

It Wasn't Murder?

Revised version (2022)

Comedy mystery

Kiernon James

6 F, 4 M (ages 20s-60s)

Two Acts | ~2 hours

A nosey neighbor pops in for a visit after assuming a policeman's arrival is for a murder investigation. The family scoffs at her, saying the wealthy aunt died of natural causes. But when questionable details emerge, a niece begins searching for the truth and quickly discovers what effect a little gossip has on an investigation.

This comical homage to Agatha Christie delighted audiences in 2006 (Eden Prairie Players) and 2008 (Blooming Gallery Theatre).

“The concept brings to mind the 1954 Alfred Hitchcock classic, *Rear Window*...the play is well written, and the characters have depth.”

— *Eden Prairie News (Twin Cities, Minnesota)*



IT WASN'T
MURDER?

A COMEDY MYSTERY



BY
KIERNON JAMES

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No changes shall be made to the script's text for the purpose of the production. Where appropriate, the author has provided suggestions for making minor staging changes in the Production Notes section of this script.

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IT WASN'T MURDER? was first presented by the Eden Prairie Players in Eden Prairie, Minnesota on February 16, 2006. It was directed by Jamey Olsen; scenery designed and lighted by Marvin Jonason; produced by Liz Michaelson; stage management by Leanne Ravey; and costumed by Peggy Lushine. The cast, in order of appearance, was as follows:

MARSHA TRUMAN..... Lorna Anderson
STANLEY TRUMAN..... Kurt Hunsicker
SGT. ANTHONY WEBER..... Chad Hallonquist
LUCY GRANGER..... Nicole Sekeres
KELLY REEVES..... Kjersten Johnson
KATHLEEN RUSSELL..... Anna Kuyava
DARREN RUSSELL..... Kevin Spencer
MEREDITH KINGSLEY..... Naomi St. Gregory
SYLVIA FULTON..... Jenna Evans
HANK SEAVERS..... Ron Ravey
VISITOR..... Jay Ludwig

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

MARSHA TRUMAN the sarcastic housekeeper
STANLEY TRUMAN..... the easygoing handyman
SGT. ANTHONY WEBER the new police sergeant
LUCY GRANGER.....the nervous nurse
KELLY REEVES..... Mrs. Rothberg's inquisitive niece
KATHLEEN RUSSELL Mrs. Rothberg's alluring niece
DARREN RUSSELL Kathleen's jovial husband
MEREDITH KINGSLEY the nosey neighbor
SYLVIA FULTON..... the family friend
HANK SEAVERS..... the estranged uncle

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action takes place in the Rothberg home's sunroom.

ACT I

Scene 1 – Wednesday afternoon in early April

Scene 2 – Thursday afternoon

ACT II

Scene 1 – Late Friday morning

Scene 2 – That evening just before midnight

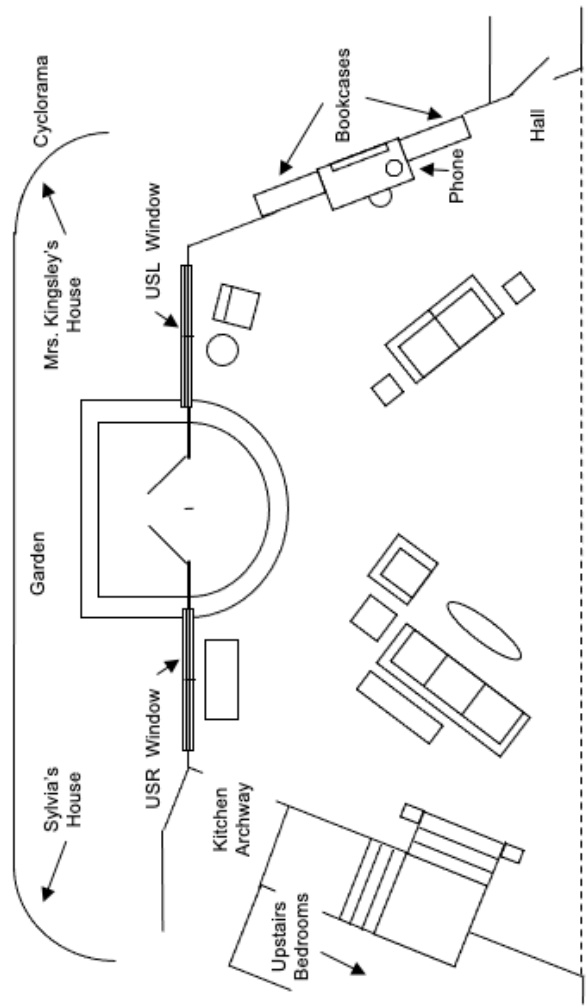
Scene 3 – Saturday morning

Time: The 1940s in America



Setting for the Eden Prairie Players production of
It Wasn't Murder? with scene design by Marvin Jonason.





It Wasn't Murder? scene design by Marvin Jonason.

ACT ONE

SCENE I

SETTING: Curtain rises on the sunroom located in the back of the Rothberg home and overlooks a magnificent garden. Shrubs and trees can be seen along the backdrop. The room is tastefully decorated and arranged for conversing. Small plants are arranged around the room.

