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THE PHANTOM OF THE

(Your location)

An Audience Participation Murder-Mystery

by

Eileen Moushey

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Clinton Slade - Arts promoter for the area. Normally easy-going, but the Virelli troupe will test his nerve. Relatively new to the arts' game. He is gambling on this "Phantom" to make his career. Has a lot at stake. A former Navy man.

Marco Virelli - A "star" - with ego and appetites to match his talent. The "Phantom" is his creation. He's romantic, emotional, and conveniently absent-minded. He's not a wicked person, but definitely not too heavy in the Moral Fiber Department.

Theresa Virelli - Marco's sister. Appears mousy and retiring but is single-minded and determined in her efforts to protect and shield Marco. She has truly given up her life in her devotion to him. In turn, he takes her completely for granted. She is his accompanist.

Alexis Virelli - Marco's soon-to-be ex-wife. Older than him, it was 'Lexie's money that enabled Marco's career to really take off. She started out as his patron, and, with the encouragement of Theresa, she became his long-suffering wife.

Tim Marshall - Alexis' baby brother. A playboy type. No ambition of any type, with the exception of seducing every lady in sight. He's been forced to appear in "Phantom" by Marco who is tired of supporting him and getting nothing in return.

Maria Gambone - Young, eager, innocent. She is to play the ingenue in Marco's "Phantom". Her sweetness and guileless behavior have completely entranced Marco and he is preparing to divorce his wife for her - unbeknownst to Maria, of course, as she'd never do anything to hurt anyone.

The "Real" Phantom - mysterious, of indeterminate age, gracefully athletic and dramatic.

Host/Hostess for the event

PRE-SHOW

The evening has been advertised as an all-new, original production. Written, directed, and starring that great operatic tenor, Marco Virelli. As the audience arrives, the cast will mingle with them, with the exception of Marco. Slade will be everywhere at once, conferring etc...

PART I - THE PLAY

PLEASE NOTE: this script was written with a particular location in mind - the Akron Civic Theatre - venue of our original production. References to the name of the theatre, the organ etc., can either be ignored or revised to reflect your event. Likewise, certain lines and speeches can be changed. And finally, remember this is a low budget production, in previews, so do not feel that all the lighting and sound descriptions within the script need to be followed.

Onstage is a grand piano and bench. After the audience is seated, HOSTESS and SLADE enter and thank the organist who will disappear into the pit but remain there to play during the next scene. He will be dressed as a Phantom, in a cape, but without a mask.

HOSTESS: Good evening and welcome to the beautiful Akron Civic Theatre. My name is _____ and I am so happy to be a part of tonight's preview performance of "Phantom of the _____." Now this "Phantom" is not really my creation, although I was pleased and proud to contribute to it. Standing next to

me is the gentleman who's hard work and dedication really "made it happen", our producer, Mr. Clinton Slade. Clint.

CLINTON: Thank you, . When you came to me with your idea of doing a Phantom, using this beautiful old theatre as a setting, I knew right away that we would need the best musical and theatrical talents in the business. It was a stroke of incredible luck that enabled me to interest the world famous operatic tenor, Marco Virelli, in the project. Not only did Mr. Virelli agree to write the book and score of "Phantom of the ,", but he agreed to perform in it as well. Now I do want to explain that what you will see tonight is a preview. "Phantom of the " is a work-in-progress, so please excuse the lack of costumes, sets, etc. And we may hit a rough patch or two in the performances. Nevertheless, I feel you will be thrilled and excited by the show you will see tonight. Ladies and gentlemen, "The Phantom of the "!!!!

(The stage goes to black as CLINTON exits. In the darkness THERESA enters and sits at the piano. MARCO, dressed as the PHANTOM, also enters as the organ sounds ominous chords. A single spot lights him, facing up-stage. Dramatically, MARCO removes his hat and throws it offstage. To another chord he even more dramatically removes his mask and drops it on the floor. The spot will "iris" down to the mask as MARCO moves to the piano. The lights come up and we see him there.)

MARCO: No, ladies and gentlemen, I am not the Phantom of the . And yet, I am. I am Marco Virelli, and through my music, I have found the Phantom and tonight I tell his story. For many years the rumors about the spirit that walks within these walls have circulated throughout Akron. Numerous sightings have been reported by staff and visitors alike. Sometimes - it's a glimpse of whirling cape. Or a whisper echoing through the dark, empty spaces of the balcony. And sometimes - it's the touch of cold fingers at the base of the neck. But all agree on one thing. He is real. He is here. I know. Because I have met him! (Organ chord.)

Ironically, I first met the Phantom when I was rehearsing for another, more well-known Phantom. I was getting ready to appear in Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom of the Opera" and came one night, alone, to rehearse. The music of Phantom moves me strongly every time I sing it. This night it touched someone else as well. Because as the last note sounded in the emptiness, he appeared. (Pause.) Because as the last note sounded in the emptiness, he appeared. (Pause, then loudly) AS THE LAST NOTE SOUNDED

(TIM, dressed as the PHANTOM enters, hurriedly, facing upstage. His posture and manner denote one who is reluctantly appearing)

We spoke. (Pause, then loudly.) WE SPOKE.

(TIM turns quickly, whirling his cape in a desultory manner. While MARCO is describing his encounter, Tim will appear very uncomfortable and stiff, shifting his weight, etc.)

We talked of many things that night. He wanted the world to understand why he hid, masked and alone. And so he told me his story. His beautiful, tragic story. The story of the PHANTOM OF THE !!
!!

(The organ sounds a chord. TIM will start to exit, stop, look hesitatingly at MARCO, who will try to indicate that he should exit. THERESA, too, will be motioning for him to leave. Finally, he does. MARCO removes the cape and walks SL and hands it offstage. He is dressed in a tuxedo. The lights come up.)

