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DEAD AND DEADER

AN AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION
MURDER-MYSTERY
by
Eileen Moushey

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

FREDERICO DE MEDICI - "Fredo" is in his mid-thirties to mid-forties. Flamboyant and very Italian, he is concerned with "making da art" but even more with "making da big money." Dressed in silk shirt, gold chains and/or ascot, etc.

LILIAN DURAND - Ageless.....or is she? Lilian is a former very, very big star who is finding it difficult to be less than a very, very big star. Dressed in heavy make-up, turban, and gown, she is still quite glamorous, very dramatic and quite insane. Think Norma Desmond.

BILLY BARTON - Billy is a former child star - he played Buster the neighbor on the sitcom "Make Way for Winky." Boyish, yet it gets tougher every year for Billy to get jobs. Can't quite make the transition to grown-up. In a "poet's" shirt and tight pants.

FARLEY HOOPER - Farley is a millionaire and the backer of DEAD AND DEADER - THE MOVIE. He's a good ol' boy, back-slapper, how-ya-doin'kinda guy. But you don't make a fortune in peat moss by being a pushover. Dressed in a loud sports jacket, etc.

JENNIFER KILLIAN - (ALSO THE PICTURE USED FOR LACEY LA FLEUR) Late thirties. Pretty, feminine. Not overly "endowed". A wannabe actress. Dressed mysteriously in a hooded cape to cover the long red wig she is wearing.

LIZ CARTER-CAMPBELL - A reporter for the tabloid, The Rag. Hard-hitting and fasttalking. Any age. Dressed in business attire - suit...

LYNN KELLY - This is an audience "plant". Attractive, 20-30's, she will become the object of Rico's desires.

THE FILM CREW - These are extra characters, as many as you wish. They are there to lend credence to the premise that a film is being shot. All the characters can and should interact as much as possible with them. CARL is the cameraman. He has no lines, other than "filmspeak" when appropriate. He may also serve as HOST for the event.

PART ONE - PRESHOW

The mystery begins with the arrival of the participants. In the lobby is a "glamour shot" on an easel. The legend reads LACEY LA FLEUR - In Memoriam - 19??-current year minus one.

The playing area is centrally located, but there must be a safe exit/door from it. Onstage is an ornate, high back chair. There should be another door, opposite to the playing area. This will be used for the REAPER'S entrance.

RICO is seemingly everywhere, ordering the film crew around, conferring with CARL, greeting his "stars" and at all times, pursuing LYNN. As the film crew "tries out" lights, there will be flickering and several "blackouts." This will set up the blackout that will occur later. RICO is also "auditioning", casting, and "directing" the following characters from the real-live audience:

Lady Heckler is given her line "Is he single?" and told she will be instructed when to give it.

Gentlemen Heckler is given his line "Does he have a sister?" and told likewise.

Two Lady Screamers will be told generally what they will do - stand and scream after Death comes to the party.

Lady Pounding on the Exit will be someone sitting close to another door or window.

The three FBI men will be shown their guns and instructed (SERIOUSLY) on how to use them. AIM UP, HOLD OUT FAR ENOUGH FROM BODY, AND AWAY FROM OTHER PEOPLE. For safety reasons, the "FBI" men should be located at the rear of the audience so they can do this. Also, they will NOT be given the guns at this time.

The Grim Reaper - another attractive woman who RICO will pursue. He also promises her the role of the virgin. He can't pick between LYNN and her for the part. Should be someone considerable taller than the actress portraying LACEY. This is a very important character to trust to an "amateur". Her co-operation is imperative, as you will see. Pick someone you know, perhaps, or someone who seems like a good sport.)

BILLY is circulating, reminding people of who he is (was) and doing his trademark tag line - "Gee w-w-willikers, W-W-W-inky!" . He cries alot and confides in sympathetic folks. He can't believe he's here - back where IT happened. He carries a rose which he will place on LACEY'S portrait. He also pursues the ladies with offers to help them break into show business.

FARLEY is there, back-slapping and acting like the congenial host. He will suggest likely extras to RICO, particularly the ladies. He sure does miss that little LACEY gal. He was helping with her career, you know. And he was gonna make sure she became a star. She was like a daughter to him. He also will place a rose at LACEY'S portrait.

LIZ follows the others after they talk to participants. She takes notes on their conversations. She asks audience members to give her any dirt they happen to pick up. She gives them her business card. She also tells them that there may be a few surprises tonight, and to keep a sharp eye out for suspicious reactions. LACEY was murdered - it wasn't an accident. She says she was LACEY'S best friend and also has a rose to place by the picture. If RICO, LILIAN, or BILLY spot her, an angry confrontation will occur. They will have her "thrown out". But, like the proverbial bad penny, she will always return.