Beginning with DS left, a doorway opens to the hall which leads to the main parts of the house. Along the center of the SL wall is a desk with a telephone. The desk has a small chair that faces the wall. Above the desk is a large painting of Mrs. Rothberg that conceals a wall safe. The painting swivels on a hinge and opens upstage so the audience can see the wall safe when needed. On both sides of the painting are matching bookcases that contain books, framed photos, and knickknacks.

In the center of the US wall is a set of French doors that open out into the garden. On either side of the French doors are large windows with drawn curtains. In front of the USL window is a small chair next to a table. In front of the USR window is a padded bench for sitting and looking out the window.

Just below the USR corner is an archway that leads to the kitchen. Beside the archway is a staircase landing that leads offstage to the second floor bedrooms. The staircase runs along the SR wall and opens into the sunroom.

The remainder of the room is furnished with places to converse. On the SR half is a loveseat sofa and an armchair. Before the sofa is a small coffee table. An end table is positioned near the sofa and armchair. Behind the sofa is a small sideboard that is used for laying out drinks. On the SL half is a loveseat sofa with a pair of small end tables placed on either side.

AT RISE: When the lights come up, it is about four o'clock in the afternoon. The room is somewhat dark because the window curtains are drawn and the lights in the room are off. The hallway door opens and STANLEY and MARSHA TRUMAN, 40s-60s, quickly enter. They are both dressed in black mourning clothes—he in a suit and tie with a hat; she in a dress, coat, and hat. STANLEY carries a potted plant and MARSHA carries her purse and gloves.

MARSHA: I still don't see why we had to leave early.

STANLEY: *(sets plant on table by USL window)* We need to get the room ready and set out the food.

MARSHA: *(takes off her coat and hat)* It could have waited until after the funeral. We cared for Mrs. Rothberg more than they did. The whole greedy bunch of them just waiting for her to die.

STANLEY: *(places his hat next to the plant)* Marsha, you know that's not true.

MARSHA: Of course I don't mean her niece, Kelly. But did you see the way Hank was acting? Every five minutes he kept checking his watch. And what about Darren? All smiles—as if he enjoyed the funeral!

STANLEY: Everyone grieves in their own way.

MARSHA: *(draws the USR curtain)* I'll bet Mrs. Kingsley is enjoying herself with all the activity going on today. Oh, look. There she is on the back porch with her binoculars. Just like a vulture, waiting to drop in on any social gathering.

STANLEY: *(draws the USL curtain and waves to her house)* So she is.

MARSHA: Don't wave at her!

STANLEY: It wouldn't harm you to treat her with a little kindness every now and then. *(opens the French doors)*

Poor woman. She's been all alone in that big house ever since her husband passed away.

MARSHA: That still doesn't give her the right to drop in on every family occasion that goes on in this house. You just wait. She'll pop in with another plate of goodies, like last week. And she was just in time for Mrs. Rothberg to blow out her candles, too.

STANLEY: *(crosses to kitchen archway)* Yes, dear. Let's start the coffee.

(STANLEY grabs MARSHA's coat and hat as he ushers her through the kitchen archway. SGT. WEBER, 20s, enters the garden offstage left and peers through the USL window. He wears a dark policeman uniform and hat. MARSHA enters from the kitchen carrying a white apron and a service tray with a plate of sandwiches, napkins, and plates. She drapes the apron over the sofa and moves to the coffee table. Although she doesn't notice WEBER, he sees her and moves to the French doors. MARSHA spends a few seconds arranging the plates and napkins while muttering to herself.)

WEBER: Good afternoon.

(She doesn't hear him. He takes a few steps into the room. She walks around behind the sofa and suddenly cries out upon seeing WEBER.)

MARSHA: Who are you?!

WEBER: Sgt. Weber, ma'am. Of the Westdale police.

MARSHA: *(sizes him up)* What gives you the right to go around sneaking up on an innocent woman?

WEBER: My apologies, I was just—

(STANLEY rushes in from the kitchen with a container of lemonade.)

STANLEY: Marsha, what is it?

WEBER: Hello, Stanley.

MARSHA: He snuck up behind me!

STANLEY: Sgt. Weber, this is my wife, Marsha.

WEBER: Nice to meet you.

MARSHA: (*accusingly*) Stanley, how does the officer know your name? (*turns quickly to WEBER*) I'm sure that whatever he did, there's a perfectly good explanation for it!

WEBER: (*chuckles*) Oh, no. I'm not here to see Stanley.

MARSHA: (*intrigued*) Oh? Then why *are* you here? Perhaps to investigate the missing medication?

STANLEY: (*quickly steps between them*) You must forgive my wife. She likes to imagine all sorts of mischief going on in this house. (*turns to WEBER*) May I offer you a drink?

MARSHA: Stanley! He's on duty.

STANLEY: (*shows MARSHA the pitcher of lemonade in his hands*) I meant of lemonade.