He was young, handsome and incredibly talented. He was a singer. He had a Voice. A voice like an angel. But he was poor and forced to sing in churches, in small clubs, at weddings. Anywhere he could go and make his music. And then one evening, his life changed forever.

(THERESA begins to play softly underscoring.)

It was a society party. He had been hired to sing and knew that the contacts he made that night could very well be the "break" he'd waited for. Nervous and anxious, he waited to begin. But before he sang a note, it happened. He saw her.

(MARIA enters SR, dressed as maid. She serves imaginary guests as MARCO continues.)

She wasn't a guest. She was hired help, just as he was. But she made all the debutantes and society queens pale by comparison. She was luminescent, she was light, she was love.

(TIM enters SR, sees he's made a mistake, and goes off again. MARCO continues after glaring at him.)

His heart was beating so loudly he was surprised no one else could hear it. And then the most incredible thing happened. She looked up, met his eyes, and in that split micro-second, that tiny fragment of time he knew. He knew all about her, her fears, her hopes, her little habit of laughing when she was nervous. And he knew, too, as they drew together in that room, filled with the shallow chattering of shallow people, that he would never again be the same.

(They move slowly toward each other, the lights dim and a spot picks them up as slowly they begin to dance. TIM, as PHANTOM, again enters, this time from SL. MARCO has had it.) NOT NOW, YOU IDIOT! OFF!! OFF!!

TIM: It's not like I asked to do this, man. Really. (He exits with dignity.)

MARCO: (Calling after him.) The cue is when I say, "And to this day, he waits for her letter." Listen!! Listen!! (MARIA is trying to get him back on track. He notices the audience again.) I am so sorry, ladies and gentlemen. A little problem. First night, you see. This is what Mr. Slade was talking about when he meant there would be little rough spots. So, we begin again, hmm?? Where were we??

MARIA: We were dancing. You'd just told how we met.

MARCO: (Softening) Ah, yes, we were dancing weren't we? (He takes her in his arms again and says curtly to THERESA.) Play. (She starts at the introduction again.) Not there. Take it from the fifth measure. (She starts again. He tries to start dancing again but steps on MARIA's foot.) MARIA: OWWW! I'm sorry, Mr. Virelli....It's my fault.

MARCO: No, it's not. If the song were played at the correct tempo, we'd be able to dance to it. (THERESA, flustered, tries to start again and hits clinkers.) What IS your problem? (He is close to losing his temper.)

MARIA: Why don't we just start over from where I see you across the room?

MARCO: What...how can we...(he see her hopeful, upturned face.) Alright, little one..... (To THERESA.) If you would be so kind as to begin again. (Mumbling to himself. MARCO and MARIA go back to their previous positions on opposite sides of the stage. Quickly as he goes through it to find his place) Heart beating... Incredible....micro second.....Her fears, hopes.....(Acting again) "And he knew too, as they drew together in that room, filled with the shallow chatter of shallow people, that he would never again be the same." (They start to move together again as THERESA starts to play. ALEXIS enters SL.)

ALEXIS: Marco, Timmy just told me that you yelled and screamed at him and kicked him off stage! Is that correct?

THERESA: Alexis, please....(Lights come to full.)

MARCO: (To THERESA) You be quiet. (To ALEXIS) What the hell are you doing out here!! This may be just a preview but it is still a performance. OFF, DAMMIT. NOW.

THERESA: Marco, please....

MARCO: Shut up, sit down, and play.

ALEXIS: Just because you treat your own sister like dirt, doesn't mean you may speak to me in that way. Or my brother. He's a sensitive.....

MARCO: What?? What??? Look, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry for so much it would make your head spin.

But we are trying to do a show here. Look, you can help. Work with baby brother on his cue. Letter. " And to this day, he waits for her letter???" Thank you so much and good-bye. (To MARIA) Come, let us dance!!

ALEXIS: Marco. Timothy is a sensitive boy. And he gets so hurt when you talk abruptly to him. (As TIM comes onstage, still in his PHANTOM attire.) Now Marco didn't mean it, darling. (To MARCO) Say you're sorry.

MARCO: No, no, you cannot!! Don't come out here....He's ruining everything! (Dramatically he puts his head on the piano.)

TIM: See....He did too mean it. He's not one bit sorry.

MARIA: Oh, please, Mr. Virelli, don't cry...Everyone, you must go off. You're upsetting Mr. Virelli...

TIM: Don't know what you want, man. Doing my best. Maybe if I had some lines I could like get into this more. Maybe give me a chance to act a bit. Could be terrific. Know I could.

MARCO: Shoot me, please.

ALEXIS: Stop it, Marco. You're making an ass of yourself.

THERESA: Marco, please..

MARCO: A gun. Find me a gun.

TIM: Babes get really hot for actors.

MARCO: I want to die. I want to lie down in a cool dark place and never come out. I welcome death!! I embrace it! Anything is better than this.....

ALEXIS: Oh, grow up, Marco. Come on, Timmy. (TIM is trying to "move in" on MARIA who glares at him and removes his hand(s).)

MARIA: Stop that!! Mrs. Virelli, make him leave me alone. He's touching me again!!

TIM: Oh, like you don't like it.

ALEXIS: Timmy, leave that girl alone. We don't know where she's been. See, Marco, we're going now. Just start your little play over again.

TIM: So, like, am I gonna get some lines??

MARCO: No, no, no, no, no!!! I can't go on!!! It is gone. I can't perform now, don't you realize that???

ALEXIS: Of course you can. Don't be a baby.

MARIA: It will be fine, Mr. Virelli, really it will. Please, let's try again.