LILIAN makes a grand entrance. She is very obviously "the star" and will greet everyone warmly (if somewhat condescendingly) and will offer her autograph (even if it is not solicited.) She flirts madly with the younger gentlemen in the audience. She is cold to BILLY and will stare daggers at him. She will denigrate his "talent" to one and all. She loses no opportunity to make reference to how young she is. Indeed, this should be a recurrent theme with her. Of LACEY she will only say that she was like a sister to her. She also carries a rose to place before LACEY'S portrait.

JENNIFER is present, looking suitably mysterious and trying not to draw attention to herself. So of course, she will generate all kinds of interest.

PART TWO - THE PLAY

When the audience is completely assembled, and RICO has completed "casting", he will advance to the playing area with LILIAN and BILLY. LYNN will be seated with near the stage. JENNIFER will be near the door being used for the REAPER'S entrance. FARLEY and LIZ will be at tables in the rear of the room.

RICO: Hokay, hokay. We gonna start cause inna movie biz, the money, itsa being spent alla ti me.

FARLEY: Yeah, my money.

RICO: Yeah, hissa money. Okay, so she goes likkaa dis. Imma da Frederico De Medici anna this is the second time Imma try to make-a my movie - DEAD ANNA DEADER. Last time, you know whatta happened, no? My little star, my little girl witha da big talent, she die. Lacey LaFleur. It wassa bigga time accident, nobody's fault, justa oh-so-sad tragedy.

LIZ: (Standing and shouting) Yeah, an accident, sure. An accident, my ass!

RICO: Hey, you, shutta you face! Peoples, peoples, don' listen to dat woman. She's a gotta da beeg mout, she writes for dat bad paper that they sella inna food store. Da Rag. Cheez, that'sa one stinko paper, Imma tell you. Why, one-a time they putta stuff in 'bout Rico. Hey, Imma no t kid you. Bigga, fat lies about Rico. Make-a me cry...

LILIAN: Rico, darling, can we move this along? I feel my muse fading.

RICO: Oh, yeah. Si. Scusi. So anyway, peoples, it wassa here, one year ago itta happen. And Rico, what could he do, he hadda stop makin' da movie. But, you know, art...she's notta s o easy to kill. So Imma back, witha da same peoples, 'ceptin' LACEY, to finish da movie. So, h okay, here we go. Inna this scene, is a big party given by da Countess...Thatsa right - you alla g onna be the...whatta you call it? Ho, yeah, you gonna be da extra peoples at the party. Da big party thrown by da Countess - that'ssa my Lilian (he blows kiss.) It starts whenna she make da speech about how she is gonna make da big trick. 'Cause she's like-a da witch, you see.

LILIAN: Rico, darling, I'd thought we'd settled that. Not a witch darling. Sorceress.

RICO: Oh, yeah, I forget. She'sa thissa bigga time beautiful flying sorceress. Cheez, so anyway, she's gonna make da spell to summon DEATH. Oooh, attsa so scary, make Rico nervous, lemme tella you. And so first, when she tella you dat, you laugh. After she say, (to LILIAN) whatssa you line?

LILIAN: (Very dramatically.) Tonight, you will all meet Death, up close and personal.

RICO: Hokay, you gotta dat, peoples? She's gonna say dat line anna everybody laugh lika " Ho boy, Countess, you one-a dumb person." Letsa try.

LILIAN: Tonight, you will all meet death up close and personal. (RICO "directs" everyone's derisive laughter.)

RICO: Attsa not too bad. Anna when we done witta da laugh, I gotta two peoples make-a da heckles. Where issa my Mr. anna Mrs. Heckles. Raisa da hands. (He spots them.) That's nice, Rico know where you are. Hokay, ladies first. (to LADY HECKLER) When da bigga laugh she's done, thatsa whenna you stand up and say da line Rico givva you. You remember? Gott a be a nice anna loud. You try. "You gonna meetta Death" anna big laugh anna....(He points to "cue" her.)

LADY HECKLER: Hey, Countess, is he single?
(RICO may "direct" here and have her repeat it, etc. Anytime he does, he makes the extras say the lines as he does - accent and all.)

RICO: Hey, thatsa great! You see dat? Iffa da rest of you don' do a good job, Imma get dissa lady to do alla da parts, capisce? Hokay, anna as soon as she say her heckle, Mr. Heckle, he ju mpa up and give hissa line. (He points to him.)

GENTLEMAN HECKLER: Does he have a sister?
(Again, RICO may "direct". And he gets everyone to laugh after the line.)

RICO: Attsa great. You gonna be a beeg hit. So, hokay, then da Countess she's gotta another buncha stuff to say and the last line is....

LILIAN: Surely, there is a virgin among you.

