee-Yea") ..... the dame  
LARRAMORE MANDRAKE ..... a 40-year-old actor  
LILLY DRAMKEAN .... a 40-year-old business woman  
MARY TOBIAS ..... a 35-year-old socialite  
HUMPHREY HOPKINS .. a 30-year-old American Indian  
HANS ..... the gardener  
THUNDER O'BRIEN ..... a hulk of a man  
RHEA TETLEY ..... a 50-year-old woman

TIME: The present.

PLACE: Living room of the Peaceful Pines Sanitarium.

## ABOUT THE PLAY...

This is a spoof of the multi-character Dashiell Hammett-type mystery where cops and crooks dart in and out of dimly-lit parlors and speakeasies. Following this "film noir" genre and, keeping the practicality of staging in mind, many characters in this piece can be played by few actors. The following casting is not only suggested but recommended, especially considering the second act climax.

1st actor . . . . . Capt. Mandrake, Larramore, O'Brien  
2nd actor . . . . . Danny O'Donnell, Hans  
3rd actor . . . . . Tramp, Humphrey  
Actress . . . . . Lilly, Rhea

Using this system, 9 people can essay 14 roles. Also, it should be great fun for a few versatile actors.

The advertising regarding the play should include the subtitle as well as the title, especially on the play program itself. The trombone player mentioned shows up in the play, albeit on the periphery.

An added attraction is the "Scene of the Crime"; a desk with various clues on it which can be placed in the lobby or somewhere near the stage. During intermission the audience can go over the clues in person and draw their own conclusions. Perhaps in the second act, you may even have Harry ask for a show of hands or applause as he lists each of the suspects. This can be placed after all the clues are in and just before he reveals the solution. (It is up to the director's discretion). A list of the props for the SOC is included. However, the play can work without this element, but try it, you'll like it!

Pat Cook

## ACT ONE

*AT RISE: The overall atmosphere of the living room is one of foreboding and ill-lit depression. The rest of the room is dark save for a small lighted area where CAPTAIN MANDRAKE sits and dictates his memoirs into a cassette recorder.*

MANDRAKE (*bellowing*). "Blast ye, man," I shouted to the first mate. "Blast you!" And then, quick as a mouse's wink I took the wheel, facing the typhoon with nothing but raw courage. Arrrrgh! "Stand to and keep a lookout!" I yelled, "and I'll use yer yellin' streak fer a beacon!" (*He stops and takes a sip of tea from his cup.*) Yellin' streak fer a beacon, I like that. Where was I? (*Back to the recorder.*) Wide-eyed, the lad soon realized that he was more afraid of me than any hurricane. With legs wobbling like seaweed he took the watch and there...there...(MANDRAKE *does a bit of wobbling himself as he grows dizzy.*)...he took the lookout and... and he...he...(He *clutches his throat, falls into his chair and looks at his cup.*) Arrrrgh! Bitter tea! (*He now falls limp, quite dead. Lights out on MANDRAKE.*)

(*Lights up on another part of the room where DANNY is running one of his time-worn routines with his "friend," MANNY.*)

DANNY. Now Manny, you don't talk to an audience like that.

MANNY. You're the one doing the talking, I'm just the mouthpiece.

DANNY. Those were the days, though, weren't they?

MANNY. You're not going to sing, are you?

DANNY. We had a great time on the road.

MANNY. How would I know. I was always in the trunk!

DANNY. But you weren't lonely. Remember that pet I got you?

MANNY. Some pet. A woodpecker! Every time I took a nap, he had lunch! *(A gunshot rings out. DANNY's eyes widen and he falls backward in his chair. MANNY looks around. Another gunshot is heard and MANNY falls backward and "dies." Lights out.)*

*(Lights up on the front door. A TRAMP opens it and stumbles into the room.)*

TRAMP. They tried to tell me this was a tough neighborhood, but NOOOOO, I wouldn't listen. *(He falls to the floor, revealing a knife in his back. Lights out. In the darkness, HARRY speaks, his voice is clipped and brutal, a professional.)*

HARRY'S VOICE. It was the kinda night when you found yourself holding your breath for no reason at all. Calm as a tomb but hot enough to put you on edge. On a night like that, mousy little housewives eyed their husbands and silently wished that they were taller...or thinner...or deader. I shoulda been back at my apartment with a big blonde but I had to work. Three murders at the Peaceful Pines Sanitarium and the cops didn't have a clue. So I got called in. *(He lights a ciga-*

*rette.*) Name's Monday. Harry Monday. I'm a private eye.