MARCO: Do you imagine that genius is a faucet or a light switch? No. No. it's impossible. The show has been ruined. We'll refund everyone's money and....

MARIA: I know it will be awfully difficult, Mr. Virelli, but,.... this show means so much to me - and you. We can do it, I know we can! And, if you'll let me, I'll....I'll help you. I mean, I don't have much experience, I know - but if we both concentrate and put all our energy together, maybe we can capture the moment again.

MARCO: Oh, little one. Such faith you have. You make me ashamed. (Taking her hands, looking deeply at her) "Despite the shallow talk of shallow people", eh, Maria???? (He kisses her hands) Will you help me, little girl? Will you help me find the moment again, cara??

TIM: See, Lexie, actors really score, big-time...

MARIA: If that's what you want, Mr. Virelli.

ALEXIS: Come on, Tim. I've already caught this act. (They start to exit. ALEXIS stops just before going offstage.) You know, Marco, one day you're going to do that with the wrong little lady. (They exit.)

MARIA: What does she mean, Mr. Virelli??

MARCO: Nothing, nothing. She's just jealous of your youth and innocence. Come, come. Let us try again. Are we going to tell the story and play our Phantom?? We will take it from when you see me and we move toward each other. (They move to their previous positions, he takes a minute to get in "character" again) And he knew too from across the room filled with shallow people and shallow chattering.....no, that's not right....And he knew that his life would never be the same after he heard the shallow chattering of....that's not it either. Line!!

ALEXIS: (from offstage) "AND HE KNEW TOO, AS THEY DREW TOGETHER IN THAT ROOM, FILLED WITH THE SHALLOW CHATTERING OF SHALLOW PEOPLE, THAT HE WOULD NEVER AGAIN BE THE SAME."

MARCO: (Mumbling it too himself then beginning) And he knew too, as they drew together in that room, filled with the shallow chattering of shallow people, that he would never again be the same.....(He moves toward MARIA and THERESA begins to play. ALEXIS enters.)

ALEXIS: Just what is that supposed to mean, anyway?

MARCO: WHAT? WHAT???? What do you want, Lexie? You want blood?? I give you blood!!!

ALEXIS: I just want to know something. All this "shallow chatter" and "shallow people" business - Do you think I've forgotten that we met at a party at Binky Winterhaven's. Am I supposed to recognize myself as one of those debutantes that pale against Miss Beauty, Truth, and Light here?

THERESA: Of course not, Alexis. Marco's version of the Phantom is strictly fictional.

MARCO: Stick to playing, would ya. (Notices that MARIA is crying) Oh, oh, cara, cara, it will be alright.. ..There, there, don't cry, little one.....

ALEXIS: Dry 'em, dear. You may fool this big stupido, but it doesn't work on me.

MARCO: This is what I get for marrying into a family of insensitive clods!

ALEXIS: A family of insensitive clods with lots and lots of money...

MARCO: And no artistry in their souls!!

ALEXIS: You cheap, crude, sex-obsessed.....philanderer!!

MARCO: Frigid old cat!!

ALEXIS: Middle-aged, worn-out, lying, cheating has-been!!

MARCO: Bitch!!!

ALEXIS: Scum!!

THERESA: Stop it!!! (She exits crying.)

MARCO: Hey, you get back here and play!!!

ALEXIS: One of these days, Marco, you are going to push Theresa a little to far and she's going to walk out on you for good.

MARCO: One of these days you're gonna say "one of these days" just one too many times. (He exits after THERESA.) Theresa!!!

MARIA: Mrs. Virelli, I'm sorry, Ican't....I can't stand all this fighting and....

ALEXIS: (Applauding slowly) Bravo, bravo. Wonderful performance, my dear. But tell me, how did you know he was a sucker for the weak, frail little ethereal types??? Although considering the number he's seduced, it'd be a miracle if you hadn't heard.....I imagine he's a regular legend on the gold-digger circuit..

..

MARIA: What....what do you mean, Mrs. Virelli?? I'm not after anything. I just wanted to be in his " Phantom"....and get a chance to work with him.....I've never asked for anything!!!! And just so you know, I have absolutely no interest in Mr. Virelli except as an artist. He's nice to me, and...and, he's helped me a lot....but he's much, much too old for me....and there is nothing between us now and there never will be.... because I....

ALEXIS: I suppose he's never laid a finger on you??

MARIA: Never!! Unlike your octopus brother who can't keep his hands off me, Mr. Virelli has never been anything except a perfect gentleman!!

ALEXIS: Well, it's still early going, then. He must still be at the little gift and long soulful talk stage. He has given you something, hasn't he? Usually, it's just perfume or a silk scarf, but something tells me you are definitely the jewelry type.

MARIA: I....I.....I never asked for anything.

ALEXIS: Yes, but he did give you something. I'm right, aren't I?

MARIA: (Nodding head glumly.) Yes, a ring.

ALEXIS: A ring!!! My, my, my, he must have high hopes for you. You've got to understand something, sweetheart. You aren't the first. Better girls than you have been making a fool out of him for twenty years. He's especially fond of the "esses". As in seamstress, and actress, and probably shepherdess, for all I know! Let's see, the first one I knew about was when we were engaged. The waitress. She told him she was pregnant and so he promptly got engaged to her too. Ring and all. Although as soon as she got her hands on it, she suddenly had to take a little trip, to break the news to her papa, or something. And of course, Marco never heard from her again. One burger, hold the jewelry. After that there was the Australian stewardess, who borrowed money to go visit her poor sick uncle in Sidney. She gave new meaning to the phrase "down under." And then there was.... oh, the list goes on and on. Theresa usually handles them anymore. Without bruising his ego, of course. So, if you want to save time, just ask Theresa for a thousand or so, she'll give it to you and you can be on your way.