RICO: Which, of course, maka you laugh again. But while-a you make widda da ha-ha's, (To LYNN) my new star, Misssa Lynn timer Kelly, she stand. (LYNN does.) anna she say... (To other "virgin") Anda don' worry _____, Imma got one super-duper part for you, too. Okay so Lynn timer, givva you line.

LYNN: (Very "flat" and with no expression) I am a virgin, Countess, and I am not afraid of Death.

RICO: Oh, thattsa so beautiful. You gonna be so good, little Lynn timer, make-a me cry. Anna it g onna make her da big movie star. Rico know. You gonna be one lucky, little lady, lemme tell you.

BILLY: (Crying) Being a virgin wasn't very lucky for Lacey.

LILIAN: Being a virgin isn't lucky for anyone, Billy.

RICO: Cheez, getta grip. So, Lynn timer-winnie, I wanna you to say-a you line, and then you comm a over here anna sit down. Anna don' you worry. Itsa no bigga deal. It wassa jus' an accident. You gonna be jus' as great. Better, even.

FARLEY: Hey, I just thought - she can't do the virgin!

RICO: Whatta you say about my Lynn timer??

FARLEY: Lacey had red hair.

BILLY: That's right. Red hair.

RICO: Cheez. Thissa issa movie, notta life. Whattsa matta you? So maybe da virgin, she dye her hair for da party. Fix it different. Hey, whattsa da big deal? (Yelling.) MAKE-UP! (A mystery assistant, or one of the film "crew" appears with a long red-haired wig.) Thissa make Rico sick. Cover up his Lynnie's hair. But whatta I do? (He gives LYNN the wig and she puts it on.) Hokay. So, da virgin, she sit inna chair. And the Countess does this spell anna she danc e all around. Anna she say...

LILIAN: (In character, dramatically.) Come, Oh Death. Come, Oh, Grim Reaper, and meet your Bride!

RICO: Attsa da cue for da lighting peoples and da fog guy. Da lights, they go off anna fog peoples, they turn on the fog. (If fog is used.) When you here-a dat, you turn offa da lights and starta uppa da fog. (To LADY chosen to play the GRIM REAPER) Anna thissa issa it. You bigga chance, _____. I couldn't havva two virgins - though thatsa one greatta idea - so Rico find you another role. Issa da biggest, most important part offa all. YOU GONNA BE DA REAPER. ISSA GREAT PART. You comma through that (gestures to offstage exit) door w itha dis knife.

LYNN: Wait a minute. I'm playing her bride? Her virgin bride?

BILLY: Geez, thats sick, man. Like, she's a chick.

LILIAN: It's some sort of metaphor, is that it, Rico?

FARLEY: I like it. Kinky, but I like it.

RICO: You don' unnerstand. See. (He yells.) COSTUMES. (A mystery assistant arrives with a Grim Reaper style cloak with large, large hood.) See, nobody know that you are a chick-a woman. But issa bigga part. Important part. You are-a Grim Reaper. You are-a da Death. Anna you comma through thatta door witha thissa knife (He gives her the knife) anda go "OOO oooh". You gotta dat. Whatta you gonna do? (She repeats it.) Oh, thatsa so good! Hey, letsa try just thatta much. Start witha (To LILIAN) you line about meetin' Death. PLACES! (They go to their places, directing the GRIM REAPER to exit through the non-stage area door. To BILLY) You too....(BILLY exits via the door onstage.) Carl, you checka da positions, anna follow witta da camera, but donna role, hokay? THIS ISSA REHEARSAL.

(During the "rehearsal", RICO may have to cue, or repeat a section, etc. CARL and the film crew will "follow" the action.)

LILIAN: (Extremely dramatic and "hammy") I have brought you here tonight so that you could meet a very, dear friend of mine. My friend....who will soon be your friend. Ladies and gentlemen, tonight you will all meet Death, up close and personal. (Derisive laughter.)

LADY HECKLER: Hey, Countess, is he single? (More laughter.)

GENTLEMAN HECKLER: Does he have a sister? (More laughter.)

LILIAN: You know that I have tried to do this before. Yes, I know that I have attempted to contact the spirits from another world and failed. And at last I know why. It is because in order

to reach these spirits we must placate their master. DEATH. By offering him a human sacrifice. A bride. A virgin bride. Who is not afraid of Death? (very distinctly a "cue") SURELY, THERE IS A VIRGIN AMONG YOU.

LYNN: (Coming forward) I'm not a virgin and don't call me Shirley. (To audience and RICO who is pulling on his hair.) Sorry, couldn't resist.

LILIAN: Amateurs!

LYNN: Okay, okay, I'm a virgin and I am not afraid of Death.