MARSHA: Uh huh. I'm sure you did. (*puts on her apron*)

WEBER: No, thanks. I'd like to speak to Hank Seavers.

MARSHA: About what?

WEBER: To pick up some donation papers I left here last week.

(*MARSHA gives STANLEY a confused look.*)

STANLEY: Sgt. Weber stopped by while you were up north at your sister's.

(*MARSHA nods and begins placing glasses and cups on top of the sideboard.*)

WEBER: Mrs. Rothberg agreed to donate a generous sum to the Westdale Children's Hospital, but wanted to first speak with her brother, Hank. I don't mean to disturb the family so soon after the funeral, it's just I got the impression Hank might be leaving soon. So I'm here to see if the family wishes to continue with her donation.

MARSHA: Knowing those greedy—

STANLEY: (*interrupts*) Marsha. (*to WEBER*) Hank will be here shortly.

WEBER: Thanks.

(*WEBER looks around at the desk and sees framed photos. He*

grabs one of KELLY. STANLEY crosses to end table to straighten things and pauses when looking at the tray.)

STANLEY: Where are the rest of the sandwiches?

MARSHA: Didn't make any extra this time. All that food and everyone on a diet! *(STANLEY gives her a look)* If they get hungry, they know where the kitchen is.

STANLEY: We should make more. Just in case. *(gestures to WEBER)*

MARSHA: You mean *I* should make more.

(STANLEY ushers MARSHA towards the kitchen. WEBER turns to them.)

WEBER: Stanley, you do know your front doorbell doesn't work, right?

STANLEY: What?

WEBER: Nothing happens when you press the button.

MARSHA: That's odd. I haven't heard it ring since that telegram arrived for Mrs. Rothberg two days ago.

STANLEY: I'm sure it's just a loose wire or something. I'll go have a look at it. *(crosses to hall door)*

MARSHA: *(mumbles to herself)* That's okay, I'll make more sandwiches.

(MARSHA exits for the kitchen. STANLEY opens the hallway door and bumps into LUCY, 40s. She's dressed in a conservative black dress and clutches a leather bound journal. As soon as the door opens, she looks startled.)

STANLEY: Pardon me, Lucy. Just need to fix the doorbell.

LUCY: *(timidly)* Oh?

(STANLEY exits into the hall. With her back to WEBER, LUCY opens her journal and checks an entry. She turns and doesn't see WEBER.)

WEBER: Excuse me, Lucy—

(Startled, LUCY drops her journal and they both kneel to grab

for it. LUCY quickly snatches it up.)

LUCY: Oh, sorry. I've been so jumpy lately.

WEBER: *(aside)* Seems I'm startling everyone in this house.

LUCY: What brings you back?

WEBER: *(confused)* Have we met before?

LUCY: Not formally. Last Saturday you came to speak with Mrs. Rothberg in the garden about something. I saw you from my room upstairs.

WEBER: *(smirks)* You're quite the witness. I'm sure nothing gets past you.

LUCY: *(offended)* I do not spy, officer! I was...merely noticing. That's all.

WEBER: I meant no offense. You're one of Mrs. Rothberg's nieces?

LUCY: No, I am—was her nurse. She had a bad heart and her doctor sent me to monitor her health. But that's over now. I leave tomorrow for a long overdue vacation.

WEBER: Well deserved, I'm sure.

LUCY: *(hesitantly)* Why are you here? Is it about Mrs. Rothberg?

WEBER: Why, yes.

LUCY: *(quickly)* I thought so! I felt all along that something wasn't quite right. But I had no proof.

WEBER: What?

LUCY: *(nervously looks around then leans towards WEBER)* The night she died, someone made sure I couldn't help my patient.

WEBER: *(puzzled)* Lucy, I'm here about her charity donation.

LUCY: You mean—oh, how embarrassing. You must forget what I said. *(stares absently up the stairs)* Surely it wasn't a dream...

(MARSHA enters from the kitchen with a serving tray filled with extra sandwiches and vegetables which she places on the coffee table.)

MARSHA: *(to LUCY)* You're arriving already?

LUCY: *(to WEBER)* If you'll excuse me, I must change out of

these heels. They're killing me. *(starts up the stairs)*

MARSHA: Now you come right back down after you change. We won't have you disappearing upstairs on your last night in this house.

LUCY: *(forced smile)* Of course.

(LUCY exits upstairs. MARSHA moves about the room ensuring everything is ready.)

MARSHA: An odd sort of woman, really. Enjoys quietly sitting there and writing in her journal.

WEBER: Yes, she's protective of her journal. I wonder why.

MARSHA: Beats me. I once saw it lying open on her dresser. Just a bunch of weird phrases like "Check R's prescription log" and "Ask K about will." *(grabs STANLEY's hat off of the USL table)* Oh, Stanley! Always leaving something behind for me to pick up.

(KELLY, 20s, enters from the hall dressed in conservative mourning clothes. She's lost in thought and crosses to the desk to put down her purse. Her gaze rests on the portrait of Mrs. Rothberg and she smiles lovingly. WEBER has been watching her silently, hesitant to speak. Noticing WEBER looking at KELLY, MARSHA smiles ever the matchmaker.)