MARIA: I don't want money!! I don't want anything. He can have the ring back!!!

ALEXIS: Oh, dear, you're insulted. I am sorry. But it's been so long since he's fallen for one with principles.

MARIA: I don't want to hear any more!!

ALEXIS: But the stories are so good. Let's see now, my personal favorite was the girl he met while filming his television special at the zoo. Must have been a zoostress. She was in charge of the reptile house. I remember thinking how appropriate that was.

MARIA: You don't have to do this....

ALEXIS: Yes, I do, Maria, yes I do. You see, I should have gotten out then. Now, it might be too late, although I've been thinking lately that maybe I should just go ahead and divorce him. And take everything he's got, right down to his baggy boxer shorts. (MARCO and THERESA return, obviously reconciled.) MARCO: Alexis, tell me - did I just hear you saying the word that is music to my ears.....divorce??

MARIA: Excuse me, Mr. Virelli, but I can't accept the ring you were nice enough to give me. I'll go and get it now. (She exits.)

THERESA: Marco, you're not giving out jewelry again, are you? You promised after giving away all of Mother's.....

MARCO: Maria, wait!!!! Lexie, what did you tell her????

ALEXIS: I just gave the little girl a history lesson, that's all.

MARCO: You're a vicious, bitter woman, Alexis.....(He exits after MARIA).

ALEXIS: I know, I know. I had to be, married to him. And you know, Theresa, after talking to her, I think maybe I will go ahead with Plan B.

THERESA: What do you mean?

ALEXIS: I think I'll just go ahead and give him that divorce. After he gives me every dime, down to the gold fillings in his lying mouth.

THERESA: I think not, Alexis.

ALEXIS: Beg pardon?

THERESA: Well, I can't stop you from divorcing my brother. Though I will certainly miss you. If it hadn't been for you, Marco would have struggled for years before achieving stardom. Your money and position opened all kinds of doors for him. We'll always be grateful. You believed in him when no one else did. I'm just sorry he wasn't always nice to you.

ALEXIS: You mean like the time he was making it with the night nurse while I was recovering from gall bladder surgery? I guess that qualifies as not-so-nice behavior. He's your brother, Theresa, but I'm going to make him pay. Through the nose. In fact, he may even start singing at weddings again to pay for all the alimony I'm going to collect.

THERESA: (Quietly threatening) Oh, but I can't let you do that, Lexie.

ALEXIS: Well, I hate to put it like this, Theresa, but try and stop me.

THERESA: Lexie, please. Marco is not the only one guilty of indiscretions. Remember that night at Candlestick Park.

ALEXIS: Theresa!! I told you that in confidence!! Besides, who'd believe it?

THERESA: Don't you ever notice those magazines at the grocery checkout. Tell me they wouldn't have fun with that story....

ALEXIS: Oh, you wouldn't!!!

THERESA: Sorry, Lexie, but if you persist in divorcing Marco and bleeding him dry, there is nothing I wouldn't do to protect him.

ALEXIS: You're a fool, Theresa! He treats you like a dog, works you half to death, and still you defend him. I may have been a fool to stay with him this long, but you're a blooming idiot!!

CLINT: (As he enters) I just got off the phone with my lawyer, Miss Virelli....

MARCO: (From offstage) Theresa, come here!!

THERESA: You have a problem, Mr. Slade?

CLINT: You bet I do!!

MARCO: (From offstage) THERESA!!

THERESA: It'll have to wait - my brother needs me. (She starts to exit.)

CLINT: Listen, Miss Virelli, I just got off the phone with my lawyer and he thinks I've got the basis of a lawsuit over what has happened here tonight. If you think I'm going to pick up the tab for this debacle, you are even more nuts than your brother....My God, I expected rough spots, it's a preview, but THIS....

THERESA: (Stopping) Check the contract, Slade. Page 26, Clause 52, Paragraph 9. Pretty well covers what happened here tonight. Hope you don't do anything foolish. The last promoter who did that is now working box office at a little theatre in Butte, Montana. (She exits) CLINT: She's one tough cookie.

ALEXIS: When it comes to her brother, Mr. Slade, she plays hard-ball.

CLINT: Call me Clint, Mrs. Virelli.

ALEXIS: Alexis.

CLINT: Alexis. Pretty name. Understand you used to be a Marshall. Of the Asphalt Marshalls.

ALEXIS: Yes, Daddy was the Concrete King and I used to be the Driveway Princess. Till I married Marco and became an accessory to the majesty and ego that is Virelli. But not for long. If I can just work a few things out.

CLINT: Well, I wish I could work a few things out. Any advice would be gratefully appreciated. I haven't been in "the biz" that long, and I've sunk just about all my Navy pension money into your husband's all new and original "Phantom" - Frankly, I can't afford the loss.

ALEXIS: Oooh, I'm afraid it may be "Anchors Away" to that money, Clint. Although considering Marco, all you'd have to do is arrange a date with your daughter, or sister, or wife, for that matter.

CLINT: (Shrugging) Not possible.

ALEXIS: Too bad, because, Theresa is, as you've observed, single-minded, or rather, simple-minded, when it comes to my darling husband. You see, Clint, Theresa's devotion to her brother borders on an obsession. She manages his career, his business, his investments, his diet, his laundry, his life. Luckily, or unluckily, she totally approved of me. Other women in his life have not been so lucky.

CLINT: And you weren't jealous?

ALEXIS: Not at all!! She did a lot of the things I would have been stuck with. You've got to understand something, Clint.

CLINT: What?

ALEXIS: The only force which drives Marco harder than sex is laziness. Theresa, on the other hand, lives to serve. In all the years I've known them, I've never seen him change a channel on television, or talk on the phone.

