Murder in Bloom
A Mystery Comedy in Two Acts

By Thomas Hischak

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1. The full name of the play
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3. The following notice: “Produced by special arrangement with Pioneer Drama Service, Inc., Englewood, Colorado”
CAST OF CHARACTERS

LAVINIA WESSON a middle-aged woman; rather fussy and particular, but warm-hearted.

RACHEL HODGES the maid, a girl in her late teens; lazy, cold, not likeable.

MELODY HAYDOCK middle-aged spinster, but very animated and lively; talks on and on.

PRISCILLA STEWART-WAYNE a pretty heiress, 18 years old.

MRS. VIOLET CAMERON late-middle-aged widow, demanding, nervous; a hypochondriac.

MISS SIBLEY middle-aged nurse and long-time companion to Mrs. Cameron.

STEPHANIE DEARBORN a quiet, shy girl in her late teens; wears glasses.

MRS. LETITIA WHETMORE a wealthy old woman.

INSPECTOR GREENE polite, respectful police detective in his middle age; rather calm man.

HUGH TRAVIS his new assistant, a lively, too imaginative man in his twenties.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

The action of the play takes place in the sitting room of Lavinia Wesson’s home in St. Basil-on-Green, a small English village. The time is the present.

ACT ONE
Scene One: Late afternoon
Scene Two: That night.
Scene Three: Later that night.

ACT TWO
Scene One: The next morning.
Scene Two: That night.
MURDER IN BLOOM

Scene 1

SETTING: The room is a well-furnished one decorated in a very traditional style. There is only one entrance from the rest of the house, a door to the hall. There are French doors and windows that lead out to a garden. The French doors and windows have heavy drapes that can be closed. The furniture consists of various chairs, a settee, tea tables, some bookshelves, etc. The doors and windows should be practical, as they must be locked and unlocked during the action of the play.

AT RISE: Late afternoon. The drapes on the French doors and windows are open. RACHEL HODGES, the maid, is doing her obligatory dusting. She is relatively new to the house so she dusts with some curiosity. She comes to an oriental vase sitting on a table, stops dusting, and picks up the vase. She looks at it carefully. LAVINIA WESSON ENTERS, stops dead in the doorway when she sees RACHEL with the vase. LAVINIA clears her throat and RACHEL quickly puts the vase down and dusts it furiously.

LAVINIA: Rachel, on the days of my garden club meetings, this room is to be dusted in the morning, not the afternoon.

RACHEL: Yes, Mrs. Wesson . . .

LAVINIA: There are far too many preparations to be made as it is. The dusting must not be allowed to interfere with the schedule.

RACHEL: (Annoyed.) Yes, mum . . .

LAVINIA: A well-planned schedule is the rule of this household, not the exception. On my garden club meeting days this is especially vital.

RACHEL: (Dusting faster.) Yes, Mrs. Wesson! (She knocks over another vase, catching it before it falls to the floor.) Sorry, mum . . .

LAVINIA: Put that thing down. It's nearly four. We have more important things to attend to.

RACHEL: (Unenthusiastically.) Yes, Mrs. Wesson.

LAVINIA: We start the preparations each week with the furniture. You are to bring three of the chairs from the dining room in here. (RACHEL starts to EXIT.) Rachel!

RACHEL: Yes?

LAVINIA: Not the highback chairs, you understand. But the other ones. Is that clear?

RACHEL: No highbacks . . . (Leaving.)

LAVINIA: And Rachel . . . (She stops) Not the armchairs. The dining chairs. Three of them.

HEL: Dining chairs . . . (EXITs. LAVINIA watches her go, then
rushes over to the oriental vase. She picks it up, examines it closely, then looks off to where RACHEL has left. The noise of chairs being dragged causes LAVINIA to replace the vase and rush to the doorway. RACHEL ENTERS, dragging two chairs carelessly.)

