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Dramatic Publishing

**ALL I REALLY
NEED TO KNOW
I LEARNED BY
BEING IN A BAD**

MURDER

MYSTERY

BY WERNER TRIESCHMANN

ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED BY BEING IN A BAD MURDER MYSTERY

Comedy. By Werner Trieschmann. Cast: 16 either gender. Look out, our band of lovable yet impossibly inept thespians are onstage again in *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Murder Mystery*. Last time, we saw our collection of bad actors and actresses in *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play*. In that comic disaster, they butchered *Romeo and Juliet*, performing the timeless

classic by Shakespeare in a Starbucks while wearing potato sacks and bowler hats. This time, our terrible troupe takes on the genre that will not die—the murder mystery! Follow along—if you dare—as our misguided performers attempt to nail down those devilish British accents, understand what a red herring is, and figure out how to die onstage without looking all gross and stuff. Meanwhile, the director and stage manager, who really love dealing with the egomaniacs and lunatics in the cast, wouldn't really try to murder someone during the murder mystery. Would they?! Chaos rules the day as time is running out for cast and crew to sort out this mess. Safe to say, you will never look at a whodunit the same way again as *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Murder Mystery* brings up the curtain on bad accents, murder and laughs. *Simple set. Approximate running time: 40 minutes. Code: AL5.*

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By

WERNER TRIESCHMANN



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All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Murder Mystery

CHARACTERS

ACTORS: a group of actors.

DEAD ACTOR

FLAPJACK

NACHO

NARRATOR

INTIMIDATING ACTOR #1

INTIMIDATING ACTOR #2

DIRECTOR

STAGE MANAGER

BUM-BUM-BUM ACTOR

CHRISTIE-LOVING ACTOR

ACCENT COACH

CONTORTED-FACE ACTOR

RED HERRING

ACCUSING ACTOR

PEACE ACTOR

PRODUCTION NOTES

TIME: Showtime.

PLACE: A basically empty stage of whatever flavor you have handy.

SETTING: There is a podium set off to one side. The rest of the stage could have chairs or black boxes scattered about. There might also be a painted flat or other set pieces on stage to suggest a working acting company.

CAST NOTE: The generic term ACTOR is used to describe a cast member who can be either gender, and the lines can be assigned to whomever and however you wish. A character given a specific name such as FLAPJACK or DIRECTOR should be given to a single actor. However, characters given a specific name and who appear in a single scene can also be one of the ACTORS should you need to double these roles. In almost every case, these parts can be cast with either gender and feel free to change pronouns whenever necessary.

All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Murder Mystery

(Lights up on the stage. Slumped over at the podium is DEAD ACTOR with a large knife sticking out of her back.

Now the rest of the ACTORS slowly start to walk onstage, looking at each other as if something is off.

The STAGE MANAGER, possibly wearing a headset, quickly walks out.)

STAGE MANAGER. Hold cue 2. Hold cue 2. Where is he? The narrator. Anybody? Ugh, I don't know why I'd expect you Mensa members to know.

(STAGE MANAGER scans the room and then stops.)

STAGE MANAGER *(cont'd, pointing)*. There he is. He's out in the audience. Go get him so we can get this disaster started.

(STAGE MANAGER walks off as INTIMIDATING ACTOR #1 and INTIMIDATING ACTOR #2 walk off the stage to fetch the NARRATOR.)

INTIMIDATING ACTOR #1 *(to NARRATOR)*. Let's go.

NARRATOR. No.

INTIMIDATING ACTOR #1 *(to NARRATOR)*. Come on.

NARRATOR. I don't want to do this, thank you very much.

INTIMIDATING ACTOR #2. You better do what she says.

NARRATOR. Oh please, I'm not scared.

INTIMIDATING ACTOR #1. What did you say?

NARRATOR (*scared*). Um, you see, the last time was really not good.

(NARRATOR and INTIMIDATING ACTOR #1 and INTIMIDATING ACTOR #2 walk back to the stage and then up to the podium.)

NARRATOR (*cont'd, to DEAD ACTOR at the podium*). Excuse me. A-hem. Excuse me. You're not dead.

(The DEAD ACTOR stands up and smiles and then bows out to audience.)

NARRATOR (*cont'd, to DEAD ACTOR, who is still hamming it up for the audience*). Shoo.

(DEAD ACTOR walks to the group of ACTORS gathered together on the stage.)

NARRATOR (*cont'd, out to the audience*). My apologies. Good evening. It is against my better judgement that I am in this theatre today. You may not be aware that I was the narrator for—

ACTORS (*out*). *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Play!*

NARRATOR. Yes. That was the unfortunate evening where we watched these actors rehearse and perform William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

ACTOR. Hey, you shouldn't say it was "unfortunate." My mother really liked it.

ACTOR. So did mine.

NARRATOR. No doubt. But you performed the Bard's immortal work of poetic brilliance by wearing costumes consisting of

potato sacks and bowler hats. You moved the setting of *Romeo and Juliet* from Verona to a Starbucks. To call what you did a bomb is to do a disservice to explosive devices.

FLAPJACK (to NARRATOR). What does that mean?

ACTOR. She didn't appreciate it, Flapjack.

NARRATOR (to FLAPJACK). Yes, you stunk up the joint.

FLAPJACK. Aw, flapjacks!

NARRATOR (to ACTORS). I returned tonight because I couldn't believe you all were allowed anywhere near a theatrical facility. I had to see it for myself. Why, Geraldine, why? You could be home with a nice glass of tea and your cats but instead you are here for—

ACTORS (out). *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Murder Mystery!*

NARRATOR (out). Yes, my fellow long-suffering friends of the theatre, this is your cast of actors.