CLINT: You're kidding. But he worked so hard on this show. And his singing....

ALEXIS: For Marco, singing is not work. It's as natural as breathing. It's something he must do. Which is one of the reasons I loved him, and married him, and continue to struggle with the idea of living without him.....of all the things he's abused, myself among them....his music and his voice have remained sacred. (They are interrupted by TIM, MARCO, MARIA, and THERESA entering together.) TIM: Like why would I take it, man? I'm not into women's jewelry. This is like so dumb.

MARCO: Tell your bonehead brother to give it back!!

THERESA: Now, Marco, we don't know that Tim took it.

CLINT: Oh God, what's happened now?

MARCO: Someone has stolen a very valuable ring from Maria.

MARIA: Mr. Virelli, I just want to give it back.

ALEXIS: Your ring was stolen, Maria??? Why am I not surprised???

TIM: Hey, I never saw it, I never touched it, I didn't take it. Get off my case.

MARCO: Oh?? Then what were you doing in Maria's dressing room?

TIM: She invited me there.

MARIA: I did not!!!

TIM: Okay, so maybe it wasn't an invitation, exactly. But, she wanted me. She was sending signals. Hey I can tell these things. She looked at me and went like this (he sucks on his teeth) Is that like a come-on or what??

MARIA: I had something caught in my teeth!! And what were you doing in my underwear drawer?

ALEXIS: Tim, you promised!!!

TIM: It's a hobby, okay?? Will someone tell me what is so wrong about having a little hobby??

ALEXIS: I told you, Timmy, stamps or coins, stamps or coins.

CLINT: I'm very sorry about your misplaced jewelry, Miss, but, frankly that is not my concern. What I'd like to know is when..

THERESA: Oh, Mr. Slade, I'm afraid the theft of jewelry is your concern.

CLINT: How so???? Oh no, you mean????

THERESA: Page 13, Clause 2, Paragraph 45. Missing items, stolen or loss. Sorry, Mr. Slade, hope you're fully insured.

CLINT: What!!! Oh, great. Look, I'm not going to take this. My insurance doesn't cover any of this. Let me get this straight, Mr. Virelli - you gave Miss Gambone a valuable piece of jewelry? Why??

THERESA: Look, my brother is not always the most astute judge of character....

ALEXIS: A major understatement.

THERESA: He gives expensive presents to his latest little.....you know. I thought we'd agreed, though, Marco. No more jewelry. MARIA: I am NOT a "you know." MARCO: Shut up, Theresa.

THERESA: I'm sorry, Marco, but ever since you brought that little.... you know....around, we've had nothing but trouble. That's when you got all those sore throats - she's probably loaded with germs. And she lost I don't know how many scripts....

ALEXIS: And she began working with us at just about the same time that the threatening letters began arriving.

THERESA: My God, you're right!!!

MARCO: I will not stand here and listen to you defame this poor, sweet, innocent, little girl. Wait a minute. What threatening letters??

THERESA: I didn't want you to worry, Marco.

MARCO: What threatening letters?

THERESA: You don't need to be concerned about them, Marco. I've dealt.....

MARCO: (Stamping his feet.) Dammit, Theresa, stop treating me like a child!!! What threatening letters??

ALEXIS: Oh, for Pete's sake, Marco. Just about the same time that you booked us here, Mr. Slade, Marco began receiving threatening letters. The words were all formed from letters cut from newspapers and they all just basically threatened his life. Very crude, but effective.

THERESA: Yes, and they started arriving right after we hired you-know-who to play the ingenue in Marco's "Phantom".

MARIA: I am not a you-know-what or a you-know-who and I wish you would stop this! Mr. Virelli, Marco, make them stop. I don't know anything about letters!!!

ALEXIS: Notice how he's "Marco" now.

MARCO: Shut up, Lexie. Theresa, why didn't you tell me I had received threatening mail??? I should know these things.

THERESA: I didn't want you to worry, Marco. I knew how much you needed to concentrate on your work.

ALEXIS: Marco, you act like you run out and get the mail every day at ten. (To CLINT) He hasn't dealt with correspondence ever. He thinks you can still send a letter by Pony Express.

CLINT: Miss Virelli, have you kept any of these letters?? (She nods.) Since I seem to be at least "quasi" in charge, I'd like to take a look at them. Also, before I call the police in, I'd like you to look for the ring. Carefully, very carefully. How much was it worth, would you estimate? MARIA: About one hundred dollars? (She looks questioningly at MARCO.) MARCO: More like ten thousand.

THERESA: Marco!!!

MARIA: Those weren't cubic zirconium???

ALEXIS: YOU GAVE DIAMONDS TO SOMEONE WHO CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE??? Oh, Marco, how low you have sunk!

CLINT: Please, all of you, look for the ring. Please. (All but MARCO and CLINT exit.)

MARCO: Clint, can I take this opportunity to talk to you - man-to-man???

CLINT: Oh why not? I seem to attract true confessions, Mr. Virelli.

MARCO: Marco.

CLINT: Marco. (They shake hands.)

MARCO: Sometimes, Clint, a guy just has to talk to another guy. And since I don't count my brother-in-law, I am a man surrounded by women. I need to get your perspective on things. Mind?

CLINT: Shoot.

MARCO: See, I love women, Clint. (He puts his arm around CLINT.) I mean, I really love women. And I love being in love with women. You get my meaning, Clint?

CLINT: It's not a difficult concept.

MARCO: But sometime, I wish I were gay. (A sudden thought occurs. He removes his arm.) You gay, Clint?

CLINT: Gee, no, Marco, I'm not. But thanks for asking.

MARCO: It's Alexis. She was this society debutante when we met. Well, she was really past the debutante bit. Kind of a lame duck debutante. Say, you wouldn't happen to have a drop of something, would you??