MARSHA: Kelly, we have a visitor.

(KELLY turns from the desk. She freezes upon seeing WEBER.)

KELLY: Oh, it's you...

WEBER: *(hesitantly)* Hello. I'd hope to see you again.

KELLY: *(stoically)* That's nice.

MARSHA: Ohh, you've already met...Do tell!

KELLY: We, uh, met when I was studying at the university.

MARSHA: *(quietly to KELLY)* He's very handsome. *(KELLY gives her a look)*

STANLEY: *(enters from the Hall)* Looks like I'll have to replace the doorbell button.

WEBER: A faulty wire?

STANLEY: No, the main wire has been cleanly cut in two.

MARSHA: Sgt. Weber, I know exactly who's responsible for this! Clearly another prank from those Nelson boys! And you can save us all some trouble by arresting them now.

WEBER: I can't arrest them.

MARSHA: Of course you can! You're a policeman. Did you hear what they did last month to Sylvia's front yard?

STANLEY: (*interrupts*) Marsha, we can't go spreading rumors about the Nelson boys.

MARSHA: They're not rumors! Why the reverend overheard them—

STANLEY: The reverend can't hear anything unless you shout it at him. (*ushers her to the kitchen*) Let's finish setting up.

MARSHA: Fine. (*holds up STANLEY's hat*) Look what you left lying around again! What would you do without me always picking up after you?

STANLEY: Thank you, dear. (*smiles sheepishly to WEBER*) If you'll excuse us.

(*MARSHA and STANLEY exit into the kitchen. WEBER and KELLY look at each other. There is a small awkward pause.*)

KELLY: Sorry about that. Marsha gets carried away sometimes.

WEBER: Comes with wearing the uniform. (*beat*) Kelly, I—

KELLY: Tony, no! I never wanted to see you again.

WEBER: But I did.

KELLY: Clearly. That's why you're here?

WEBER: Partly. The transfer came up. I had hoped we could—

(*KATHLEEN and DARREN, 20s-30s, enter from the hall. KATHLEEN wears a very stylish black dress with a glamorous and colorful shoulder wrap. She carries a small black clutch purse and wears several pieces of expensive looking jewelry around her neck and hands. Her appearance is very striking and she looks as if she has just returned from an elegant party rather than a funeral. DARREN is dressed in a colorful sweater and khaki pants—anything but the traditional black mourning clothes.*)

KATHLEEN: *(laughs)* You're making that up!

DARREN: No, I swear. Those old busybodies are morbid like that. *(helps remove her shoulder wrap)* Yesterday, Mrs. Kingsley cornered me at the post office. She kept hounding me with questions about Ellen's death. Something about seeing a suspicious— *(spots WEBER and freezes with a startled look before quickly regaining his jovial composure)* Kelly, who's your friend?

KELLY: *(to WEBER)* Tony—um, Sgt. Weber, this is my sister, Kathleen Russell, and her husband, Darren.

DARREN: *(snidely to KELLY)* Oh, we're on first name basis with the cop, are we? *(shakes WEBER's hand)* So you're the new cop in town! From the way Sylvia raves about you, you'd think the old girl has fallen for you. *(elbows WEBER in the side and crosses to the sideboard)*

WEBER: Well—uh—

KELLY: Ignore him. He's always joking around.

DARREN: Guilty as charged, officer.

(MARSHA enters from the kitchen with a pot of coffee and sets it on the sideboard. KATHLEEN crosses between KELLY and WEBER, touches WEBER's arm.)

KATHLEEN: Tell me, sergeant, what brings you to our home?

DARREN: Let me guess. Marsha's been caught stealing again.

MARSHA: I'm no thief!!

(DARREN chuckles and drapes the wrap over the DR arm of the sofa. WEBER steps away from KATHLEEN.)

WEBER: I'm here to see Hank Seavers.

KATHLEEN: Has Uncle Hank broken the law?

WEBER: No, nothing like that. Just seeing if the family wishes to continue with your aunt's charity donation.

KATHLEEN: *(disapproving)* To that children's hospital?

WEBER: Yes.

KELLY: She was very fond of that hospital. Of course we will.

WEBER: Wasn't she a nurse there?

KATHLEEN: *(sits on the DS end of the sofa)* No, but Lucy was

until about two years ago. Rumor has it she was involved in some scandal at the hospital.

MARSHA: I heard it was an affair with a doctor—!

KELLY: *(interrupts MARSHA)* But we don't know that for sure. *(to WEBER)* Aunt Ellen loved volunteering in the infant ward.

MARSHA: She loved those days. She'd go on and on about her "little ones."

(LUCY quietly enters from upstairs and slowly descends into the room. She's changed into more casual clothes and carries her leather journal. She stops on the steps and listens.)

DARREN: But what does Ellen's donation have to do with Hank?

WEBER: Before signing the donation papers, she first wanted to speak with Hank about some trust fund.

KELLY: Probably the family charity foundation.

(STANLEY enters from the kitchen with an ice bucket which he sets on the sideboard.)

