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Murder by MAGIC

An Audience-Participation

Murder Mystery by

Eileen Moushey

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

LOIS MERCHANT - Forty-ish; very much in charge; ambitious; wearing a suit and carrying a clipboard. Lois is the President and chief motivator behind Merchant Entertainment.

SIMONE THE PSYCHIC - Thirties or older; flustered and forgetful; Simone has been pulling the psychic scam for so long she almost believes it herself. Makes up her stuff as she goes along. Wearing a long skirt, peasant blouse and many beads.

DWAYNE CARTER - Thirties. not overly bright. A man of few words; lover of country music. Has fallen in love with Gloria. Wearing coveralls with tool belt, etc. Depending on location, he's a stagehand, or a handyman, etc.

GEORGE HARCOURT - Thirties to forties. An actor; has been hired by Lois to play the ghost of Morgo the Magnificent. Makes a living by doing industrial videos and has appeared on tv in commercials for muffler shops and basement waterproofing companies. He is a "method actor" and at times has gotten just a little overwhelmed by the characters he plays. As Morgo, he wears a tux shirt and pants and cape.

WENDY HARCOURT - Twenties to thirties. George's sister, also an actress; hired by Lois to play the ghost of Clarisse, Morgo's wife. Disillusioned by trying to make a living as an actress in Northeast Ohio, Wendy wants them to move to New York to try for a legitimate career on the stage. As Clarisse, she's wearing a long white flowing gown with a bloodied red line circling the waist. Or a magician assistant costume - sequined with headpiece, etc.

GLORIA MERCHANT - Twenties - thirties. Glasses, shy, not especially attractive. Gloria is Lois' daughter who is very much under the thumb of her mother. She's met someone, fallen in love, and for the first time in her life, LOVE is reciprocated. The object of her affection is Dwayne, but of course Lois will not have THAT. Dressed dowdy.

HOST/HOUSTESS

ADAPTING TO YOUR LOCALE

NOTE: The script is written for the location where we first performed MURDER BY MAGIC, the Akron Civic Theatre. It can be adapted to be performed just about anywhere, by changing the name and other pertinent information.

Because we performed on a stage, we were able to take advantage of a fog machine and special lighting effects. The script contains references to "specials" which are used mostly for MORGO CLARISSE effects. If you have access to spotlights, or can create special lighting effects, great, but it can be performed without. You will need to be able to dim the lights during certain scenes which are important to the action. Spooky music, live or taped, adds greatly to the ambiance.

Because there are important things which happen "in the wings", wherever you perform you'll need someplace to go for exits and entrances. References are made to "off stage" in the script. We've used screens to create wings and also have just exited out a nearby door. If your "offstage" is any distance from your playing area, you may need to inject ad-libbing to cover the time this will take.

It's also effective to be able to have "disembodied" voices for CLARISSE and MORGO. Being able to "pipe in" these voice from outside the room works well, or using a microphone in an area of the room hidden from view.

PART ONE - PRELUDE TO MURDER

As the audience arrives and registers, they are given premise sheets which set up what will happen during the mystery. The following is the one we used at the Civic.

The Akron Civic Theatre was built in 1929 as a motion picture and vaudeville house. Among the acts which performed regularly was the magician, Morgo the Magnificent and his wife, Clarisse. But a disastrous event during their act ended their careers. Morgo inadvertently sawed Clarisse in half - REALLY sawed her in half. In grief and remorse he hung himself on the Civic stage. Since that time, Morgo and Clarisse have haunted the theatre. Tonight, Merchant Entertainment with WQMX will attempt to contact the ghosts of these tragic lovers, with a seance led by Simone the Psychic. Members of the audience who possess psychic powers should meet with Simone - she's looking for sensitive people to join in the seance.

If your event is NOT being staged at a landmark or historic building, you can substitute the above with:

The (name of location) was built in _____. But in 1929 the Majestic Theatre stood on this site. The Majestic was a famous vaudeville house which attracted the best entertainers of the era. Among the acts which performed regularly was the magician, Morgo the Magnificent and his wife, Clarisse. But a disastrous event during their act ended their careers. Morgo inadvertently sawed Clarisse in half - REALLY sawed her in half. In grief and remorse he hung himself on the Majestic stage and both their ghosts have haunted the theatre and this site ever since. Tonight, Merchant Entertainment will attempt to contact the ghosts of these tragic lovers, with a seance led by Simone the Psychic. Simone is looking for sensitive, psychic audience members to assist her.

The characters are circulating during pre-show.

SIMONE and HOSTESS are recruiting audience members to join the seance. (You'll need 9.)

They interview them to get information they can use when they introduce them later on stage. LOIS and/or the HOSTESS will also have to find a man who will feature in the action. In the script we refer to him as JOE SMITH. SIMONE will test their psychic powers by seeing if they can bend a spoon, having them guess the card she is holding, etc.

LOIS is also finding audience members to use during the seance. She drags them over to SIMONE, particularly good looking men. LOIS also is seen ordering people around, usually in a nasty, imperious manner. If she spots DWAYNE she gets really tough, insisting he go backstage and get things ready. If she spots GEORGE and/or WENDY she'll make a big fuss and very obviously hustle them out of sight.

DWAYNE, when not avoiding LOIS, is seen tinkering around the lobby. He checks everything, from light switches to tables. He carries a flashlight and has it on shining it all over the audience. And sings country songs to himself.

GLORIA wanders around trying to help her mother, but really on the lookout for DWAYNE. Whenever she sees DWAYNE, they immediately go into a clinch, kissing passionately. If LOIS spots them, she immediately puts a stop to THAT.

GEORGE although he is not supposed to be seen beforehand, has donned a "disguise" because he cannot resist being among his "public." He will accost females and perform Shakespearean sonnets to them, etc. Our George just wore a black, Zorro-like mask, which got him instantly noticed.