CLINT: Marco, I started drinking about a half hour ago. Keep on with your story, I'm listening. (MARCO sits down on the edge of the stage. He continues while CLINT exits and then returns with a bottle, two glasses. He sits down next to MARCO.)

MARCO: I never told anybody this but....I didn't love Lexie when we got married. But she loved me and

Theresa said it would be good and... Anyway, it was what used to be called "a marriage of convenience". She had the money and position I needed for my career, and I had the talent she found irresistible. We got married for all the wrong reasons. But you know the most surprising thing of all?

CLINT: You grew to love her?

MARCO: (Pause.) Nah. Oh, that too. But the really amazing thing was how wonderful she was. You know. . . (He nudges CLINT knowingly.)

CLINT: Marco, I've never been really good with locker room talk....

MARCO: No, no, wait. God, this is bad scotch. The last time I drank scotch this bad, I woke up the next morning with a tattoo of a penguin on my chest. It's still there. Wanna see? (starts to unbutton.)

CLINT: Maybe later.

MARCO: You think that's bad? You should have seen the kid I got drunk with!! At least I can keep mine covered up. Somewhere out there is a guy named Richard with a tattoo of his nickname done up in living color, all over his forehead.

CLINT: You mean he had "Rick" tattooed...

MARCO: Not Rick, the other nickname for Richard....

CLINT: Oh, you mean "Di.."....across his forehead??

MARCO: Yep, enough to make you give up drinkin' isn't it?

CLINT: Wait a minute, Marco. Back to your wife.

MARCO: Where was I?? Oh, Alexis. She was great. She was terrific. Incredible. Inventive. Tireless. Adventurous. The best. And, therefore, it was inevitable that I would cheat on her..

CLINT: Wait a minute. Let me see if I've got this straight. Your wife, because she was a great lover, forced you to cheat on her??

MARCO: Isn't that a kicker, though? But see, I figured, why would God give me the best lover in the world?? What had I done to deserve that?? Hell, I didn't even like Alexis that much when we got married. So then I start thinking maybe God did it to trick me. See, if she was so good, there had to be a woman out there who's even better. And I'm going to keep looking till I find her.

CLINT: You haven't yet??

MARCO: Nah, still lookin'. And, over the years, I really started to care for the old bag of bones.

CLINT: Touching story.

MARCO: Not that she believes me. This was supposed to bring us together. This show. It's based on my life, you know. This Phantom. (He begins to "act" again) Like him I must wear a mask. Like him I know the meaning of tragedy. Like him I know what it is to wait. To wait. For a little scrap of happiness.

(As sincere as MARCO gets.) I've been hurt, Clint. By women. By that woman. I wanted this show to be a triumph for both of us. But then she insisted that I use her brother as the Phantom. So I paid her back by hiring Maria. Ah, my little Maria!! She is so beautiful! She reminds me so much of someone, but I can't place who. I'll tell ya this, my "Phantom" could make her a star!!

CLINT: Well, I don't know how we can do the preview now, much less the show.

MARCO: Of course, we can. Tell you what. Let's just have the organist play for a little while and then start over. Really, it could work.... (He is interrupted by the entrance of TIM and THERESA. TIM is trying to get away from her while she clings to him.) TIM: Geez, Terry, would ya let go of me?

THERESA: You can't treat me like this!!! I'm not someone you can use and then dump in the....

TIM: Terry, baby, chill out. And let go, will ya???

THERESA: I'll never let go, Tim. You've seen me with Marco, and you know I can stick like glue.

TIM: Yeah, yeah. Yo, Marco, Slade!!! There's no sign of the little chickie's ring. Looked all over.

THERESA: Here's the letters, Mr. Slade. (MARCO and CLINT look them over.)

MARCO: Wow, these are nasty. Someone is NOT a fan.

SLADE: I'll hang on to these, if you don't mind. And tomorrow I think we should take them to the police....
. (ALEXIS enters.)

ALEXIS: Marco, if we aren't going to do this Phantom thing, I want to start packing. I'm going to New York tomorrow to find a lawyer.

CLINT: Marco???

MARCO: We are going to give it one more try. Clint here has a lot of money tied up in the show and...

THERESA: I'm sorry, Marco, but that is his problem, not ours. This entire production has been jinxed from beginning to end and I think we should just cut our lo.....

CLINT: What losses???. I'm the one losing everything!!! Money. Do you have any idea what I will be out if you leave now?

MARCO: Okay, one more try.

THERESA: No.

MARCO: What???

THERESA: I have never denied you anything, Marco, but I'm saying "no" now. I hate this place. It gives me the creeps. Those letters scared me to death and now all this mess. We don't lose a thing by leaving now and I think we should go. I'm going back to the hotel and pack.

MARCO: I'm staying.

THERESA: You can't do it without me. Who'll play for you?

MARCO: He can. (gestures toward organist or an audience member is recruited or he will announce he is playing "a cappella") Yes, you. Don't worry, Mr. Slade here pays big money. So, Theresa, go, leave. You keep threatening. Do it.

ALEXIS: Before you're so eager to get rid of her, remember - I don't pack, do laundry, cook, answer the phone or the mail, and I would be willing to bet your new little bimchette can't do it either.

MARCO: I don't need any of you. Get out, all of you!!!! All I need is that young man (or woman) to play for me (or "my music")...

THERESA: Marco, I didn't mean that you....

CLINT: Mr. Virelli, I'm not sure of this....

MARCO: ...And someone to do the Phantom. How'd you really like to get into show business, Clint?? Ever think about acting??? I think you'd make a terrific Phantom.

TIM: Yo, Marco, that's my role, like.

MARCO: No, it's not. You're fired.