LILIAN: Come. (She leads LYNN to the chair and begins to dance and chant around her, ending with....) Come, oh Death. Come, Oh, Grim Reaper, and meet your Bride! (There will be fog, the lights will dim and GRIM REAPER will enter from an offstage door, into it the room, moaning.)

GRIM REAPER: OOOOOOHHHHHH...

RICO: CUT! Lights up, hokay, light peoples. Hey, attsa not so bad. 'Cept, _____. Maybe we cut the "oooohh". Notta that you weren't magnifico. . . it's just dat. . . (He's thinking fast and is suddenly inspired.) Causa Death, uh, he don' speak English, hokay, and he's ashamed offa dat so he jussa very, very quiet. Anna you keep walkin' to the little virgin, hokay. And you peoples, you getta real scared, causa it looksa this time likka da Countess, she's a big time witch.....

LILIAN: (Icily) Perhaps you could rephrase that, dear.

FARLEY: I thought he hit the nail on the head, Lil!

BILLY: Don't take it personal, old girl. It's like, your character.

LILIAN: OLD GIRL. Did he just say old girl?

RICO: Oh, cheez, Billy, shutta you mouth. Imma so sorry, Lilian. Imma say another way. Peoples, atta thissa point you gonna tink "hey, itsa Mr. Death, hoo-boy, Amma I scared or what! Anna thatta Countess, she'sa real pretty anna young to be a witch but she doesa da real good spell." Hokay, Lilian?

LILIAN: Much better.

RICO: Anna I gotta two screamers...where are they. (He indicates LADY SCREAMERS #1 & #2) Whenna da Reaper, he gets to about here, (halfway to the stage area.) firstta you, thenna y ou, is gonna stand up anna scream. Say, "Issa da Reaper! She make Death comma to da party....or somethin' likka dat." You gotta that? (He has them demonstrate.) Anna, where's-a lady, where's a dat lady who's gonna run. Hokay, whenna dey scream, you gonna run to thatta door (one NOT being used for the Reaper's entrance. Or a window could be used) and bang on na it anna scream "Hey, letta me outta here!" You try. (She does) Anna all da time, da Reaper, she keepsa walkin' to da virgin. Walkin' anna walkin' anna walkin' likka no body can s toppa her....Causa she's a-Death, you know, anna no body can stoppa Death. Issa like a symbol. And whenna da Reaper, she gets to here (Indicating the edge of the playing area) - att sa da cue for Mr. FBI boys to standa

up. Where issa you, FBI boys? (They stand) Anna you yell, "Imma da FBI guy. Halt." and you shoota you guns atta da Reaper. Causa, you see da Reaper, he's by-a this time up behind da virgin - Cheez butta my little Linnie issa one-a gorgeous virgin - Ho, boy. Hokay, so Death, he'ssa standing anna gettin' ready to stab da virgin widda big knife and da FBI guys all do da bang-bang witta da guns. We're gonna do-a da practice first so-a just use-a you finger and say "Batta Boom, Batta Bing" atta da Grim Reaper.

You try. (The REAPER moves toward the virgin, RICO cues the FBI men who "shoot" vocally. If necessary, RICO makes the FBI guys say their lines just as he does, accent and all., including "Batta Boom, Batta Bing.")

RICO: Attsa great. She's gonna work.

LIZ: (Standing and yelling from the audience.) It's too bad you didn't do it that way last year. Lacey would be alive if you had.

RICO: Imma not gonna tell you again, lady. Shutta you face. It was jussa accident.

LIZ: Accident, hah! I don't care what the police said. Someone had to have loaded those guns with real bullets.

FARLEY: They cleared me! They cleared me! I didn't load that gun!

LIZ: With enough money, any one can get away with murder.

LILIAN: Please, everyone! Rico is right. It was just a freak accident. And it is in the past.

This film is the future. Art is the future.

LIZ: Hey, Lynn, if I were you, I'd get the hell out of here. This is how Lacey was murdered!

LYNN: Whoa, whoa, whoa! Nobody told me that. Hey, (Name of GRIM REAPER) There's an opening for a virgin! (She starts to exit.)

RICO: Hey, hey, no,. . . comma back, little Linnie, please! Itsa gonna be hokay. I promise.

LIZ: She was sitting in that chair. And the FBI men stood and fired. Old Farley was playing one of them.

FARLEY: Hell, it was my money getting it done, why shouldn't I play a part? But I didn't load the damn guns.

LIZ: Well, someone put real bullets in them. And Lacey was shot. Right through the heart.

RICO: Somebody justa play da joke and itta backfire, hokay?

BILLY: (Sobbing) My beautiful Lacey!

LILIAN: Oh, no! Now he's off again!