WENDY is wearing sunglasses, a hat, and trench coat over her costume. She is trying to find GEORGE so that she can get him out of the lobby. "We're not supposed to be seen, George! Come backstage before LOIS sees you!"

During pre-show, it's also a great deal of fun to have real magicians, performing close-up magic tricks and sleight of hand.

PART TWO - THE PLAY

Onstage are 13 chairs. The one in the center is more ornate than the others - this is for SIMONE. LOIS comes onstage. Again, certain sections of the script refer to our particular event at the Civic. You can adapt to suit your event.

HOSTESS: (If pre-show music is used, HOSTESS begins by thanking the musician.) Good evening and welcome to _____. I am _____ and we've got something very special for you tonight. Something very different, something that will soon become a tradition at _____. And here to tell you all about it is the President of Merchant Entertainment, Lois Merchant.

LOIS: Good evening, _____, and thank you. It is exciting. Previously, here at the _____ we've done (whatever is done there - wedding receptions, etc.). But changes are being made. The _____ is changing. By this time next year, it will be gutted, completely redone and renovated and will become a year round (spookily) house. That's right a (spookily) OOOHhaunted house.

HOSTESS: (repeated spookily) OOOOH . . .sounds like fun. Like Halloween every day?

LOIS: That's right, _____. Halloween every day.

HOSTESS & LOIS:(Together, same spookily). OOOH

LOIS: It WILL be fun. So we're beginning tonight with a seance, led by a world class psychic, the one, the only, the mysterious Simone!! (Nothing.) Um, SIMONE THE PSYCHIC!! (Again, nothing.) Simone. Simone. (Singing) SIMONE??? (No SIMONE) Um, _____ could you find Simone?

(HOSTESS exits to get SIMONE)

LOIS: (Stalling) So the _____ will become a haunted theatre. Year round. Eat your heart out, Jaycees (or whoever does "haunted houses" in your town.)

(HOSTESS enters with SIMONE in tow.)

SIMONE: Even psychics gotta go to the john. Geez, quit pushin'.

LOIS: Ah, Simone. Ladies and gentlemen - Simone the Psychic!! Thanks, _____.

(HOSTESS exits.) Simone. . .why don't you tell us what's on the (spookily) OOOH spooky agenda for tonight?

SIMONE: Wha??? Um, good evening, one and all. Tonight, ladies and gentlemen, we will attempt to reach the spirits that haunt the _____ and. . .and (she looks at LOIS.)

LOIS: (Prompting her) And. . .and. . .which ones will we be trying to reach, heh-heh??

SIMONE: (Remembering. . .sort of). . .Oh, that's right. Um, we're going to reach the spirits of some magician or other. . .Marko the . . . Marko the . . .

LOIS: Morgo the Magnificent. Remember, Simone?

SIMONE: Remember what?

LOIS: "back when on this site there was a vaudeville house. . ." (she's obviously trying to get her back on "the script")

SIMONE: . . .back when on this site there was a vaudeville house. . .no, no, don't tell me. . .I've got it. . . damn. . (Then, remembering - she's now on track.) back when on this site there was a vaudeville house, one of the biggest attractions was a magician, Mingo. . .

LOIS: Morgo

SIMONE: MORGO? You sure? Oh, yes, MORGO. MORGO. Right. . .Morgo the. . .the. . the something or other. . and his wife and assistant, Clara. .

LOIS: Clarisse.

SIMONE: Clarisse? Yes, Clarisse. One night their magic act was really. . .really, really screwed up. See, Mumbo was doing the sawing in half thing and Clarabelle was in that box thingy and he started sawing away . . and the next thing you know there was blood all over the damn stage. . .

(DWAYNE has entered and is staring at the floor.)

DWAYNE: They say you could see the stain. Musta been right about here. (looking down to an imaginary spot).

SIMONE: (Startled). . . Wha. . .damn, you gave me the willies.

LOIS: DWAYNE!! Get off the stage now!

DWAYNE: (Still lost in his reverie.) Even though they sanded it down, kept comin' back. Said it kinda looked like Texas. .

LOIS: Dwayne!!

DWAYNE: That musta been one big stain. (Coming out of it.) Oh, sorry, Miz Merchant. . . (mumbling) Thought they'd wanna see where the stain was. . . .had like a little panhandle . . .

LOIS: Please continue, Simone. .

SIMONE: Wha. . who me??? .Oh dear, where was I??? . (trying desperately to remember). . right. . . back when on this site was a vaudeville house one of the biggest attraction was a magician, Mimsy.

LOIS: Morgo. . .you already did that part. . .

SIMONE: I did? (She frantically tries to go through "the script" in her head.) Majestic. . .vaudeville. . .
Cora. . .Did I do the part about the. . .

DWAYNE: I'm gonna miss where that stain used to be. .

LOIS: Dwayne!! Look, do you want something?

DWAYNE: Me? No. . .yes. . .no. . .yes. . .Gosh, Miz Merchant. . .See, I'm kinda upset about something
and I thought maybe you could help. . .

LOIS: Not now, Dwayne. .

DWAYNE: But see it affects Gloria n' me, so I thought. . .

LOIS: Not now, Dwayne, Simone is telling us about the ghosts.

SIMONE: I was? Oh, yes, I was. Mumford and his beautiful wife Connie. .

LOIS: Morgo and Clarisse. .

DWAYNE: (starting to cry) See, Miz Merchant, I got fired this afternoon. . .'cause if this ol' place
becomes a haunted house LOIS: Ahem.

DWAYNE: What? Oh, I forgot. Haunted house. (Not spookily.) OOOOH.

LOIS AND SIMONE: (Together Spookily) OOOOHHHH (DWAYNE gives half-hearted little OOOH.)

DWAYNE: Well, anyway, they probably won't be needing me and you know that Gloria and I were
planning on getting married and all, but if I don't have a job, well, that's gonna be tough and so I was
thinking since you're gonna set up the haunted house OOOH thing, you could talk to them about maybe
hiring me back. . .