ALEXIS: Now, Marco, get a grip.

THERESA: Marco, you can't fire Tim. And Mr. Slade, take a look at your contract Page 58, Clause 23, Paragraph 7. I own one-half of the rights to this Phantom and I hereby rescind permission to produce it and if you dare to go on without my approval, I will sue you so fast.....

CLINT: Now wait a minute here, I don't like threats.

THERESA: And I don't make them idly, Mr. Slade. You go on with this tonight and you'll be lucky to come out of it with so much as a mask....

MARCO: Are you all having difficulty understanding??? Go. Leave. Exit. I don't need any of you. I've got this young man to play my music, Maria is probably downstairs, crying her eyes out because of your treatment of her....

THERESA: I should have known that little bitch was involved in this. Look Marco, I didn't want to hurt your feelings about her, but there's a few things you should know...

MARCO: SHUT UP!!!! Theresa, one more word and I'll kill you, I swear I will!!!!

THERESA: Mar...

ALEXIS: Oh, for God's sake, Theresa, leave him alone. If he wants to make an ass of himself, let him. Come on. Timmy??

TIM: Just a minute, Lexie. So, Marco, are you gonna like give him some lines???

MARCO: OUT!!!! Get him out of here before I do something I will regret!!! (They exit through the house.)

CLINT: Marco, do you really think we can pull this off??

MARCO: Pull it off???? We'll do more than that, Mr. Slade. We'll give them a "Phantom" they will talk about for years. Don't forget!!! I AM VIRELLI!! (He exits grandly)

CLINT: Ladies and gentlemen, we will present "Phantom of the _____" after one more short delay. In the meantime, please sit back and enjoy the music of _____.
(Either the recruited musician, another actor, or taped music, will entertain for 5 minutes. The stage will then go black.)

(MARCO enters in darkness. The lights will come up as he enters.)

MARCO: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. As you've no doubt realized by now, I am not the Phantom of the _____. But as you learned earlier, I am the voice through which he speaks. I know his pain, and he has asked me to tell his tragic story. You'll remember that this story begins at a party, a society party. Matter of fact, (loudly, for the benefit of ALEXIS offstage) it was a party at Binky Winterhave n's, but that's not important. The Phantom's life changed forever at that party, because it was there that he first saw, and touched, and danced, with her. (MARIA enters as the organ plays a few bars and they dance briefly before she floats off..) It began that way. And things might have gone on like that, indefinitely.... (The cloaked and hooded figure of "a Phantom" enters SL, facing US.) Oh, for God's sake, Clint, not now. I told you the damn cue. "And to this day..." (CLINT enters, in cape, from SR.) CLINT: Marco.

MARCO: (Whirling around) What the hell!!!! (Whirling back) I told you you're out of it, Timmy!!! (The next entrances, lines occur almost simultaneously. TIM enters from the house as ALEXIS enters SR and MARIA enters SL)

TIM: Gee, Marco, I thought you were only gonna use one Phantom. Lexie, Marco's using a whole bunch of Phantom dudes.

ALEXIS: Marco, I don't know how to tell you this, but having more than one Phantom looks really ridiculous. Why don't you stick to your original concept?

MARIA: Marco, is this a new..... (MARCO holds up a hand to stop and silence her.)

MARCO: (Whispers) There really is a Phantom. It's him.

ALEXIS: Oh, come now, of all the asinine...

TIM: Oh, wow....

CLINT: What an idea. You're a genius, Marco.

MARCO: Sshh!!! You'll frighten him. (The cloaked figure slowly drags itself onstage. It turns suddenly, and we see that it is THERESA clutching at her throat. She falls and dies. She has been strangled. MARIA screams. All run to the body, ad-libbing. "Theresa" and "She's been strangled!" "Is she.....??" " Oh, no!!!!")

ALEXIS: Oh, my God, this is horrible. Who would want to kill poor Theresa?? She wouldn't hurt a fly. Unless they landed on you, Marco....Oh, Marco, darling, I'm so sorry. I know how much you cared for her. Even if you did treat her like garbage.

CLINT: I'm afraid there's no getting around it, Mr. Virelli. Your sister has been strangled. By what appears

to be piano wire. I'll go and call the police. (He exits.)

MARIA: Mr. Virelli. Marco. You poor man. Come to Maria. (He does and she embraces him.)

TIM: Ya know, it mighta been a case of mistaken identity. Maybe they thought 'cause of the cape and all that, that it was like me. Gee, Maria, I'm scared. (He attempts to "get in" on the embrace, even holding out his hand as if to grab her bottom.)

MARIA: (Jumps back and starts slapping him.) I don't believe you!! Theresa loved you. You are so sick!! Don't you have any feeling at all?? And can't we move her so she's not..... (The body removal team goes into action.)

ALEXIS: Well, Marco, if you are sufficiently recovered, I'd suggest we start planning just what we are going to tell the police.

MARIA: The truth, of course.

ALEXIS: Really, you think we should tell the truth??

MARCO: Why not? What do we have to hide?? Outside of Brother Timmy's unsavory little habits.

ALEXIS: Oh, I don't know.....I just thought maybe you wouldn't want to repeat your farewell address to dear departed sister.....something along the lines of "I'll kill you, I swear I will.".....

TIM: What unsavory habits??

CLINT: (entering) There's a problem.

ALEXIS: What?

CLINT: Do you remember the children's story, "The Boy Who Cried Wolf"???? Well, evidently all evening someone has been calling the Police Department and saying that there's been a murder at the . They've made three trips down here so far, and I would say they are no longer amused. And they will be taking their time about coming down again.

MARCO: Who would be stupid enough to phone in a false alarm like that?? (TIM takes out a handkerchief and picks his nose.)