LAVINIA: One at a time, Rachel! And for gracious goodness, don’t drag them so!
RACHEL: Where do you want them?
LAVINIA: There . . . near the center of the room. (Arranges them.) One goes here . . . like this. The other at an angle . . . like so. Now get the third. Carefully! (RACHEL exits again. LAVINIA checks to see if there are any scratches on the chairs. In a moment RACHEL re-enters with the third chair, holding it so high that it practically hits the doorway.) Watch out! Here, give that to me! (Takes chair.) Now this one goes here. (Points.) Those two chairs must be brought next to them. (RACHEL brings two chairs already in the room to center.) And this last one comes over here. There. This is the proper arrangement of the chairs for my garden club meeting. You must memorize it, Rachel, and then see to it that this arrangement is prepared each week. Do you understand?

RACHEL: Yes, mum . . .
LAVINIA: Good. Now this table here is used for the tea things. But it is much too early for that now. Next . . . see that these doors are closed and latched shut. (RACHEL closes and latches French doors.) The same for the windows. (RACHEL latches windows.) Good. Now draw all the drapes.

RACHEL: But you said yesterday . . .

LAVINIA: On my garden club meeting days, the drapes are to be drawn early. Now do as I say.

RACHEL: (Wearily.) Yes, Mrs. Wesson. (Draws all drapes.)

LAVINIA: Now this room is ready. Once again, take notice of the arrangement of things, Rachel. The six chairs like this, the table, the doors and windows, and the drapes drawn. It is now four o’clock. Time to prepare tea. You are to leave all the tea things on the dining room sideboard so that it will be easier tonight at the meeting.

RACHEL: Yes, mum . . . (EXITING.)

LAVINIA: The biscuits are in the tin on the top shelf. And don’t forget the lemon. Cut it evenly, if you please. Then you can go.

RACHEL: (Stops, turns.) I’m finished for today?

LAVINIA: That is correct.

RACHEL: But it’s only . . .