DARREN: Where's Lucy? I thought she left the funeral before us.

KELLY: Actually she's—

KATHLEEN: *(interrupts)* Did you notice how she kept thumbing through her journal throughout the funeral service? *(voice trails off as she spots LUCY on the steps)* I wonder what she was up to...

DARREN: *(cheerfully)* Hello, Lucy! How long have you been standing there?

LUCY: Long enough.

(LUCY snaps her journal shut and crosses along the back wall to the chair by the USL window. She sits so she can silently watch everyone. DARREN hands KATHLEEN a cup of coffee and sits on the arm of the sofa with his drink.)

DARREN: I'm surprised Mrs. Kingsley hasn't turned up yet,

especially with a cop visiting us today. *(chuckles)* Ten bucks says she'll be popping in within the next few minutes.

KATHLEEN: That soon?

MARSHA: *(looks out the USR window)* Speak of the devil. We've got company!

KATHLEEN: *(to DARREN)* No fair. You saw her coming across the garden.

DARREN: *(jokingly)* You accuse me of cheating? Honey, I'm surprised at you.

(MRS. KINGSLEY, 40s-50s, quickly approaches the French doors from offstage left. She's carrying a purse and a small plate with brownies stacked in a pyramid. MARSHA meets her at the French doors.)

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(smiling)* Hello, everyone! I hope I'm not disturbing you—

MARSHA: Well, actually—

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(interrupts and hands her the plate)* —but I wanted to deliver a plate of my Turtle Delight.

MARSHA: *(acidly)* You shouldn't have.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Nonsense! It's the least I could do for you on this sad occasion.

MARSHA: I'll put these in the kitchen in case anyone's hungry later.

STANLEY: *(pulls MARSHA aside)* Marsha! What's gotten into you?

(STANLEY takes the plate and sets it on the sideboard. KELLY steps to MRS. KINGSLEY.)

KELLY: *(politely)* Hello, Mrs. Kingsley. So nice of you to stop by.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Thank you, dear. Being neighbors and all, I just wanted to pop in and offer my condolences. So sorry about your aunt's sudden death. Heart attack, wasn't it?

KELLY: Yes.

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(touches KELLY's shoulder sympathetically)* I know how close you were to her. *(looks around at others)*

Although I think we all knew it was going to happen sooner or later. (*spots WEBER*) Sgt. Weber! I thought that was you snooping around the house. Looking for clues no doubt.

WEBER: Clues?

MRS. KINGSLEY: Of course! You walked along side the house and kept looking in the bushes. Perhaps for a discarded flashlight?

WEBER: I wasn't looking for clues. I was trying to see if anyone was home.

DARREN: (*snidely*) Why not try the front door like most people?

WEBER: Because the doorbell wasn't working. I had to go into the back to find someone to let me in.

MRS. KINGSLEY: And when he entered this room, you should have seen it! Scared Marsha half to death.

MARSHA: He only *startled* me. Your trusty binoculars must be failing you.

(*As MARSHA glares at a smirking MRS. KINGSLEY, SYLVIA FULTON and HANK SEEVERS, 40s-50s, enter from the hall door. SYLVIA frequently smiles and sees the world through rose-colored glasses as if nothing bad will happen to anyone. She wears a dark colored dress that attempts to make her look younger than her actual age. HANK wears a dark sports coat and turtleneck. SYLVIA's arm is tucked around HANK's and she appears to be smitten with him.*)

SYLVIA: Hello, everyone! You'll never guess what just happened. I was standing out on the front porch and—

MRS. KINGSLEY: The doorbell didn't work?

SYLVIA: (*amazed*) Yeah! How did you guess? (*gasps*) Say, are you—oh, what's the word?

KATHLEEN: Nosey?

SYLVIA: (*snaps fingers while trying to think*) No—um—psychic?

DARREN: (*laugh*) Yeah, right!

SYLVIA: (*looks fondly at HANK*) Well, thank God Hank showed up just now. Otherwise I would have been standing

out there all day waiting for someone to answer the door.

HANK: (*charming*) My pleasure, Sylvia.

SYLVIA: You really are an angel. (*spots WEBER*) Oh, Sgt. Weber, what a pleasant surprise! I didn't know you were invited, too. Have you met everyone?

WEBER: All but Mr. Seavers.

SYLVIA: I must introduce you both. (*pulls HANK over to WEBER*) Hank, this is Sgt. Weber. (*WEBER and HANK shake hands*) Sgt. Weber just transferred to our town a few weeks ago.

HANK: So I've heard.

SYLVIA: (*to WEBER*) Did you know that Hank is new to town just like you? He returned a month ago to be with his sister. (*smiles at HANK*) It really did wonders for Mrs. Rothberg, too. I've never seen her so happy before. I was hoping that Hank's return would have cured Mrs. Rothberg.

LUCY: Mrs. Rothberg had a heart condition, not an illness.

SYLVIA: Well, you know what I mean. (*smiles to WEBER*) I'm afraid I get those medical terms mixed up in my head.

WEBER: (*to HANK*) You look familiar to me. Have we met before?