SIMONE: That's right. Sawed her in half. Nasty business. . .gives me the willies. .

LOIS: Why would I talk to them when I was the one who got you fir . . .???. . .never mind. (VERY
sympathetically) That's very sad, Dwayne. Maybe I can do something. . .

DWAYNE: Gee, that would be great, Miz Merchant. Oh, and don't tell Gloria 'bout me losing my job. . .
it'll break her Achy-Breaky li'l heart. .

LOIS: (Trying to hustle him offstage.) Cross my heart. . .now, if you'll go, we can proceed. . .

DWAYNE: Oh, sure. . .sorry. . .and you know, Miz Merchant. . .I'll bet that even after I tell her, she won't
care. She loves me. She'll marry me anyway. . .(He starts to exit)

LOIS: Yes, yes, you're probably right. . .you're absolutely right. . (it occurs to her that he IS probably right
and she grabs him before he can get offstage..) You're probably right. DWAYNE! Come back here.
(To the audience) Excuse me a minute - family business. Simone, we'll get started in just a sec.

SIMONE: (Dramatically) "Back when on this site there was a vaudeville house. . ."

LOIS: (Rushing back to her, then back to DWAYNE.) Hold that thought, Simone. We'll get started in a minute.

SIMONE: We will? Oh, that's okay. Need to go over my lines anyway (she starts doing this, in her head)

LOIS: Dwayne, dear, I don't want to add to your burden, but I think I need to tell you something about Gloria.

DWAYNE: Now, I don't wanna be rude, Miz Merchant, but there ain't nothin' you can tell me about Gloria We're connected at the soul.

LOIS: Yes, yes, I know you THINK you are, Dwayne. But, see, actually there's something you don't know about Gloria. Before she met you, she was in love with someone else. . .well, actually, Dwayne you have a right to know.. .

DWAYNE: Know what, Miz Merchant?

SIMONE: (Overlapping the following dialogue.) Morgo, Morgo, Morgo. . .

LOIS: Well, it's difficult to talk about my own daughter like this, Dwayne, but well, let's just say there have been others.

DWAYNE: Huh?

LOIS: Gloria has been around. There have been other men.

DWAYNE: (Clueless.) I don't know whatcha mean, Miz Merchant.

LOIS: (Very meaningfully) She's been to the county fair. Taken a few spins on the tilty-whirl.

DWAYNE: What? (The light dawns.) Gloria???? MY Gloria.

LOIS: Yours and a whole lot of other people's, Dwayne. My. . .OUR Gloria has a great deal of experience . .with men.

DWAYNE: Gee. Wow. (Thinking and making up his mind) That's okay, Miz Merchant. Everything that happened before we met, it's like it didn't really happen. Our lives began on the day we set eyes on each other. (Striking the dramatic prow-of-the-Titanic pose.) My heart will go on.

LOIS: And there was one man in particular. . .out of all those, dozens and dozens and dozens of men. . . yes, yes, Dwayne, Gloria was in love with another man. . .and, to be blunt - she still is.

DWAYNE: I don't believe it!

SIMONE: (Overlapping their dialogue) Morgo, Morgo, Marky Mark. .

LOIS: It's true. (Thinking fast) And. . .um, uh. . . he's here tonight and he's come back to her and, and, and - he wants her to marry him!

DWAYNE: NO!!! It can't be!

SIMONE: (Interjecting whenever she can.) Clarisse, Clarisse, Clarisse. . .

LOIS: I'm sorry to hurt you and I know this comes as a shock. In fact, she's planning on dumping you for him.

DWAYNE: Who is it? Tell me! I'll kill him. I'll bust his. . .

SIMONE: (Interjecting whenever she can.) Clarisse, Clarisse, Clarabell. .

LOIS: Um. . . the name's not important, Dwayne, no, er, no the names not important. . but, uh, he's handsome - oh, my he's handsome and, and. . .and RICH. . . oh, just filthy rich and. . .well, they plan to live happily ever. . .

DWAYNE: TELL ME HIS NAME!

LOIS: It's _____ (here she supplies the name of a male audience member chosen beforehand. For the script, we'll call him "Joe Smith")

SIMONE: Joe Smith, Joe Smith, Joe Smith. . .

LOIS: Look, Dwayne dear. Be grownup about it. These things happen. If you really love Gloria, then let her go. And speaking of going, (she gestures him offstage)

DWAYNE: (mumbling as he exits). That's right. I'll show her I don't care. I can do that. It was just a fling for me too. (Sings as he exits) "You picked a fine time to leave me, Lucille." I mean "Gloria."

LOIS: (To the audience) So very sorry about that. Simone, please continue in your tale of the ghosts of Mergo and Clarisse.

SIMONE: (Startled) GHOSTS!! Where?? Oh, I get it. Damn, you gave me the willies there. Oh, my yes. The ghosts. The ghosts of Maxwell and Clingon the famous musicians. .

LOIS: What's the name of your agency again, Simone?

SIMONE: Agency? State Farm. . .or was that last year? I had to switch after I rear-ended the Volvo. Wasn't my fault, tho.

LOIS: I think maybe there's been a mixup. . .you are a psychic, aren't you?

SIMONE: (Insulted) Never been sick a day in my life!

LOIS: Ladies and gentlemen, it appears that the talent agency may have sent the wrong psychic and I need to talk to (HOSTESS name). . .(she looks to the wings. We see GLORIA frantically waving from offstage.) What is it? What???? WHAT??? Oh, just say it!

GLORIA: (entering) I'm sorry, Mother. I just wanted to tell you that I put Duke in the bathroom and I'll pay for your shoes.

LOIS: What?

GLORIA: Duke. Duke. DUKE. The puppy I bought to surprise Dwayne on his birthday. The beagle. He chewed up one of your red pumps.

LOIS: Gloria. . .can you tell that we're trying to do a show here? Forget the puppy for now. . .