*(Lights come up on the living room as HARRY walks around, looking it over.)*

HARRY. I bet this put a big hole in five dollars.

*(BEATRICE enters from the dining room.)*

BEATRICE. Hey! Who're you? How'd you get in here?

HARRY. What's wrong, sister? I need to get my hand stamped?

BEATRICE. Please, sir, we'd rather you didn't smoke.

HARRY *(crosses to window)*. Sure, kid. *(He flicks the cigarette out the window. Outside DR. MORRISSEY yells but HARRY pays him no mind. He moves back to BEATRICE.)* Name's Monday. Harry Monday. I was put on the case here.

BEATRICE. Oh, you're here about the...the difficulties we've been having.

HARRY. Difficulties? The word is "murders," ma'am, "murders." You make it sound like the dog's been scratching himself on the piano leg again.

BEATRICE. He has! Aren't you the vet?

HARRY. Private investigator, I...*(He stops and looks at her.)* The dog's been scratching himself...

BEATRICE *(finishing the sentence)*. On the piano leg, it's just the strangest thing.

HARRY. Uh huh. Maybe you ought to try a little Flea-Off. Worked great for my boxer.

BEATRICE. You have a dog?

HARRY. No, a boxer.



(*MORRISSEY enters through the front door, rubbing a black spot on his face.*)

HARRY. He fights under the name of Kid Gloves. You ought to go a couple of rounds with him. Might do him some good.

MORRISSEY (*irritated*). What is the meaning of this? Beatrice, I told you not to allow anyone in. (*He turns to HARRY.*) What's your business here? (*MORRISSEY, still holding the cigarette butt, drops it into a wastebasket near the desk.*)

HARRY. Ain't you afraid of fires?

MORRISSEY. Oh, no, we have fire alarms over each door and...(*Suddenly irate again.*) See here! I'm Dr. Morrissey...

HARRY. *You're* Dr. Morrissey?

MORRISSEY. Yes, and I run this institute.

HARRY (*looking around*). Yes, I know.

MORRISSEY. Oh, you do.

BEATRICE. He says he's a private eye.

MORRISSEY. I see. (*To HARRY.*) Well, you won't find anything out about us.

HARRY. I won't, eh? (*He takes out a pad and reads.*) Dr. Vernon Morrissey, forty years old, lives at 733 Chandler Street with mother, who nags you except on Thursday nights when she plays Mah-Jongg with her sister and two nieces. You've been the head cheese at this place for eight years and it's been getting to you for the last three of those. You like old movies, nightly walks and ping-pong but your mother keeps telling you it scars up the dining table.

MORRISSEY. Anything else?

HARRY (*reading again*). You graduated seventh in your class from Hammett Medical University. During your senior year your thesis on "Cellulite and You" was published in the journal and subsequently picked up by the Reader's Digest. You tried private practice in Boston but you could never get the hang of the accent and to this day, you can't watch "Cheers" on TV without crying.

MORRISSEY. Is that it?

HARRY (*reading once more*). You drive an '89 Chrysler with power steering and air conditioning. You wanted a two-door but they didn't have it in maroon. You have three cavities...

MORRISSEY. ALL RIGHT!

BEATRICE (*meekly*). What do you have on me?

HARRY (*turns a page*). You're Beatrice Smith, twenty-seven and you've been working here for four years. (*He closes the pad.*)

BEATRICE. Whoa boy, I'm drained!

MORRISSEY. So, Mr. Monday, exactly why are you here?

HARRY (*deliberately*). Don't you know? I was put on the case. I came to...(*He looks at BEATRICE.*) look into the difficulties you've been having.

BEATRICE. He doesn't mean the dog.

MORRISSEY. I got that, I got that! (*Back to HARRY.*) So. A private investigator, huh? "Small things make base men proud." That's Shakespeare.

HARRY (*moving to MORRISSEY*). Yeah. "Henry, the Sixth, Part Two," I believe.

MORRISSEY (*moving to HARRY*). Act four.

HARRY (*moving closer*). Scene one.