HANK: (*crosses to the sideboard*) Really? I'm pretty sure we haven't met until today.

SYLVIA: You two must be having one of those déjà vu moments!

HANK: (*to WEBER*) In fact, I haven't been in these parts for years. When I recently heard about my sister's condition, I rushed back to the states and decided to stay for a few weeks.

WEBER: Oh, where from?

(*SYLVIA sits on the DS side of the bench near KELLY where she can face the people around the coffee table.*)

HANK: (*vaguely*) Oh, overseas here and there. I haven't had a permanent address in over three years.

KELLY: He's spent the last few years traveling in Europe.

HANK: It's really invigorating not being tied down to one place for too long. Whenever I get bored, I simply move on.

(pours himself a drink) So, officer, what brings you here?

KATHLEEN: He's here to see you.

HANK: *(wearily)* Is that so?

WEBER: Oh, nothing to be alarmed about. Your sister pledged a donation last week. I left some papers for her to sign. But she wanted to first speak to you about some trust fund.

HANK: *(hesitantly)* Oh, yeah. I—I think she left those papers down here somewhere. *(looks at DARREN who casually gestures towards the desk on the other side of the room)* Perhaps in that desk. Just give me a minute to look. Shouldn't take too long.

(HANK crosses to the desk and quietly begins searching the drawers. MRS. KINGSLEY stands beside WEBER and looks around the room suspiciously.)

MRS. KINGSLEY: So, someone didn't want the doctor to make it? That is intriguing.

KATHLEEN: Mrs. Kingsley, we're not expecting a doctor.

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(to KATHLEEN)* Perhaps not today. *(to WEBER)* I know why the doorbell is broken.

(MARSHA looks at MRS. KINGSLEY with suspicion. LUCY leans forward in her chair with curiosity. HANK drops a stapler from the desk. He quickly picks it up.)

STANLEY: You do?

MRS. KINGSLEY: Of course. Don't you see? The murderer was trying to prevent anyone from ringing the doorbell—especially the doctor.

(ALL but LUCY stare at MRS. KINGSLEY in disbelief—it's another of her exaggerated stories. LUCY quickly opens her journal and checks her notes.)

SYLVIA: *(excitedly to KELLY)* Did she just say murderer?

KATHLEEN: *(to MRS. KINGSLEY)* You're not suggesting my aunt was murdered?

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(defiantly)* Well, something suspicious was going on the night Mrs. Rothberg died!

DARREN: *(laughs)* Mrs. Kingsley, you've certainly outdone yourself today. *(crosses behind her towards LUCY)* What's next? A little robbery? Some good old-fashioned blackmail? *(LUCY glares at DARREN)*

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(confused)* But...I thought...you mean...it wasn't murder?

KELLY: What do you mean?

MRS. KINGSLEY: Well, it was something I saw the other day. And now with the police here searching the grounds, I just naturally assumed...

DARREN: Ah! Well, there's your problem! You're assuming things again.

WEBER: Mrs. Kingsley, I'm not here for a murder investigation.

MRS. KINGSLEY: You're not?

WEBER: No, I'm here about Mrs. Rothberg's charity donation.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Well, I just thought— *(apologetically to KELLY)* Oh, dear!

STANLEY: *(to MRS. KINGSLEY)* Don't worry about it. Mistakes like this happen all the time. Perhaps you'd care to join us for some sandwiches?

MARSHA: But, Stanley—

STANLEY: *(to MARSHA)* There's plenty to go around.

MRS. KINGSLEY: I don't want to impose....

MARSHA: Good! I'll get your things.

STANLEY: Marsha will get you something to drink. Perhaps some coffee?

MRS. KINGSLEY: That would be grand.

(MARSHA grudgingly goes to the sideboard to pour out the coffee. DARREN joins her there. KATHLEEN reaches into her clutch purse, pulls out a nail file, and begins filing her nails.)

SYLVIA: I'd like some, too.

STANLEY: Certainly. *(turns to LUCY)* Lucy, may we pour you some coffee, too?

LUCY: *(places her journal on the table)* Yes, please.

DARREN: I'll help you, Marsha.

MARSHA: (*suspiciously*) All right. I'll pour. You serve.

DARREN: Hank, you want anything?

HANK: (*still searching the desk*) Whatever you're having.

MRS. KINGSLEY: (*spots LUCY by window*) Lucy, what are you doing back in that corner all by yourself? You should join us down here. (*fetches LUCY who is flustered*) Come, come.

(*LUCY's journal remains forgotten on the small table by the window.*)

LUCY: But I...I enjoy sitting there.

MRS. KINGSLEY: You know I was almost afraid I had missed saying goodbye. I thought you left this morning.

(*MRS. KINGSLEY urges LUCY into the US side of the sofa while she sits down in the armchair.*)

LUCY: No, I leave tomorrow.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Yes, for that big ocean cruise. If I could afford it, I would love joining you.

LUCY: Oh, that's not necessary, Mrs. Kingsley. I really don't mind going by myself.

KATHLEEN: An expensive cruise? Don't tell me Aunt Ellen was paying you *that* well.