GLORIA: (finally "noticing" the audience) Oh, gee, I'm sorry. . . but, Mother, have you seen Dwayne?

LOIS: Yes, yes, he was here a minute. . .

SIMONE: Only had one accident in 30 years of driving. Not counting that thing in the back yard.

LOIS: (Realizing she's got to do a little work here.) Um, wait a minute, Gloria. There's something you need to know about Dwayne.

GLORIA: What?

LOIS: (Thinking, "Hey, it worked with him.") He's in love with someone else.

GLORIA: I don't believe it.

LOIS: It's true. He confided in me. But, Gloria, dear. . .um, please don't let on that you know. He told me in utter confidence. So, if you um. . .if you see him, just pretend you don't know.

GLORIA: Dwayne? My Dwayne? MY DWAYNE? My Dwayne has someone else? Who is it? Who is it??

LOIS: That's not important. What's important is that you found out now rather than after you got serious about him.

GLORIA: But I AM serious about him. Oh, who is it? Where is she?

LOIS: It really doesn't matter, dear, in the big picture. .

SIMONE: (Still in remembering-lines-mode.) Joe Smith, Joe Smith, Joe Smith.

GLORIA: WHAT?? JOE SMITH???

LOIS: Be quiet, Simone, Gloria it's not. . .(sudden inspiration that this is even better.) Yes, yes, that's it, dear. Dwayne is dumping you for Joe Smith.

GLORIA: What??? You mean??? He's. . .? My Dwayne? MY Dwayne is . . .?

LOIS: Yes, dear, Dwayne is gay. Really, really gay. I mean, talk about queens - that's our Dwayne.

GLORIA: I. . .I can't believe it. . .I mean, he builds things. . .he watches football. . .he. . .he. . .oh, my God. . .wears a TOOL BELT. . . he CAN'T be gay. . .(She sits down and starts crying.)

LOIS: Oh, for Pete's sake. (To the audience). Look, everyone, we're going to have a short delay here while I confer with (HOSTESS name) about Simone. . .could be the agency made a mistake. And we'll get it sorted out. . .for now, just remain seated and . . .and. . .well, just remain seated. Gloria, stop crying. Entertain the people. Sing or something. (She exits stage right, dragging SIMONE with her.)

GLORIA: I should have known when he cried during Titanic.

SIMONE: (As Lois drags her off stage) Is Joe Smith a magician too?

GLORIA:(Singing softly.) I was looking for love in all the wrong places. . . (As they exit, and GLORIA sings, DWAYNE enters from the opposite side of the stage.) DWAYNE: Gloria?

GLORIA: Dwayne?

DWAYNE: I was. . .um. . .looking for you. There was something I wanted to tell you.

GLORIA: Me too.

(Silence. Then they both start to talk at once.)

GLORIA: You first.

DWAYNE: Look, Gloria. . .you're mama told me about your little secret.

GLORIA: Secret? MY secret. Oh, you mean HIM. . .It doesn't matter now. . .she told you? Gee, now even that is spoiled..

DWAYNE: Spoiled?

GLORIA: I wanted it to be a surprise. I wanted to tell you myself. I wanted to see the look on your face when you saw him. He's so cute.

DWAYNE: I don't think I want to hear this. . .

GLORIA: I just thought you might. . . we always had at least one around when I was growing up. . .

DWAYNE: Yeah, your mama told me 'bout you. . .goin' to the fair and the tilty whirl and all. . .wait a minute - you had them around the house? Your Mom let you do that?

GLORIA: Oh, yes. I'd pick them up on the street and bring them home. She said as long as they didn't hump her leg or pee on the carpet they could stay. Which is why we preferred males to females.

DWAYNE: You had females?? But your Mom said. . .FEMALES.

GLORIA: Only one. But then she got pregnant.

DWAYNE: Pregnant?

GLORIA: Well, the bitch was always running around the neighborhood chasing the paperboy so it was bound to happen.

C'mon, didn't you have ever have one?

DWAYNE: Not really, my folks are Baptists. . .they were pretty strict. . .although I did take one to the prom.

.

GLORIA: The prom?

DWAYNE: Nothing compared to you, I guess, but it was something. . .Look, Gloria. . .

GLORIA: No, stop, Dwayne. I can't pretend. Mother told me your little secret, too.

DWAYNE: She did? Oh, THAT. Somehow it don't seem like so much after. . . Oh, gee, I'm sorry. I wanted to find my own time and place. .

GLORIA: And I want you to know I understand. . though, of course, it will change anything between us? Tell me, Dwayne, how long have you "known"?

DWAYNE: Well, I felt it comin' for a long time, but only found our for sure this afternoon. .

GLORIA: This afternoon???

DWAYNE: Remember, I tried to tell you. . .in the lobby - when I was arranging the flowers. . .

GLORIA: Ah, yes, I should have known then. But if you only found out this afternoon maybe it's not for sure. . .

DWAYNE: Oh, it's for sure all right. Definitely. I talked to your Mama about it. I was hoping she could do fix it.

GLORIA: You thought my MOTHER could fix it?

DWAYNE: Well. . .she's quite a woman.

GLORIA: Yes, but still. .

DWAYNE: But there's some stuff even she can't fix, and this is one of 'em. Look, Gloria, it's not THAT unusual. And I'm glad you know. Really. Otherwise you'd have wondered when I was sending out resumes.

GLORIA: You have to send out resumes?? I thought you just went to bars or something.

DWAYNE: Bars? No, mostly you just check the ads.

GLORIA: That's so pathetic.

DWAYNE: Yeah, and then you go on interviews and they want to see what you can do. .

GLORIA: Wow. . .I didn't know. . .

DWAYNE: Yeah, well the competition's pretty stiff . . . for the really good ones that pay a lot. . .

GLORIA: Pay!!! I'm seeing a whole new side of you, Dwayne.