MORRISSEY (*in HARRY's face*). Spoken by Suffolk!

HARRY. To the Captain!

MORRISSEY (*moving away*). You seem to know quite a bit about this case.

HARRY. Only that three men were murdered last night.

MORRISSEY. And you suspect me?

HARRY. Is there some reason I shouldn't?

(*TARA enters through the front door, unnoticed.*)

MORRISSEY. Of course. I wasn't even here last night.

HARRY. Right. I know where you were.

MORRISSEY. I suppose that's intended to frighten me. See here, Monday, this is a sanitarium and, as of last night, we only have one patient left but I will not have you disturbing him with any of your ham-fisted grilling.

HARRY. Just who is that patient?

MORRISSEY. Osgood Harnelle, if it's any of your business. He's not only a patient but he owns this building, the grounds around it...

TARA. And has the dubious distinction of being my uncle.

HARRY (*seeing her*). Par-ty!

MORRISSEY (*equally smitten*). I saw her first! (*HARRY and MORRISSEY rush to the door.*)

BEATRICE. I can't stand it!

HARRY (*hat off*). Come in, won't you?

MORRISSEY. Yeah, can I get you anything? Anything? Just name it, AN-Y-THING!

BEATRICE (*crossing to the group*). Down boy! (*To TARA.*) You're Mr. Harnelle's niece?

TARA (*adjusts her gloves*). Now you're cooking on the front burner, honey. Unk got on the blower a couple of nights ago and asked if I could frequent this place. (*She*

*oozes into a chair.*) So much for the small town palaver, any chance I could get a long, tall one?

MORRISSEY. I'm long! I'm tall!

HARRY. Don't listen to him, he's a mamma's boy.

BEATRICE. What would you like, Miss...?

TARA. Dillaise. What've you got, toots?

MORRISSEY (*showing off*). Oh, just the usual. Red or white.

BEATRICE (*disgusted*). Yeah. Cranberry juice or milk.

HARRY. I wouldn't drink anything around here if I was you, kid. Name's Monday, Harry Monday. I'm a private investigator.

MORRISSEY (*moves in front of HARRY*). And I'm Dr. Vernon Morrissey. Hi, there!

TARA. Hey, what's in a name. "That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

HARRY and MORRISSEY. "Romeo and Juliet"! (*They BOTH look at BEATRICE for a ruling.*)

BEATRICE (*points to HARRY*). He was first.

MORRISSEY (*irate*). Drinks! (*BEATRICE exits into the dining room.*)

HARRY. So, you're Harnelle's niece. You don't look much like a niece. More like a cheerleader.

TARA. Very good, Mr. Monday. In high school I was a cheerleader. They even had a nickname for me.

MORRISSEY (*leaning in, coyly*). And what was that?

TARA (*very sultry*). "Rah...Boom."

MORRISSEY (*gasping*). That works, that works.

HARRY. Excuse us a minute. Keep your motor running. (*He pulls MORRISSEY over to one side.*)

MORRISSEY. What?!

HARRY. What do you know about her?

MORRISSEY. Nothing. You mean you don't have anything about her in that Funk and Wagnall's note pad of yours?

HARRY (*slight pause*). Boy, you scared me for a minute there. No, I don't have anything. Did you know Harnelle had a niece?

MORRISSEY (*childishly*). No, and I don't care. (*He starts to move but HARRY holds him.*) What?

HARRY. I just figured out something else. Do you realize that her name in high school was Tara "Rah Boom" Dillaise.

MORRISSEY. You want a breath mint? (*HARRY turns to TARA.*)

HARRY. Well, Miss Dillaise, you've chosen a pretty odd time to fill in your uncle's dance card.

TARA. What?

MORRISSEY. He talks like that, don't ask me.

TARA. What do you mean, odd time?

MORRISSEY. Nothing, nothing! Well, we've had a little trouble of late. In the house.

TARA. You mean, like insects?

HARRY. You could say that. People are dropping like flies.

TARA (*to MORRISSEY*). You're right. He *does* talk like that.

MORRISSEY. Now just one minute there, Monday...

HARRY. None of your bedside manner here, *Doctor!* I believe in letting the little lady in on the whole opera, not just certain arias.