RICO: Oh, cheez, Billy. Don' cry. Lacey, she wouldn' wanna you to make witha da boo-hoo. She'd wanna you to be da happy guy, causa dissa movie gonna make-a you da big star. Hey, peoples, we gotta go on. Carl, he charge by da hour. Lynn, Lynn, please. Makka da Rico happy! Imma check personally, da guns, they are hokay. Fako-fako. Trust Rico.

LYNN: I musta be nuts, too. (She resumes her seat.)

(It is at this point that JENNIFER slips out into the hall.)

RICO: So, da FBI guys fire da guns and then, thissa real important. The virgin, she scream. At sa important causa thatta scream issa da cue for our hero, Mr. Billy, to comma in fromma that door (indicating door in playing area) anna he's gonna fight widda Death. (To BILLY.) You waiti n' outta there until you hear da scream, hokay, an thenna you busta in and say you line.

BILLY: (Rushing forward dramatically) Don't touch that virgin, Reaper! She's mine!

RICO: Attsa good. Thenna you grabba da Death's arm holding da knife and go back and forth. (He demonstrates and BILLY practices with the REAPER) Anna that'ssa where we cut. Everybody got alla dat? Hokay. we rehearse. Carl, donna use-a da film, okay. Just watch where everybody is. THIS IS A REHEARSAL. Lets take it fromma where da fog goes up, anna lights go down anna da Reaper comes in. PLACES. Hokay. And ACTION.

(The rehearsal goes as before with RICO "directing"- mostly with body language. The REAPER enters, LYNN and the LADIES scream, the LADY beats on the exit, the REAPER reaches the playing area, the FBI GUYS stand, identify themselves and "fire". BILLY enters, gives his line and struggles with the REAPER. CARL and the film crew follow the action.)

RICO: Lights-a up. (He is very emotional.) Attsa so great. Imma gonna thank you peoples whe nna I getta da Oscar! Anna you know what, everybody, I tink we're ready to do thissa sucker for real, whadda you say? Everybody get to where-a you sposed to be. Anna, Imma gonna giv e my FBI guys da guns, hokay? (MYSTERY ASSISTANTS WILL GIVE THE GUNS TO THE FBI MEN, REITERATING WARNINGS. THE ASSISTANTS SHOULD REMAIN NEARBY IN ORDER TO KEEP AN EYE ON THEM AND TO COLLECT THE GUNS AFTERWARD.) Carl, you know whatta to do, eh? Anna Carl, no matter what happen, you just keepa da camera going. There's notta to much I can't fix with da edit. Be lika ol' Man River, hokay, Carl? You ju s' keep rollin' along. Ha-ha. You hear, Rico make-da joke? Imma one funny guy, Imma tell you. So, we gotta da places? Everybody where dey sposed to be. Attsa great. Anna here we go. QUIET ONNA SET!! THIS ISSA TAKE.

CARL: I'm rolling.

RICO: And.... ACTION.

(AS SOON AS THE GRIM REAPER EXITS TO HER "PLACE", JENNIFER APPROACHES AND OFFERS HER FIVE DOLLARS FOR HER ROLE. IF NECESSARY, MYSTERY HELPERS CAN INTERVENE AND EXPLAIN THAT THIS IS PART OF THE PLOT. JENNIFER DONS THE ROBE AND TAKES THE KNIFE. THE AUDIENCE "REAPER" IS ASKED TO WAIT OUTSIDE UNTIL JENNIFER HAS MADE HER ENTRANCE.)

LILIAN: I have brought you here tonight so that you could meet a very, dear friend of mine. My friend....that will soon be your friend. Ladies and gentlemen, tonight you will all meet Death, up close and personal.

(Derisive laughter.)

LADY HECKLER: Hey, Countess, is he single? (More laughter.)

GENTLEMAN HECKLER: Does he have a sister? (More laughter.)

LILIAN: You know that I have tried to do this before. Yes, I know that I have attempted to contact the spirits from another world and failed. And at last I know why. It is because in order to reach these spirits we must placate their master. DEATH. By offering him a human sacrifice. A bride. A virgin bride. Who is not afraid of Death? SURELY, THERE IS A VIRGIN AMONG YOU.

LYNN: (Her usual flat, delivery, accompanied by a stiff arm gesture.) I am a virgin and I am not afraid of Death.

LILIAN: Come. (She leads LYNN to chair, begins to dance and chant around her, ending with. ...) Come, oh Death. Come, Grim Reaper, and meet your Bride! (Optional fog rolls in and the lights will dim and the Reaper will enter, only this time it's JENNIFER in costume, with the knife. LILIAN will be the one to notice the switch - right after the FBI "fire" and before LYNN can scream, she does.)

LILIAN: That's not (name of audience REAPER)! Rico! It's not _____.

(The "Reaper" turns her back to the audience.)