(LOIS and HOSTESS return, dragging SIMONE, obviously in the midst of a discussion about her.)

LOIS: So, you're sure?

HOSTESS: Yes, she's a real psychic. And, well, she might be related to someone..

LOIS: Okay. Guess it can't hurt to try. And since I'm psychic myself we should be all set. . .so. . .let's get started with the seance, shall we? Dwayne, dear, not you. . .off, off. . .

GLORIA: Goodbye, Dwayne. . .good luck with. . .you know. . .I hope you'll be very happy. . .

DWAYNE: Goodbye, Glo. . .Look Gloria, maybe I can find a position you'd be comfortable with. . .

GLORIA: A position!!! You mean. . .the three of. . . I don't think so, Dwayne.

DWAYNE: Well, then, I guess this is. . .goodbye. . .

SIMONE: There's always Joe Smith. . .

DWAYNE: Yeah. Joe Smith. I forgot. (He exits.)

LOIS: Alright. Fine. That's settled. Now besides my Gloria, _____ and Simone here (SIMONE is playing with her skirt, hair, whatever) we need some of you to help with the seance. We conducted interviews in the lobby earlier and discovered some true psychics in the audience. Please come up here (She brings up the 9 audience members chosen during pre-show. She interviews them or gives biographical data she found out when they were picked.)

SIMONE: (As she finishes) And, of course, Joe Smith. Come on up here, Joe. It wouldn't be a party without you. (LOIS ad-libs protests but Joe comes onstage. DWAYNE reenters)

DWAYNE: Joe Smith!! (GLORIA shakes JOE'S hand). Don't be shy, Gloria. Go ahead and kiss him.

GLORIA: You won't be jealous?

DWAYNE: Not me. In fact, I think I'll join this little seance. Gotta be near my good buddy, Joe. (He takes JOE to one of the chairs and sits next to him.) And Gloria, you sit on the other side. (She does. He pats JOE'S leg and puts an arm around his chair.) Joe. Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe, Joe. (They both turn to JOE and enter into an animated conversation with him, punctuated by exclamations of surprise. Actual ly, they get JOE to tell them what's been happening and how they have both been duped by LOIS. GLORIA tells DWAYNE about the puppy and DWAYNE tells her about losing his job. We hear exclamations of "a dog!! You're not gay!! Mother did what!! I can't believe this. . .in the midst of all this, LOIS knows the game is up and starts to try to divert attention and "cover up.")

LOIS: Um, uh. . . well, since we're adding to the numbers here, I'm gonna need a few more chairs. (She exits rapidly stage left for them. After a second we hear a shriek from her. She re-entering with 2 chairs, rubbing her behind) Dwayne, that backstage area is a mess. I just backed into something sharp.

DWAYNE: Too bad it wasn't a knife.

LOIS: (Ignoring him and placing the chairs.) Okay. We're all set, Simone. . .Simone. . .Come on, Simone let's get this. . . Simone???(SIMONE is center stage, staring straight ahead.)

SIMONE: (SIMONE is making an effort.) Okay, first of all. . . Lights down (the lights dim. She surveys the group.). . .Now, everybody change places. Um, that's right. Rearrange. . .(She directs everyone to different places. There is a lot of confused movement.) No, no, that's not right. Again. (The confusion is repeated. During this time, someone could have ostensibly injected LOIS.)

LOIS: Ouch! (To an audience member.) Hands to yourself, buddy. . .Simone. . .get on with it.

SIMONE: Oh, right, um. . .(She looks at the group.) That's much better. (She sits in the chair in the middle.) Now, let's see. . . . join hands, that's right. . .and now the trance. . . Everybody. . . Let your head fall forward. (They do.) Close your eyes. (They do.) Picture yourself floating. Floating. (Singsong) Floating. Drifting along through time and space. You have no worries, no cares. . . (Her voice abruptly changes.) MARGOOOOO. . .I mean, MOOOOORRRRRGGOOO. . .we await you. . . we are here for you. . .MOOOOOORRRRRRRGGOOOOO. . .(LOIS begins twitching.) DWAYNE: Hey, what's with Lois?

GLORIA: It's just her trance routine.

SIMONE: SHHHHHH. . .do not break the spell. . .MORGOOOOOO. . .are you there??

GEORGE: (as MORGO, from offstage) I AM HEEEEERRRRRE!!!

(By this time, LOIS has ceased twitching and is sitting slumped in her chair.)

SIMONE: I can feel him. . .I can feel him. . .Show yourself, Oh Mylanta. . .

GLORIA & DWAYNE: Morgo, dammit.

SIMONE: Morgo, dammit!! Morgo the Magnificent!!

(There is fog, then the lights dim further, with only a "special" illuminating where MORGO enters. Spooky music, etc. GEORGE/MORGO enters dramatically from stage left.) GEORGE/MORGO: I am here! Why have you summoned Morgo the Magnificent?

SIMONE: Wow!! . .You are here. Cool.

GEORGE/MORGO: I said, "Why have you summoned Morgo the Magnificent??"

SIMONE: Is he talking to me?

GEORGE/MORGO: (Prompting her.) Could it be to find out what happened that fateful night? Could it be to discover just why I haunt this site? Could it be to uncover the secrets of our last performance here?

SIMONE: Sounds good to me.

GEORGE/MORGO:: But. . .to reveal the events of that night, we must call on my partner, my lover, my wife. . .CLA. . .

SIMONE: (Interrupting) Cla. . .don't tell me. . .Cloris, Chlamydia, Cla. .

GEORGE/MORGO: Clarisse. . .Clarisse. . .CLARISSSSSSSE!! My love, my own. . .Come to your Morgo . . .Come, COME, COME!!!