TARA (*fearful*). Wait, my uncle...he's not...he's not...? (*She bites a finger.*)

MORRISSEY (*soothing her*). No, no, I can assure you that Mr. Harnelle is quite safe. (*TARA is relieved and looks at her finger.*)

HARRY. For the time being, that is.

TARA (*painfully*). No!

HARRY and MORRISSEY. What?!

TARA (*holds up a finger*). I broke a nail, lookit that.

MORRISSEY. Let me put something on it.

HARRY. You'd like that, wouldn't you!

(*BEATRICE enters carrying a tray with a pitcher of prune juice and glasses.*)

MORRISSEY. I'm just saying that her finger should be looked at.

HARRY. Sure, first her finger, then...

MORRISSEY. I'm getting pretty sick and tired of your accusations. I want you to know that we run a very sanitary sanitarium...sanitarium. (*He smacks his lips, trying too late to straighten out his last sentence.*)

HARRY. Oh, it's going to be *that* kind of humor!

BEATRICE (*a flat tone*). Prune juice.

TARA. Am I to understand that patients, *your* patients are dying? (*She crosses away from MORRISSEY and begins circling the couch.*)

MORRISSEY (*following her*). Nothing to worry your alabaster head over. Such a lovely head it is, too.

HARRY (*following them*). You just make sure it stays where it is, Morrissey.

MORRISSEY. What does *that* mean?

HARRY. You make it sound like you want to mount it!  
(*BEATRICE watches HARRY, MORRISSEY and TARA circle the couch. As they pass her, she speaks again.*)

BEATRICE. Prune juice.

MORRISSEY. And Miss Dillaise has such an innocent face, one that bespeaks sweetness and light.

TARA. Lucky thing I shaved today.

MORRISSEY. Why worry yourself over our trivial problems. I bet you haven't had dinner yet?

HARRY. Yeah, how about a nice tray of hemlock. (*They pass BEATRICE again.*)

BEATRICE. Prune juice.

HARRY (*stopping*). Hey, can we stop for a minute? I'm starting to feel like a float.

MORRISSEY. What's your point?

HARRY. My point is she never answered my question. (*To TARA.*) Why *did* you happen to come by tonight? Three people get killed and you suddenly show up. (*TARA sits, apparently surprised by this information.*)

TARA. Three people? Murdered?

MORRISSEY. Hey, two...three, something like that.

TARA. So now I'm a suspect?

HARRY. What do you think, kid? (*MORRISSEY crosses to BEATRICE.*)

MORRISSEY. The police think it was passing gypsies.

TARA. Who stopped long enough to kill three people? Well, I guess that's one way to tell your fortunes.

MORRISSEY. We get hoboes around here all the time.

TARA. And why passing gypsies? Don't you have any resident ones?

HARRY (*warming to her*). Say, kid, you got a pretty analytical mind there. (*TARA stares into HARRY's eyes.*)

TARA. A man who admires my mind. Well, well. Will wonders never cease?

MORRISSEY. I like your mind, too.

BEATRICE. He's a mamma's boy. Watch him if he takes out his stethoscope.

MORRISSEY. Beatrice! Are those the drinks? What is that stuff, anyway?

BEATRICE. Prune juice? I'm just guessing, now.

TARA. You think the murderer is still here?

HARRY. Maybe he is. Or maybe *she* is.

TARA. Awfully free with your pronouns, aren't you?

MORRISSEY. Monday, why don't you go investigate something and leave us to our own devices?

TARA (*smiling at MORRISSEY*). You have devices?

HARRY. I would if I could get some cooperation around here. Come on, Morrissey, where do you have the evidence?

MORRISSEY (*suddenly cold*). What do you mean? What kind of evidence? (*He backs up to the covered table.*)

HARRY. You're holding back something, I can tell.

MORRISSEY (*biting his lip*). Well...there is one item you should see.

HARRY. Uh huh, I knew it.

MORRISSEY. We still have...(*He takes a deep breath.*) one of the victims.

TARA (*rising*). What? (*She moves up behind HARRY.*)

HARRY. One of the murder victims?

BEATRICE. I *hate* this. I *really* hate this. (*She sits, disgustedly.*)

HARRY. You still have him here?

MORRISSEY (*moving to covered table*). Yes, he was shot.

HARRY (*to TARA*). I hope this isn't too much for you.

TARA. I'm fine, go ahead.