FARLEY: She's right!

RICO: Hokay, I givva up. CUT! Yeah, I know whatta I say. CUT, Carl. Whattsa matter withyo u, Lilian? Hey, why don' you just take-a dat knife and stick it into Rico's heart, eh? We gotta mo vie to make-a here!

LILIAN: (Pointing.) That's not _____. This one is shorter!.

FARLEY: (Noticing the audience REAPER who has just come in the door, counting out money.) There's _____

RICO: Whattsa going on, _____? I thoughta you wanna be a bigga star.

(Hopefully, the audience REAPER will make a reference to the five dollars.. RICO and the others should be prepared to help with the extemporaneous exchange.)

RICO: SHE GAVE-A YOU FIVE BUCKS?? Cheez, you one-a cheappa date!

(With that, JENNIFER turns, faces the audience, and dramatically drops the hood back, revealing her face and hair. There is a huge reaction from all the characters. "It's Lacey!" and ad-libbing of that kind. LYNN ends the reaction.)

LYNN: This is Lacey LaFleur? The DEAD Lacey LaFleur? (She stands and screams and steps off the playing area. BILLY, thinking the scream was his cue, enters.)

BILLY: Don't touch that virgin, Reaper. She's...(He stops, thunderstruck. JENNIFER carefully places the knife on the chair vacated by LYNN.) Lacey....Lacey....Is it you? Like, it can't be! You're like..dead. We all saw you....Oh, wow, Lacey. This is y'know, crazy. Lacey, oh Lacey.. ..It's me. Your Biscuit Buns.

RICO: Biscuit Buns?

BILLY: Man, is it really like you? (JENNIFER nods.) Oh, okay, look before you say anything, baby, I want to tell you. I was really true to you, like for almost two whole months. But, like, man, you were dead, and I'm like human, y'know, so....And maybe you heard some stuff 'bout me and some other girls ...but, hey, you gotta know how much I loved you...Baby, remember all that stuff you told me...SECRETS and stuff. I never told any of it, baby, not even to the cops. Oh, man, Lacey. You're alive. (He goes to her, embraces her, kisses her passionately, then steps back.) Wait a minute. You aren't Lacey. (By this time the others - except LIZ - have approached the playing area.)

JENNIFER: Umm, yes, I am. (Sexily) I am Lacey LaFleur and I'm alive.

BILLY: No, you aren't. Unless you had some kinda surgery. I oughtta know. Lacey had great big....y'know. I could barely like get my arms around her.

FARLEY: He's right! Lacey was stacked!

LILIAN: Implants. They had to be implants.

RICO: Hey, they were likka da trademark witha Lacey. Da real Lacey.

LIZ: (Standing and walking to the playing area.) I told you to wear falsies. Didn't I tell you to wear falsies?

JENNIFER: (Removing the wig.) So I forgot. Sue me. This whole thing was creepy anyway.

BILLY: (Disintegrating into crying boy again) This is just, like, so mean! First Lacey's y'know. Then she's not....and now I guess she really is like, y' know. Man. Oh, wow, I think I'm gonna h url. (He exits through the playing area door. AT THIS TIME HE WILL BE "SUITED UP" with the knife effect.)

LILIAN: AN IMPOSTER! This is sick, even for you, Liz! Hiring someone to impersonate Lacey.

RICO: Attsa what it is, alright. Issa big time sick.

FARLEY: (Examining her closely.) Pretty weird, all right. WHEE-OOH! Outside of the boobs and the hair, she's a dead ringer for Lacey.

LIZ: I know. That's why I hired her. And it wasn't a sick joke. You forget Lacey was my best friend. I know that one of you murdered her. She knew too much about all of you. Remember the expose's that hit the Rag? Guess who was feeding all that stuff to me?

FARLEY: Lacey was a spy for the Rag?

LILIAN: After we took her in! After Rico cast her! She was nothing but a has-been soft porn star until I got her this role!

RICO: I shoulda known! I'va gotta too bigga heart. Itsa real problem witta me! Thatta Lacey. I'mma spit onna her picture. She tella da big lies.

LIZ: Did she? Lacey had a way of finding out things. I believe she knew things about all of you - worse things than she passed on to me. And that's why she died.

FARLEY: Ah, hell, she didn't have anything on me! (They all deny, ad-libbing, etc.)

LIZ: And that's why I brought Jennifer here. Figured I'd scare you. Figured her killer would Shake you up. And I hoped her killer would give him - or HER - self away. Jennifer works for "Carbon Copies" - the celebrity impersonator agency. She's made a career out of playing Lacey.