(MORGO moves from the "special" . During CLARISSE'S entrance with her accompanying scream, while attention is focused on her, he will drop the hypodermic behind the chairs. From offstage we hear an earth shattering scream, followed by WENDY/CLARISSE'S entrance from stage right into the "special". Her entrance is every bit as dramatic as GEORGE/MORGO'S. Any effects that will divert attention from GEORGE/MORGO should be used.) SIMONE: Wow, whatta set of lungs.

WENDY/CLARISSE: I am heeeerrrrre. . .I am here to tell you the story of what happened the night. . .the night. . .the night. . .the night that my husband killed me. . .

GEORGE/MORGO: (Moving into the "special" with her.) It was an accident. A horrible, tragic accident, Clarisse, my love. . .I've told you a thousand times how sorry I am. . .

WENDY/CLARISSE: (Whirling on him) NO!! It was . . .

(During this next section, both of them try to do "hammy" actor things to grab the spotlight.)

GEORGE/MORGO: (Interrupting) I had checked the props over and over and over and over. . .How could it have happened? What went wrong??

WENDY/CLARISSE: It's time the truth were. . .

GEORGE/MORGO: Stop!! The truth IS known. . .I never meant to harm you. . .and I killed myself in grief and remorse afterward.

WENDY/CLARISSE: (momentarily stunned. GEORGE/MORGO is not following "the script"). . .I know. But the full story isn't known, George, I mean Morgo. . .Was it because you weren't able to. . .you know. . .Because you couldn't be a REAL man. . .is that why, Morgo??

GEORGE/MORGO: I started sawing, and sawing and sawing. . .Only a real man could saw like that. . .Oh, Clarisse. . . The only thing I am guilty of is loving you too much. . .

WENDY/CLARISSE: What?!! (Trying to get him back on track. A sudden idea.) Loved me too much??? You weren't even able to. . .to. . .you know. . .get it. . .I mean, wait!! That's why you did it!! You were always jealous. Insanely jealous. . .you. . .uh. . .thought I was having an affair with someone who could. . .

SIMONE: Uh, oh, an affair. Watch out, Joe.

GEORGE/MORGO: (Laughing loudly.) Jealous. I was never jealous. . .and I knew you would never betray me. . .our love was too strong. . .it was eternal. . .remember how we always promised each other that. . .

WENDY/CLARISSE: (hissing in a stage whisper.) Stop it, George!

SIMONE: George??

GEORGE/MORGO: I know what you're going to say, Clarisse. .

WENDY: (All pretext of acting is gone.) That's good, 'cause I sure as hell don't.

GEORGE/MORGO: You're going to say that I was TOO much of a man for you and my spirit will not rest until I confess of your murder. . .

WENDY/CLARISSE: (Hopefully). . .Yes, yes. . .that's just what I was going to say. . .your spirit will not rest until you confess. . .

GEORGE/MORGO: Why would I want to rest, when I could haunt this place, eternally, with you, my one and only love. . .

WENDY/CLARISSE:. . .Because, because (she is desperately trying to come up with a reason, before giving up all pretense of "acting".) Oh, damn. That's it. George what the hell do you think you're doing?

SIMONE: Yes, you have some explaining to do, young man. Like how did David Copperfield make the Statue of Liberty disappear? And whatever happened to Doug Henning, anyway.? Always thought he was kind of cute, even with that dumb hair.

GEORGE/MORGO: David Copperfield. Doug Henning. (He laughs loudly) Amateurs, mere amateurs. They could not hold a candle to MORGO!!

WENDY: Well I'd like to hold a candle to Morgo. Actually, I'd like to shove a candle. . .

GEORGE/MORGO: Clarisse!!

WENDY: Okay, okay, OKAY. Seance over. Bring up the lights. (The lights return.) I don't believe you, George. Our first paying gig in a month and you have to screw it up.

GEORGE/MORGO: I am not George! I am Morgo the Magnificent!!

SIMONE: Wow. Multiple personalities. Kinda like "Sybil Goes Supernatural". (Shudder) There go the willies again.

WENDY: (To the audience.) Sorry, everyone. In case you haven't figured it out yet - we're not ghosts. We're actors. My real name's Wendy and that doofus over there is my brother, George, the great Method actor. (To GEORGE) You couldn't just stick to the script, could you, George? Noooo, you had to do an instant rewrite onstage.

DWAYNE: The real ghosts are not gonna be happy about this.

GLORIA: Neither will Mother.

DWAYNE: Yeah, she's been real quiet through all this. . . (Everyone looks at LOIS).

GLORIA: Mother?

SIMONE: Shhhh, she's still in the trance. If you wake her it could damage her psycho, psychic, physic. . . one of those "ps" words. . . psyche, that's it. . . hey, isn't this fun?

GEORGE/MORGO: Vaudeville was my life. . .

WENDY: Yeah, ya-da, ya-da, ya-da. . . Give it a rest, George. . .

(DWAYNE and GLORIA have gathered around LOIS.)

GLORIA: (Shaking her). . . Mother?? Mother??

DWAYNE: Miz Merchant??

GLORIA: She's. . . she's. . . dead. (GLORIA begins to cry and is comforted by DWAYNE.)

GEORGE/MORGO: For years, there have been rumors. . . all sorts of ugly rumors. . . rumors about murder and . . . not being able to. . . able to. . . but tonight, I shall lay those rumors to rest, if I have to lay every woman. . .

WENDY: GEORGE!!

GEORGE/MORGO: I AM MORGO THE MAGNIFICENT. I AM MORGO THE MAGNIFICENT. I AM MORGO THE MAGNIF . . . Oh, hell! How can I keep my concentration when all of you keep yammering on?

WENDY: George, Lois is dead.

SIMONE: (Who has moved over and is also examining the body.) That she is. Dead as a doornail. Must a been her heart. . .

WENDY: If she had one. . . that woman was one tough broad. Oh, sorry, Gloria.

DWAYNE: Whoa, this is heavy duty.

GLORIA: Mother. . . oh, Mother (she starts to cry harder.)