LUCY: Oh—er—no. I keep my eyes open for a good deal.

(*DARREN carries two coffee cups for MRS. KINGSLEY and LUCY to the coffee table. Because of the food tray, he places the cups on the corner of the coffee table between MRS. KINGSLEY and LUCY.*)

DARREN: Your coffees, ladies.

LUCY: Thank you.

(*DARREN returns to the sideboard as LUCY reaches for a sandwich.*)

MRS. KINGSLEY: Lucy, I made your favorite dessert.

LUCY: Turtle Delight? Oh, where is it?

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(snaps her fingers)* Marsha...

(MARSHA ignores her. STANLEY grabs the goodies plate and hands it to MRS. KINGSLEY.)

STANLEY: Here they are.

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(holds plate out to LUCY)* Here you go, dear. Help yourself.

LUCY: *(grabs top brownie and tastes it)* Mmm, it's so good. I'm going to miss these when I leave.

MRS. KINGSLEY: I've got extra at home. Tell you what, I'll pack them up and drop them off first thing in the morning.

LUCY: Oh, that would be wonderful. Thank you, Mrs. Kingsley.

SYLVIA: *(crosses to MRS. KINGSLEY)* May I have one, too?

MRS. KINGSLEY: Of course. Anyone else?

(SYLVIA takes a brownie. Everyone else declines. Over the next few pages, LUCY looks uncomfortable being in the center of all the activity around the coffee table.)

SYLVIA: Kathleen, is that a new bracelet?

KATHLEEN: *(beams)* Yes. Darren gave it to me for our anniversary.

SYLVIA: *(grabs KATHLEEN's arm to admire the bracelet)* Oh! It's absolutely beautiful!

MARSHA: *(acidly to DARREN)* Must have cost a fortune. How much are they paying you down at the pharmacy?

DARREN: Not nearly enough. I'll be making payments for the rest of my life.

(HANK has finished searching the desk. He paces slowly between the USL window and the desk lost in his thoughts. DARREN hands SYLVIA her coffee and carries HANK's drink to him by the US bookcase.)

MRS. KINGSLEY: Reminds me of the gifts my dear William used to give me. God rest his soul. He was always the perfect husband.

SYLVIA: And a good doctor, too!

(SYLVIA helps herself to a sandwich from the food tray and returns to the bench. MRS. KINGSLEY picks up her coffee and blows on it for a second.)

HANK: I can't seem to find those papers anywhere. Maybe she left them upstairs. *(starts for the stairs)*

KELLY: Hank, that can wait.

(HANK tries to hide his disappointment and smiles at KELLY. He crosses to the coffee table, grabs a sandwich, and then sits on the foot of the stairs. While eating, HANK watches WEBER. MARSHA is at the sideboard tidying things up. DARREN crosses to the USL window and glances briefly out into the garden. STANLEY stands quietly by the USR window. SYLVIA, KATHLEEN, and LUCY eat quietly. MRS. KINGSLEY is about to take a sip from her coffee cup when WEBER speaks to her.)

WEBER: Mrs. Kingsley, what did you mean when you said "it was something I saw the other day?"

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(sets her coffee down on the edge of the coffee table beside LUCY's cup)* A few nights ago, something suspicious was going on in this house.

(She suddenly stands and points at DARREN who is now facing everyone and is standing with his hands behind his back. His eyes dart nervously around the room.)

MRS. KINGSLEY: Now before you cut me off, please hear me out! *(beat, then to all)* The night Mrs. Rothberg died, I had trouble sleeping. So I decided to try reading for a little while. I went downstairs to grab my book. It was out on the back porch and as I picked it up, I glanced over at this house and saw the most peculiar thing.

SYLVIA: *(edge of her seat)* What, Mrs. Kingsley?

MRS. KINGSLEY: A strange light in Mrs. Rothberg's window.

KATHLEEN: So she had trouble sleeping and turned on her lamp.

MRS. KINGSLEY: No. This light was small, and kept bouncing

around in the window.

KELLY: Like a flashlight?

MRS. KINGSLEY: Exactly!

KATHLEEN: When was this?

MRS. KINGSLEY: I think around two in the morning. It only lasted for a few minutes, and then the light disappeared. The next morning I heard Mrs. Rothberg had passed away in the middle of the night. Awfully suspicious seeing this light in her room, wouldn't you say?

(EVERYONE stares at her in stunned silence for a moment. MRS. KINGSLEY picks up a coffee cup and holds it above her lap. DARREN who is leaning against the US bookcase shakes his head and crosses to her.)

DARREN: Now, Mrs. Kingsley, you don't honestly expect us to believe that incredible story.

MRS. KINGSLEY: I'm not making this up!

DARREN: If it were true, how come you weren't over here yesterday telling us all about it?

MRS. KINGSLEY: Well, it—it slipped my mind. I forgot all about the flashlight until I saw Sgt. Weber searching around the house. *(looks around the room)* It's the truth! I saw a flashlight on in Mrs. Rothberg's room that night. You must believe me!

LUCY: *(quietly)* I believe you.

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(sinks into the armchair)* You do?