HARRY. Okay, Morrissey, for the tally books, let's set the record straight. You got the one that was shot. And there's one that was stabbed and one that was poisoned.



MORRISSEY. No, two were shot.

HARRY. Oh? Okay, two were shot and one was poisoned.

MORRISSEY. No, there was one who was stabbed.

HARRY (to TARA). I figured you'd have fainted by now.

TARA. Boy, you'd have thought so, wouldn't you?

HARRY (to MORRISSEY). Okay, two were shot and one was stabbed.

MORRISSEY. No, one was poisoned.

HARRY. Hold it! How many people were killed?

MORRISSEY. Three.

HARRY. Well, it ain't adding up.

MORRISSEY. You asked how many people were killed.

HARRY. In a murder, that's usually the kind of question that kinda pops up. But you said two were shot, one was stabbed and one was poisoned. That makes four victims!

MORRISSEY. Right, Mr. Monday, it's kind of like Bridge. You have to listen to the bidding very carefully.

HARRY. Bridge? (He thinks.) Four victims, three people...

MORRISSEY. Right. And like Bridge...(He whips off the cover and holds up MANNY.) one of them is a dummy! (HARRY faints. Lights out in the living room.)

*(A solo light comes up and HARRY walks into it.)*

HARRY (to the AUDIENCE). So, you think you had a tough day. How do you like the staff at Peaceful Pines? Not your average cocktail crowd, is it? And how about Miss Dillaise? Not exactly the kind of woman I'd take home to Mother but then again, she never brought one home to me, so we're even on that score. The next day I checked through the files and made a few calls. Odd

how relatives head up a suspect list. That morning, they all showed.

*(Lights up in the living room. LARRAMORE enters through the front door.)*

HARRY. Larramore Mandrake, son of the late Captain Mandrake. He inherited all of the swash but none of the buckle. An actor of some reputation who's appearing in a play downtown. *(LARRAMORE moves into the room and sits on the couch.)*

*(LILLY enters through the front door.)*

HARRY. Lilly Dramkean. One of those uptown dames who had her last laugh about ten years ago. She's the attorney to Captain Mandrake and Osgood Harnelle.

LARRAMORE. Good morning.

LILLY. I suppose. *(She sits in a chair.)*

LARRAMORE. Okay.

*(HUMPHREY enters through the front door and smiles nervously at LARRAMORE and LILLY.)*

HARRY. Humphrey Hopkins. He's an Indian. Claims to have once worked with Danny O'Donnell. He also claims to be in his will. *(HUMPHREY crosses and sits on the couch.)*

LARRAMORE. Got a cigar?

HUMPHREY. That's not funny!

*(MARY enters through the front door and waves gaily at the REST of the room.)*

MARY. Hello, everyone. Hello, hello, hello. (*She primps over to a chair and nests.*)

HARRY. Last to arrive, Mary Alice Tobias. One of the Who's Who who can't tell you what's what. Says she's Danny O'Donnell's daughter. They're all taking it quite well, don't you think?

LARRAMORE. You, excuse me? You, in the battered out-of-date trench coat. Are you somebody? (*HARRY crosses into the room as his light goes out.*)

HARRY. I like to think so.

LARRAMORE. I mean someone in a position of authority? If not, hie yourself away and find one, porfavor.

LILLY. Yes, I haven't time for this sort of thing. Besides, we all told the police all we know.

HARRY. Ah, patience, dear friends. In your patience possess ye your soul. Luke, twenty-one.

LARRAMORE. Nay, nay, there is a point where patience ceases to be a virtue. Thomas Morton.

MARY. Oh, but remember, all things come round to him who will but wait. Longfellow.

LILLY (*coldly*). Beware the fury of a patient man! Dryden. (*A pause. EVERYONE looks at HUMPHREY.*)

HUMPHREY. There was a young lady from Spain, who carried a whip and a chain...

LARRAMORE (*rising*). All right! Now that we've added a literate note to the conversation, may I be so impertinent as to inquire why we've all been summoned here?

LILLY. Yes, and who're you?

HARRY. Name's Monday. Harry Monday. I'm a private eye. (*HUMPHREY jumps up.*)

HUMPHREY (*yelling*). I didn't do it!!! (*He quickly composes himself.*) Oh, sorry, that was an accident. (*He re-seats himself.*)