DWAYNE: Gloria, honey, please stop crying. You know what happens when you cry. (Pause. Then he starts to cry too.)

SIMONE: Do you suppose we could cover her up or something. Dead bodies give me the willies.

GEORGE: Allow me. (He removes his cape and dramatically covers LOIS' body.) Good night, sweet Lois, and may flights of angels sing thee to thy rest. . .

SIMONE: Oh, that was beautiful

GEORGE: Thank you, thank you, thank you. So, ding dong, the bitch is dead. I must tell you, the

woman was cheap. I very rarely work for scale, but the opportunity to play a character like Morgo was irresistible. So complex. So many layers.

WENDY: Well, you blew it, big brother. Scale was better than nothing.

GLORIA: Her heart was fine. The only health problems she had was diabetes. She had to have an insulin shot every morning.

GEORGE: Ah, diabetes! I remember an interesting case of diabetes. . . .

DWAYNE: Are you a doctor?

GEORGE: Well, no, but I played one on tv. Spent 6 weeks in medical school doing my preparation for the role.

SIMONE: E.R.? Chicago Hope? Love those shows. George Clooney gets this little psychic heart a-racin', I'll tell you that.

WENDY: It was a hemorrhoid commercial. Hey, we're still gonna get paid for this job, aren't we?

GLORIA: I don't know. . . I don't . . . what do you think we should do now, Dwayne. . .

DWAYNE: Um, call the police or the coroner or something?

GEORGE: No one must touch the crime scene.

WENDY: George, stay out of it. . .

SIMONE: But Clooney as Batman. . . couldn't buy it. . . now Val Kilmer. . . oooh, those little bat ears. . . was he yummy or what?

GEORGE: Kilmer is a capable actor, true, although I preferred the work of Keaton.

DWAYNE: I think we can let all these people (meaning the audience members who participated in the seance) go back to their seats.

GLORIA: I suppose you're right. Thank you everyone. . . sorry about this. . .

(Audience members exit, shepherded by GLORIA and DWAYNE.)

GEORGE: And we should examine the scene of the crime.

SIMONE: He's right. . . Columbo always checks out the scene of the crime. . .

WENDY: Well, George ain't Columbo. . .

GEORGE: (Laughs loudly) No one is Columbo but Peter Falk. He's like a god to me. He makes it look so easy. . . (If he can do a Peter Falk impersonation, he does it here.) the walk, the voice. . . oh, anyway. .

.everyone, before you go, check around the stage for evidence. . .something that may give us a clue to who murdered Lois. .

GLORIA: Murdered! She couldn't have been. . .

(By now, the HOSTESS will have found the hypodermic.)

NOTE: You'll have to discover the best way to do the hypodermic thing. If your playing area is large enough and removed enough from the audience, it can be preset. Find a spot where it will be hidden from the view of the audience members who participate in the seance. If platforms are used, it can be planted upstage on the floor, as if it were dropped in the crack between the wall and the platform. The HOSTESS can also have it on her, and, with others blocking her, she'll bend over and find it. MORGO/GEORGE can actually drop it during the seance, though that can be dangerous - someone could see him. If you go that route, make sure there is enough confusion, darkness, etc., to "cover" it.

GEORGE: (As he takes it) Ah-hah!! Good work, _____

WENDY: Ah-hah, nothing, George. Put that down.

GLORIA: Let me see that. (She takes it.) It's one of Mother's insulin needles. . .

SIMONE: The plot thickens, eh, George?

GEORGE: (Affecting a British accent.) T'would appear so. . .

WENDY: Oh, brother.

GEORGE: What? Yes, yes. . .t'would appear to be a case of one dose too many. From my medical training I would have to deduce that someone injected Lois with insulin, sending her into insulin shock with its resulting convulsions and ultimately, death.

GLORIA: I thought she was just doing her fake trance thing. . .

DWAYNE: And here she was. . .

SIMONE: Murdered!! I can feel the willies coming on again. .

WENDY: George, repeat after me. I'm an actor. I'm an actor. I'm an actor.

GEORGE: What? Oh, alright. (Each one becomes increasingly dramatic. Each one puts an emphasis on a different word.) I AM an actor. I am AN actor. I am an ACTOR.

SIMONE: (Applauding) Oh, yes you are, you most certainly are.

GEORGE/MORGO: No. . . NO. . .I'm a magician. I am Morgo the Magnificent!!!

WENDY: Come here, Morgo. (He does. WENDY slaps him.)

GEORGE: Thanks, sis. (Abruptly) Now, back to the murder. . .

WENDY: Let the professionals deal with it, okay, Mr. Brando.

SIMONE: Has HE gotten fat or what?

DWAYNE: If the needle was out here onstage. . .

GLORIA: It means that one of the people onstage at the beginning of the seance. . remember?? . . when Simone had us all changing places?

GEORGE: Ah, yes, Brando. STELLLLLLLLLLAAAA!

SIMONE: Stella Brando? I thought his first name was Marlon.

WENDY: Yes, I watched from the wings. . .when everyone was milling around in the dark. . .anyone of them could have stuck her.

GLORIA: Oh, dear, this is so terrible. . .poor Mother. . .

GEORGE: Methinks we allowed those people to return to their seats too early. . .

SIMONE: Methinks so too.

WENDY: But none of them had any reason to kill her. . .they only met her tonight. . .

SIMONE: Except Joe Smith. . .

GEORGE: Ah, but Joe Smith was merely a distraction, a ruse, a scapegoat, as it were, to prevent the fair Gloria and her dashing knight from being together. Could it be, perchance, that one of them, or BOTH of them thought that was sufficient reason for murder. . .could it be, perchance. ???

SIMONE: Hmm. . .perchance

(GLORIA and DWAYNE both loudly protest their innocence.)

HOSTESS: Hey, everyone. Guess what I do - as well as hostessing? I organize murder mystery games

GEORGE: Hmm. . . murder as a game. I don't know if that's quite "the thing". . .