JENNIFER: It was the only career I could have, thanks to her. I'm a serious actress. Classically trained. In college I did Juliet, and Portia, and Ariel. But at every professional audition or screen test someone would say, "Hey, didn't you just pose for Hustler?" Or, "Did you ever do stag films?" Or did anyone ever tell you you look just like the star of "Bitches of Madison County"? She ruined my career before I even had one. So I cashed in on her. I thought after she died, people would forget but I wound up with more bookings than Elvis.

LILIAN: (To LIZ) Well, it appears your sordid little scheme did not work. Unless I blinked and missed it, no one has broken down and confessed.

FARLEY: So why don't you and your little pal run along? We've got a movie to make.

RICO: Oh, cheez, he'ssa right. Carl, are you still onna da clock through alla this? Issa costing a beeg money. So, hokay, let's get started. Where'ssa my little Lynn timer? Are you ready my little-a virgin wirgin?

LYNN: Make that EX-VIRGIN-WIRGIN, Rico. I'm hereby giving up my chance at stardom.

FARLEY: Hey, why don't ya use the lookalike? Hell, might as well take advantage of the situation.

LILIAN: That is macabre, Farley. Simply too sick.

RICO: No, no! Is outta da question! My little Lynn timer is gonna do da virgin. Lynn timer, you comma up here. Please. You make-a Rico look bad.

LIZ: Oh, like that's a challenge. I'm amazed Rico. Capitalizing on Lacey's death is your specialty. Why not go one step further and use her lookalike.

JENNIFER: Hey, did anyone here ask me? You're assuming I would do it!

(The argument escalates with ad-libs. BILLY re-enters, being careful not to show his back to the audience. He stands behind the chair. He is holding LACEY'S diary.)

BILLY: Hey, what's going on?

RICO: They wanna me to use Little Missy Fako Lacey inna my movie. Attssa nuts! No one does a better virgin thanna my Lynnie!

LYNN: No way, Rico, get yourself another virgin. (She exits to the rear of the room.)

RICO: But, Lynnie, come back!! Hokay, dokey, you don' hafta come uppa here. I know! You don' even hava to move, my little star. We shootta it there. Hey, canna we getta some light onn a my Lynnie over there, Carl?

(As CARL and the film crew do this - supposedly - there will be a flash and then total blackout. The characters onstage mill about, ad-lib, etc. They will position themselves in front of the chair. The view of BILLY draped over the back of the chair, knife protruding from the bloody wound in his back will be blocked as the lights return.)

RICO: Cheez, thatsa better. What happened, eh Carl?

(JENNIFER screams as she turns and sees BILLY.)

RICO: Hokay, hokay, so you can do-a da part. Attssa pretty good scream.

JENNIFER: No, look!

(The crowd separates so BILLY is in full view of the audience. There is confusion, ad-libbing, and it ends as LIZ approaches the body.)

LIZ: He's dead. I suppose this was an accident, too.

(More ad-libbing, etc. that ends as JENNIFER speaks.)

JENNIFER: What's that in his hand?

LIZ: (Taking and opening it.) It's a diary. Lacey's diary.

(More ad-libbing as all try to grab it. LIZ breaks away with it.)

FARLEY: Billy must have had it all along.

JENNIFER: Didn't he say something about keeping all her secrets? What better place to keep your secrets than in a diary.

RICO: I say we shoulda burn it. Imma tink thissa issa one bigga stinkie book.

LILIAN: Rico is right! Destroy the filthy thing. Lacey is dead. Billy is dead. We must purge the entire movie of the evil that surrounds us. And the only way to do that is to burn that book.

FARLEY: I've got some matches on me somewhere.

LIZ: Not so fast. (She is looking through the book.) Why, isn't that interesting?

ALL BUT LIZ: (Talking at once, ad-libbing.) What, what's it say? What's interesting?

LIZ: It's not WHAT it says, but what it DOESN'T say. The last page was torn out. The day she died. I wonder where it is.

HOST or CARL: Perhaps I can be of assistance. My name is _____ and I am the organizer of this evening's entertainment. (OR "I am more than just a cameraman. I'm a private eye.") I had a feeling we'd be doing a little detecting tonight. I think if we can find that last, missing page of Lacy's diary, we can discover who killed Lacey. And who killed Billy. What we need are search parties. Teams of detectives. Which is what each table will become. My mystery assistants will be distributing clue packets on clip boards. Following these will lead you to the missing page. But that's not all. Each team must talk to each suspect. They will remain in this room. Ground rules include: Do not go into areas that are out of bounds: the kitchen, offices, etc., Read instructions carefully before you begin. Begin with the clue marked with a red star and take them in order after that. The last page is your solution sheet. After you have found and examined the diary page and talked to the suspects, you should answer the questions on this page. Give it to a mystery helper. Good luck and "Happy Detecting."