CLINT: They said it sounded like someone talking through their handkerchief. (Everyone looks at TIM.)

TIM: Huh? What's everyone lookin' at?

ALEXIS: Timmy, sometimes I think Mother was right and we shouldn't have let you eat all those Ho-Ho's. Well, the police will have a field day with this one. We've got one dead woman and a stage full of suspects. (They all ad-lib denial etc.) Oh, really, look. Marco threatened her for daring to slander his little chippie. Timmy, for reasons known only to him, bedded her and seemed to be having difficulty unloading her, Clint's project and entire investment was going down the drain and she planned on suing him.

TIM: Yeah, and, Sis, don't forget she had a little something on you, too.

ALEXIS: Timmy....darling...

TIM: Whoops, sorry, Lexie. Man, was I surprised. I didn't think you were that big a baseball fan.

MARIA: Well, she may not have been very nice to me, but I didn't have any reason to kill her.

ALEXIS: Please. I haven't come up with a motive for you yet, but when the report comes back, that may change.

MARIA: What report??

ALEXIS: The one from the private investigator that Theresa hired to check on you. She felt, as I do, that you were just too good to be true.

MARIA: (Finally, with great dignity.) Mrs. Virelli, I know this is difficult for you to believe, but I don't care. I'm glad you had me "checked out!" You persist in thinking that I am some sort of cheap hustler. Nothing is further from the truth. And I will tell you for the hundredth time - I don't have the tiniest flicker of a romantic interest in your husband....

MARCO: You don't?

MARIA: Mr. Virelli. Marco. You are old enough to be my father. I am sorry I lost your ring. Somehow I will manage to repay you. And I am sorry if I gave you the wrong idea. (She looks around at everyone.) I think it's awfully sad that you think that honesty and loyalty and truthfulness are only in plays and not in life. I hope I never get like that.

ALEXIS: Look, Maria, maybe I was wrong and if I was.....

MARIA: (Crying) And I never wrote you threatening letters, and...and....I didn't like your sister, but I felt sorry for her. I feel sorry for all of you. And...and...I'll be in my dressing room when the police get here. (She starts to exit, crying. As she passes him, TIM grabs her.)

TIM: So if he's not your type, how 'bout making it with me, baby? (As she struggles, a cloaked figure is seen on the balcony. A disembodied voice echoes throughout the theater.) PHANTOM: Take your hands off her!

ALEXIS: (Screams, points) Oh, my God, look!!!! It's the Phantom. (General ad-libs, "He's real, he's real, Look, It can't be, It was just a story etc.")

PHANTOM: How dare you desecrate my theatre with this wanton display of violence and death??

MARCO: Are you.....Are you....

PHANTOM: To you, I am the Phantom of the . This is my theatre and I will not have it used as you have tonight. I alone know who killed the unfortunate woman. I alone have the key. I will share it with all. From there you must be prepared to see justice done. I have left instructions. (And with a swirl of his cape he is gone.)

(HOSTESS enters.)

HOSTESS: The Phantom of the _____ has left an envelope for you. But in order to receive this message, you will need to unravel ten puzzles. The ushers are now distributing clue packets and explicit directions from the Phantom. Follow them to the letter. Start with the one marked with a red star. Ignore

other teams. Do not remove posted clues - this will call down the wrath of the Phantom and will lead to instant disqualification. And remember - this is not a race. Winners will be chosen at random from correct solutions.

PART II - THE CLUE HUNT- OPTIONAL

If doing the Clue Hunt, participants will decipher puzzles, anagrams, trivia questions etc., in order to discover how to get the message from the Phantom. The Production Packet that comes with PHANTOM includes a sample Clue Hunt. The Production Manual is also sent and it provides an extensive explanation on how to do Clue Hunts. And, it includes directions for adapting or eliminating the Hunt.

Basically, the eight clues are words, which, when re-arranged, can be any instruction you like. For example, the one we used was

FIND * MAN * WEARING * RED * VEST * NAMED * SCOTT * SING THEME FROM ADDAMS FAMILY.

When the detectives do as instructed, "Scott" will give them an envelope. Inside is a letter from the Phantom and a copy of a torn bit of old newspaper. The Phantom explains, in his letter, that he found a ring wrapped in this newspaper. He is keeping the ring for safekeeping, but has made copies of the newspaper as he thinks this is an important clue.

The torn newspaper contains portions of news stories:

1. A society column describing the return of honeymooners MARCO and ALEXIS VIRELLI.
2. A report of a disabled Navy vessel.
3. A news story about a "spirit" at the Civic. A stagehand, Richard Jenkins, is interviewed.
4. A news story about the suicide of a young pregnant woman.
5. A news story about a piano competition. Theresa is mentioned as a runner-up.
6. An ad for a tattoo parlor.
7. A news story about the Hostess winning an award.
8. A news story about a fire at the Marshall Concrete headquarters in Chicago.

During the clue hunt, the actors mingle with the participants, and give limited help. Food is served. (The Production Manual explains the various times and methods you can use to incorporate food. Warning is given when there is ten minutes in which to turn in solutions.

The last page of the clue packet is a solution sheet. It gives very specific questions which must be answered.

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

Piano (preferred) or keyboard

Phantom cape & mask
Sheaf of “threatening letters”
Tape of Phantom speaking or miked from offstage

The PRODUCTION PACKET IS SENT ELECTRONICALLY AND INCLUDES

Production Notes
Sample Clue Hunt with Answer Key and Flow Chart
Blank Flow Chart to use in designing your own Clue Hunt
Note from The Phantom, suitable for photocopying
Clean copy of newspaper clue
Production Manual (the same for all shows)

OPTIONAL

A print version of the contents of the PRODUCTION PACKET is available for a small fee.