LAVINIA: On my garden club meeting days, you are dismissed early. Now hurry with tea. I’m expecting Miss Stewart-Wayne any moment now. Show her in when she arrives.
RACHEL: Yes, mum. Ah . . . Mrs. Wesson . . . ?
LAVINIA: What is it now, Rachel?
RACHEL: Will you be needing me to come back tonight? For your meeting, I mean.
LAVINIA: Absolutely not. This club has a closed membership and does not allow outsiders.
RACHEL: But who will serve tea?
LAVINIA: We shall manage perfectly well on our own. Now if you will please . . .
RACHEL: Will Mrs. Whetmore be at this meeting?
LAVINIA: That is not information for you to know.
RACHEL: Oh, I know that she’s a member, if that’s what you mean.
When I worked at Harley House she would tell me to press her yellow blouse so she could wear it to her garden club meeting.
LAVINIA: You must learn to keep such knowledge to yourself.
RACHEL: I will, mum. But will she be coming tonight that you know?
LAVINIA: I cannot say and that puts an end to the matter.
(SOUND: Doorbell.) There’s Miss Stewart-Wayne now. Show her in and bring tea in the moment it’s ready.
RACHEL: (Disappointed.) Yes, mum. (EXIT. LAVINIA goes to the French doors and again checks that they are latched. She arranges the drapes so that no one can possibly see into the room. Voices are heard in the hall.)
MELODY: (OFFSTAGE.) I’ll show myself in, Rachel. You had best get that tea kettle before it whistles itself off the stove. (ENTERS with a large bag with handles on it.) Vinnie, that girl of yours took me quite by surprise!
LAVINIA: Oh, dear! What has she done now?
MELODY: Done? Oh, nothing. Just the shock. Opened the door and when I saw her I thought . . . how strange! I must be at Harley House! Totally forgot that she works for you now.
LAVINIA: For nearly a week now. Lazy girl . . . and a bit too nosy. But who else is there, Melody? When Letitia let her go I had to snatch her up. These young girls today all want to be magazine models.
MELODY: Or airline stewardesses.
LAVINIA: Sit down, Melody. I’m expecting Priscilla any moment.
MELODY: I know. That’s why I dropped by. Thought it best to have this ahead of time. (Opens her bag, pulls out a long green cloak.)
LAVINIA: Priscilla’s gown!
MELODY: Finished it this morning. Brought mine along too . . . save me bringing it later. (Pulls out two more gowns.) And I did those alterations on Stephanie’s. That poor girl doesn’t know which end of a needle to use.
LAVINIA: (Holding up the first gown.) It's lovely!
MELODY: Have Priscilla try it on when she gets here. Oh, I hope it fits all right. There was so much guesswork.
LAVINIA: I'm afraid I'll have to do some explaining to Priscilla before I show her this. She knows nothing, you understand.
MELODY: Still not a hint? What did she say when you told her about tonight?
LAVINIA: Oh, you know Priscilla... such a pleasant child. She said she was very flattered to be asked to join. She was quite sincere, dear girl.
MELODY: She must suspect something. I mean, the girl doesn't know the first thing about gardening. Never goes near the Stewart-Wayne Gardens, I hear.
LAVINIA: I mentioned something about an honorary membership. I tell you, she was genuinely flattered.
MELODY: Well, she'll have to be told something before tonight's meeting.
LAVINIA: Of course. That's why I asked her to tea.
MELODY: Should I stay? Help explain things, I mean?
LAVINIA: Best not, I fear. One to one is best in matters like these. (Rachel suddenly enters with a tea tray. Lavinia quickly stuffs the gowns back in the bag so that she does not see them.)
RACHEL: Will Miss Haydock be staying for tea as well?
MELODY: Not me, Rachel. Must run in a moment. Oh, but before I go I will try one of these little biscuits! (She reaches for one on the tray, bumps Rachel's arm holding the tea pot. Some tea spills onto Melody's bag.) Oh, goodness!
LAVINIA: Clumsy girl!
RACHEL: It weren't my fault!
LAVINIA: Rachel!
MELODY: Quite all right, Vinnie.
LAVINIA: Put that tray down and get us a towel. Quickly, I say! (Rachel exits indignantly. Lavinia and Melody quickly pull the gowns out of the bag.)
MELODY: Not too bad, I hope.
LAVINIA: Did any spill on Priscilla's?
MELODY: It's mine. No great harm done. Just a slight stain near the shoulder here. I'll soak it after tonight's meeting.
LAVINIA: Rude and clumsy girl! It is no wonder Letitia Whetmore let her go. Always dropping things, too. And to think I saw her handling Uncle Stanford's china vases earlier!
MELODY: Be patient with her, Vinnie. As you say, who else is there? (Rachel enters with a towel.)
RACHEL: Here's a towel.
LAVINIA: Give it to me, Rachel. (Takes towel. Doorbell rings.)
MELODY: That must be Priscilla.

LAVINIA: We'll clean this up, Rachel. Get the door. *(RACHEL EXITS.)*

MELODY: *(Wiping the gown.)* There, there . . . will be as good as new. *(Puts gown back in bag.)* I'll keep this with you, Vinnie. I'll be on my way. Good luck with Priscilla. She's such a good-hearted girl, I'm sure it won't go badly at all.

LAVINIA: I do hope you're right, Melody. Of course, it's Letitia Whetmore that should speak to her. But I suppose I've been more like an aunt to the child than Letitia ever was.

MELODY: That's quite true. Priscilla trusts you. That should make all the difference. *(RACHEL ENTERS with PRISCILLA STEW: ART-WAYNE.)*

LAVINIA: Priscilla, you're here!

PRISCILLA: Good afternoon, Mrs. Wesson . . . Miss Haydock.

MELODY: Lovely to see you, dear. My, but doesn't she look prettier every day, Vinnie?

LAVINIA: I believe so. But of course, I'm rather partial.

PRISCILLA: Mrs. Wesson always flatters me as if I were her daughter.

MELODY: That's because she looks upon you as a daughter, I am sure.

LAVINIA: Oh, stop, Melody Haydock! You're embarrassing me. And Priscilla.