PART THREE - THE CLUE HUNT

The Production Manual provides directions for designing and staging a clue hunt. This can be as involved as you like, can be an actual physical search, or can be contained within the room. The type of event and facility will determine the nature of the clue hunt. Again, this is all spelled out in the Production Manual. But regardless how the clue hunt is done, at the end, each team will end up with last page of LACEY'S diary.

Date one year exactly before your event.

Dear Diary,

Quite a profitable day! At breakfast, Lover Boy agreed to a thou a month NOT to give Liz the pictures of him in the nurse's uniform. Rico phoned and said he'd give me half of what he's been skimming from the film budget to keep quiet. Met Lilian for lunch at the Hilton and broke it to her about Billy and me getting married. She was not happy. Spent the afternoon running errands - the bank to take care of Mother's check, the post office, the dry cleaners, the tanning

booth. No filming until tonight when we do the stupid virgin at the party scene. Oh, well...at least there's Carl later on. Yum, yum.

Additionally, during the clue hunt the suspects are available for questioning. And they will have his (or her) own additional little "tidbit" of information.

LIZ: Lacey and I were really close. Best friends. Two years ago we took a vacation together to Italy. Did you know she spoke Italian fluently? She was a great girl and a real snoop...we had a lot in common.

FARLEY: Everybody connected to the movie had money troubles until Lacey died. Lilian almost had to give up her limo and the villa on the Mediterranean. Rico tried to borrow money from me. Billy was doin' mall shows for extra cash. I'm loaded, though. Everything I touch turns to gold. Just last year I opened a European office. In Rome.

JENNIFER: Liz let it slip once. She and old Rico had a "fling" once. He dumped her. That's why she was so eager to get dirt on him.

LILIAN: The greatest performance of my life was pretending I cared when Lacey died. She was such a...brat. Could not mind her own business. I didn't kill her though. Murder requires passion. And my passion is my art. Film. The cinema.

RICO: That Lacey, she come onna to me, did I tella you dat? But, Rico, he wassa not gonna, c ause he knew - she wassa trouble - big trouble. I knew that fromma Farley. Guess they madea wonkity-wonk. Hey, thatsa truth, even iffa he notta say so now.

CARL: Okay, okay, it's true. Right before she died the two of us had been getting close to... you know. Otherwise, I don't know anything.

ALL the characters will deny the others' allegations, if questioned. But their denials will not quite "ring true". Also, if asked, none of them really knew anything about LACEY'S past.

THE VERY BRIEF SOLUTION SCENE IS NOT INCLUDED IN REVIEW SCRIPTS. IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE THE ENTIRE ACTING COPY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ABOUT PRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT US: 330-678-3893

mysteriesbymoushey@gmail.com

DEAD & DEADER - Props/Set Dressing List

Red wig

Ornate, high back, throne type chair

Film "crew" stuff. This can be as elaborate as you want, or reflect Rico's attempt to "trim the budget."

We scrounged lights, old cameras, tripods, etc. Absolutely necessary, of course, is a camera/camcorder for Carl.

A fog machine for the Reaper's entrance is optional, but neat. Three starter pistols or stage guns.

PLEASE BE CAREFUL.

A clipboard for Rico to "audition" people, track of scenes, etc.

Lacey's picture - a "glamour" shot - sexy, alluring, etc. With sign as described in script.

Roses for Billy, Farley, Lilian and Liz to place by portrait.

Large knife

Grim Reaper cape

A duplicate shirt for Billy with a stab wound in the back, covered in stage blood.

Knife effect - this is an identical knife to the one above. It is broken/sawed off about 4 inches from the handle. One-half inch of the remaining blade is hammered and glued into a thin 6x6 piece of wood.

When Billy exits, he removes his shirt and the knife effect is taped to the back of his t-shirt. . . (an important costume item for Billy - ours learned the hard way!) We use the ubiquitous gaffer's tape - also known as duct tape - and wrap it several times around his body securing the knife effect. The handle and an inch or two of the blade should stick out of the prepared bloodied shirt described above.

Lacey's diary

Something for body removal - We've used a stretcher, a hotel luggage rolling rack, a wheelchair, a furniture dollie, and we've simply dragged offstage - which is tough if you're just using a playing area without wings. If you can get local paramedics to come in with a real gurney, etc., it's a nice realistic touch.

Gun for Liz (can be one of the ones used before.)

Sent electronically – Production Packet

Clue packets with Answer key and flow charts

Blank flow chart to help in making your own clue hunt.

Page from Lacey's diary, suitable for photocopying

Sample program

Premise sheet to post or set out as people enter (instead of programs)

Sample flyer from an early event of ours

Production Manual

Optional

A printed version of everything in the Production Packet – including the Production Manual – is available for a small fee. The Manual is the same for all shows.