HOSTESS: No, really. (Spots piece of paper in LOIS' hand.) HELLO, what's this? (She takes it.) It's a piece of paper. . .

GEORGE: How fortuitous. . . a clue. . perhaps you do know a thing or too about mysteries,
_____.

GLORIA: It appears to be the top of Mother's memo pad. . .

SIMONE: "From the desk of Lois Merchant". . .what do you think it means, George?

WENDY: Oh, please don't ask him that!

GEORGE: It may be nothing. . .or it could be. . .something. . .why don't you organize a clue search for the rest of the memo, _____. . .I need to take some hot water and lemon - for my voice. . .and I feel a mal a la tete coming on. . .

SIMONE: A what in your what?

WENDY: He's getting one of his headaches. . .come on, George.

GEORGE: It's hard being an artiste, Wendy. . .

WENDY: Yeah, yeah, I know. . . (they exit.)

HOSTESS: The rest of you might as well take a break, too, because you're gonna be busy answering questions in a few minutes. . .

SIMONE: Questions??

HOSTESS: Yes, I imagine that all these people will have some questions for you. (They exit) Welcome to Murder by Magic.

I always introduce the clue hunt at my events. If you decide to produce a sample clue hunt with answer key will be provided. Using that, and the Production Manual, will enable you to adapt - or eliminate - your clue hunt.

What follows is the directions I gave for MURDER BY MAGIC when we performed at the Civic. You will want to alter this speech to your event.

Tonight you will have the opportunity to solve the murder of Lois Merchant. You will also be able to personally interrogate the suspects. During this interrogation, the characters will do their best not to lie. But, of course, one or more have things to hide and will do their best not to be trapped by your questions. It would be a short mystery indeed, if guilty parties just came right out and admitted their guilt upon being questioned.

In a moment, mystery helpers will distribute clue packets on clipboards. This will lead you to the rest of Lois' memorandum and explain how to offer your solution. The clue packets are pretty much self explanatory so it is of the utmost importance that you read it carefully and follow the directions on it. You will not save time by jumping right in and running off in all directions. Take a moment right after I am finished to go over the top page of your clue packet. It will tell you where to start - which clue to do first - and then you will do them in order after that. This prevents all of you from heading to one location. But besides reading the opening instructions carefully, read the directions for each clue. **THIS IS NOT A RACE.** Winners will be drawn at random from the correct solutions. Prizes will also be awarded for the most confused, most creative, and most outrageous solutions.

That's about it, Happy Detecting!

At this point, the body removal team goes into action, removing LOIS' "body". See back of script.

PART THREE - THE CLUE HUNT

The Mysteries by Moushey PRODUCTION MANUAL provides instructions for designing clue hunts. It also provides options for adapting the clue hunt, or even eliminating it altogether (although if you can do it, the clue hunt is always VERY popular with audiences!)

Each team will receive a clue packet (we put ours on clipboards). This includes trivia, decoding, fill-in-the-blank, puzzles, etc. Putting them all together will lead the teams to the object of the clue hunt - the memo from Lois.

The last page of the clue packet is the solution sheet. Once each team has found the memo, interrogated the suspects, and reviewed the case, they are ready to complete and submit their solution.

If you order production materials for MURDER BY MAGIC you will receive sample clue hunts and a flow chart. Production materials also include a “clean copy” of the memo, which you may photocopy.

The actors circulate during the clue hunt, answering questions. They will try not to lie, except when necessary. GEORGE will very frequently slip into being MORGO again. WENDY may explain that he has difficulty staying “out of character”. Also during the clue hunt, as participants show the actors the memo, they will respond to it.

THE MEMO

To: _____ Management

RE: Status of (date here) Show. Everything is in place to turn the _____ into a money-making operation.

RE: The psychic. I’ve hired Simone the Psychic to “bring back” Morgo the Magnificent and his wife, Clarisse. She’s a complete fake, of course, but comes cheap.

RE: The “ghost” actors. I’ve hired two professionals with excellent credentials, though the guy is weird.

RE: Script changes. The magic-act-gone-wrong thing is pretty boring, so I’ve juiced it up and made it a murder. In my version, it wasn’t an accident - Morgo was a coldblooded killer, was insanely jealous, and impotent. Really hot stuff.

RE: Dwayne. He’s a total incompetent and is undermining the entire project. And his repeated sexual advances towards me are disgusting. Please see that he is terminated.

RE: Gloria’s salary: Please make her check out to me. You’ve probably noticed that she’s not overly bright and isn’t very good with money. I’ll take care of paying her.

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

PROPS

Hypodermic

Gun

Magician's tricks for GEORGE/MORGO (This is optional. During the clue hunt, GEORGE can "amaze" with his less-than-wonderful magician abilities. Yet another thing to show how strongly he identified with Morgo.)

Something for body removal. If you perform onstage you can simply close the curtain. If this is not an option at your location, you can use a variety of things. Since she's already seated, an appliance dolly can pick her up, chair and all. This always gets a laugh. Hotels also have luggage racks, which could work. Or she could be loaded onto a stretcher. This is something you should definitely practice at the location, regardless of where you rehearse. Remember that a platform and/or steps can complicate this process. And if your performing as dinner theatre, i. e., the audience at tables, they may need to adjust their seats to make a path.

Makeup for LOIS' entrance during the solution. She needs to be very pale - almost white. In the original production, we used glow-in-the-dark makeup, which was very effective.

INCLUDED WITH PRODUCTION PACKET – sent electronically

Sample clue hunt, with answer key and flow chart

Blank flow chart so you can design your own

Sample premise sheet. Adapt and use for program, etc.

Application form for CLARICE to use in recruiting from audience

Sample Memo from Lois to use in creating yours

Sample flyer for promotional purposes

Production Manual (It's the same for all the shows.)

OPTIONAL

For a small fee you can get everything in the Production Packet and the Manual in printed format