LUCY: Yes, because I also saw something that night. I've felt all along that something wasn't quite right. But, I have no proof.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Proof? About what?

LUCY: There were three things actually. *(looks to WEBER)* First, the night my patient died, someone drugged me.

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(about to sip her coffee but lowers the cup in surprise)* Oh, my!

(WEBER pulls out a pocket notepad and begins taking notes. HANK crosses to the USL window. DARREN leans against the desk, stunned. MARSHA hovers by the sideboard.)

STANLEY remains by the French doors. LUCY picks up the coffee cup off the coffee table and takes a drink.)

SYLVIA: Someone tried to kill you?

LUCY: No. Just something to knock me out for the night.

HANK: Like a mickey?

MARSHA: A what?

HANK: A mickey. Where someone slips something into your drink without you knowing.

LUCY: *(suspiciously as she sips her coffee)* Yes.

KELLY: Do you know what the drug was?

LUCY: It was a sedative. Like codeine—or maybe even morphine. Whatever it was, it made me groggy and I slept through the night.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Oh, you poor thing!

STANLEY: *(holding the coffee pot)* More coffee anyone?

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(looks at her full cup)* Oh, would you look at that? I've been so busy talking that I haven't touched my coffee.

KATHLEEN: *(aside)* Big surprise.

MRS. KINGSLEY: What was that, dear?

(KATHLEEN shakes her head and sips from her coffee.)

WEBER: Lucy, what were the other two things?

LUCY: Throughout the night, I kept drifting in and out of sleep. The first time, I overheard a heated argument in my patient's bedroom. Our rooms are connected by a service door. The argument continued for a few minutes and then I heard Ellen shout, "Over my dead body!" I tried sitting up, but my head started spinning, and I drifted back to sleep.

WEBER: Any idea who she was talking to?

LUCY: *(hesitantly)* No, the other voice—it was too faint.

KELLY: Did you notice the time?

LUCY: I'm not sure. Maybe midnight?

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(intrigued)* And what was the third thing?

LUCY: This is going to sound strange, but I think someone was in my room while I was sleeping.

KELLY: How do you know?

LUCY: Because I saw them—unless it was a dream. But I don't think it was. That night is so hazy. I heard a small creaking sound.

MRS. KINGSLEY: Like a door opening?

LUCY: Exactly! I rolled over and saw the connecting door to my patient's room closing. I—I tried getting up, but I became dizzy and collapsed against my pillows.

WEBER: When was this?

LUCY: I don't know. I was drugged. It's all so hazy.

DARREN: *(crosses to MRS. KINGSLEY's side and laughs)* This is hilarious! We have a nosey neighbor claiming to see mysterious lights at night and a drugged nurse who isn't sure of anything. *(to WEBER)* Now before we get carried away, let's consider there isn't one piece of evidence supporting the theory that Ellen was murdered!

LUCY: Perhaps there is, Darren.

DARREN: What?

LUCY: Ellen's medicine vial—of digitoxin—is missing. I placed it on her night stand after I gave her the nightly dosage. The next morning, after she had passed, the vial was nowhere to be found in her room. Seems awfully suspicious to me...

MRS. KINGSLEY: *(smirks at DARREN)* Looks like she has you there.

(While MRS. KINGSLEY sips her coffee, LUCY picks up her coffee cup off the coffee table and takes another drink. LUCY lowers the cup and looks a little odd as she feels dizzy and lightheaded. Meanwhile, DARREN backs away from MRS. KINGSLEY and looks around the room nervously.)

DARREN: That doesn't mean I have it! Perhaps Marsha moved it when she discovered Ellen had died.

MARSHA: I did no such thing! Stanley was there, too. He can vouch for me.

(As STANLEY comes to MARSHA's side, he looks at LUCY strangely. LUCY puts her coffee cup back on the coffee table and begins taking quick breaths. She suddenly sits up,

puts one hand to her chest, and points the other hand at DARREN. Her mouth is moving as if to say something, but no words come out.)

KATHLEEN: Lucy, are you alright?

(LUCY turns to KATHLEEN, her eyes open really wide and she continues taking short breaths. Then with a sudden jerk, LUCY collapses against the sofa. MRS. KINGSLEY rises in horror and WEBER squeezes past her to check on LUCY.)

WEBER: She's dead.

KELLY: *(rises and scans the room)* Has anyone seen Lucy's journal?

(EVERYONE looks toward the USL window. The journal isn't there.)

STANLEY: That's odd. It's gone.

DARREN: Well, Mrs. Kingsley. Looks like you were right after all.

MRS. KINGSLEY: About what?

DARREN: *(gestures to LUCY)* This was murder.

SYLVIA: *(looks around the room excitedly)* And one of us did it!

(CURTAIN)

What exactly did Mrs. Kingsley see through her
binoculars the night Mrs. Rothberg died?

Why was Kelly not pleased to see Sgt. Weber again?

Who took Lucy's journal?
What secrets did it contain?

Who murdered Lucy in a room full of witnesses?

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IT WASN'T MURDER?

A COMEDY MYSTERY

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