(ACTORS now all bow or wave, trying to garner as much attention as possible.)

ACTORS (out, ad libbing). Heyo! Hi! That's my mom! Hi, Mom! To know me is to love me! Rock on!

NARRATOR (glaring at the ACTORS). Yes. Those of you out there in the dark who happen to possess IQs higher than a common houseplant can glean from the title of our evening that—

ACTORS (out). *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Being in a Bad Murder Mystery!*

(The STAGE MANAGER now walks out and stares at the NARRATOR during this speech.)

NARRATOR. Yes. The title of our show indicates that someone will be *learning* something. However, I can give you my complete assurance that will not happen. We could aptly describe these thespians as gluttons for punishment or you could say you all are the fools who rush in while the really smart ones stay home and play with their cats. Or you could say, “Sic caveat emptor!”

(The lights go out. After a moment, the lights come back up, and the NARRATOR is slumped over the podium with a knife in her back.)

ACTOR. What happened?

ACTOR. Hey! Look the Narrator is ... is ...

BUM-BUM-BUM ACTOR. Bum-bum-bum.

ACTOR. ... dead!

(ACTORS all gasp in various exaggerated ways.)

ACTOR. Good riddance I say.

BUM-BUM-BUM ACTOR. Bum-bum-bum.

ACTOR. Why are you saying that?

(BUM-BUM-BUM ACTOR shrugs.)

NARRATOR *(popping up)*. No, of course I am not dead. I just put my head down to rest and somebody stuck this fake knife back here. Goodness. Thank you for your concern but I am perfectly fine.

STAGE MANAGER *(to NARRATOR)*. Don't worry. There's still plenty of play left.

BUM-BUM-BUM ACTOR. Bum-bum-bum.

(NARRATOR turns to the audience.)

NARRATOR. If there's no avoiding this, I suppose we should begin. As usual, the road to our particular theatrical heck is paved by a director.

(The ACTORS stir and talk to each other. The STAGE MANAGER steps out of the crowd.)

STAGE MANAGER. All right everybody, all right listen. Listen. The director is going to come out and make an announcement about the next show.

ACTOR. The next show?

ACTOR. Our next show?

(All the ACTORS now look at each other and exchange excited guesses.)

ACTOR. What is it?

ACTOR *(to STAGE MANAGER)*. Yeah, do you know? Is it a comedy?

ACTOR. A farce?

STAGE MANAGER. I wouldn't know because, yeah, thanks for asking, it looks like I'm stage managing again because nobody else will step up and do it. After the last show, I promised myself I wouldn't be passive aggressive and take out my anger on you people because you are all lazy and vain actors who are only concerned about how much spotlight you can steal and how much work you can pawn off on me.

ACTOR *(to STAGE MANAGER)*. Hey, um, I somehow have gum stuck in my hair. Can you come help me get it out?

STAGE MANAGER. Seriously?

(NACHO, who holds in one hand a plate of nachos, raises his hand.)

STAGE MANAGER. What is it, Nacho? This better be good.

NACHO. There's a big sign backstage that says there's no food allowed in the theatre.

STAGE MANAGER. That is correct, Nacho, because food onstage causes a big mess, and who is left cleaning it up? Any guesses, Sherlock?

NACHO. Well, you wouldn't consider nachos food because it's really a snack, right?

STAGE MANAGER. Ugh. This rehearsal hasn't started and it already will never end.

(DIRECTOR, holding a large Starbucks cup, walks out as the STAGE MANAGER starts to walk off.)

STAGE MANAGER *(yells)*. Shut yer pie holes, everybody, it's her majesty the director.

DIRECTOR *(to STAGE MANAGER)*. Oh I didn't have time, so can you be an absolute love and go pick up my dry cleaning?

STAGE MANAGER. Dry cleaning?!

(STAGE MANAGER walks off, muttering and shaking her head as she goes.)

DIRECTOR. Thanks but hurry back because we have a ton of work to do on this show.

ACTOR *(to DIRECTOR)*. What is it? What show are we doing?

DIRECTOR. First of all, let me say I'm glad to get this chance to direct again after the unmitigated disaster that was *Romeo and Juliet*, which was only sort of my fault as I was suffering through a crippling addiction to caffeine—and this is decaffeinated tea I promise—but for a while

there I was drinking about 20 triple espressos a night, and nobody stopped me while I was trying to keep imaginary bats from nesting in my hair.

(DIRECTOR swats away something near her head.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. That was a gnat, I swear! ANYWAY while riding high on the ol' Mister Joe, I realized that if I ever got my teeth to stop chattering, that I would direct a murder mystery and quit trying to fool myself that you all could tackle important and profound themes like man's inhumanity to man and so—

ACTOR. Excuse me. Isn't a murder mystery about man's inhumanity to man?

ACTOR. Yeah, isn't it?

DIRECTOR. You're just actors and I'm the director and I think—

ACTOR. Yeah but in a murder mystery, a person is killing another person. So that is literally man's inhumanity to man.

NACHO. That's not as bad as when somebody takes your nachos. That's the worst, dude.

ACTOR. Oh, Nacho.

NACHO. Like I put a plate of delicious, perfect nachos in the green room and came back and they were gone!

(STAGE MANAGER storms back onstage.)

STAGE MANAGER *(to NACHO)*. That's because I threw them away, you numbskull. You aren't supposed to have food in the theatre.

(STAGE MANAGER storms off.)