MELODY: Well, I'm just an old maid and can say what I like without worry. See you tonight, Vinnie.

LAVINIA: Rachel, show Miss Haydock out. Then you can go. I'll serve tea for Miss Stewart-Wayne and myself.

RACHEL: Yes, mum.

PRISCILLA: Goodbye, Miss Haydock.

MELODY: Bye bye, dear. Come along, Rachel. I'll see if you've learned where Vinnie keeps her front door. *(RACHEL and MELODY EXIT.)*

LAVINIA: Well . . . Milk with your tea, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA: Yes, thank you. I didn't know that Miss Haydock was a member of your garden club, Mrs. Wesson.

LAVINIA: *(Pouring tea.*)* What gave you the idea that she was?

PRISCILLA: She said she'd see you later tonight. I assumed . . .

LAVINIA: Oh . . . quite correct. But as I mentioned to you before, Priscilla, the membership of this club is not exactly common knowledge. St. Basil-on-Green has its share of social organizations that pride themselves on who is and who is not a member. We like to think that we are not that sort of club.

PRISCILLA: All the same, I am awfully flattered. I do love the gardens Grandfather built at the house . . . and I quite enjoy listening to Mr. Atkins talk about what he's up to out there all the time. But I can hardly call myself a gardening enthusiast. I am, actually, quite ignorant about the subject.
LAVINIA: We realize that, Priscilla. But, as strange as it sounds, gardening is not the main preoccupation of this garden club.

PRISCILLA: I don’t understand...

LAVINIA: Let me say that we are much more than a garden club. We are, instead, what one used to call a secret society.

PRISCILLA: A secret society!

LAVINIA: Please don’t be frightened by the expression. As I say, it is an old fashioned term. But I suppose our little club is a bit old fashioned also. We do have our goals, our principles... and we do meet secretly. Or as secretly as one can in a village like St. Basil-on-Green. The pretense of a garden club is a simple enough ruse. People know we exist, but they probably dismiss us as some eccentric garden lovers who feel a bit superior to the rest of the village. I will admit that some of the finest gardens in the district are owned by some of our members. Others may be curious. But to them we are a harmless bunch.

PRISCILLA: You mean we aren’t... harmless?

LAVINIA: Oh, gracious! Of course we are. But that doesn’t mean we are unimportant. There are many things that can be done more effectively if done in secret.

PRISCILLA: What sort of things?


PRISCILLA: I am quite confused, Mrs. Wesson. Why... why me?

LAVINIA: It has to do with your dear deceased mother. Your Aunt Letitia will explain that to you tonight. The point of the matter right now is that we’d like very much for you to join our little group. After tonight I think you will realize how important it is... both to us and to you.

PRISCILLA: Aunt Letitia... Miss Haydock... yourself...

LAVINIA: And there are others as well. Six to be precise. I have been given permission by the others to tell you the names of the members now. It will help you understand things tonight. Mrs. Cameron is also a member, as is her nurse Miss Sibley.

PRISCILLA: Miss Sibley! I wouldn’t think Miss Sibley would want to be a member of anything.

LAVINIA: To be frank, Mrs. Cameron insisted that Miss Sibley be allowed to join. She couldn’t be separated from her nurse, she said, even for the length of time it took to hold a meeting. Mrs. Cameron may be a bit of a hypochondriac, but she is a good woman at heart.

PRISCILLA: You said six. There’s one more.

LAVINIA: Yes. It may come as a surprise but your friend Stephanie Dearborn is the sixth.

PRISCILLA: Stephanie! But she never said anything about...

LAVINIA: Exactly. Now you see how seriously we take our secrecy. She knew that you were to be asked to join someday so she kept quiet about it. It was not deception on her part. Merely complying to the rules of the Daughters of the Earth.
PRISCILLA: The Daughters of the Earth?
LAVINIA: Oh, I quite forgot. That's our little name. Mere metaphor, although I like the tie-in with the garden club disguise. Daughters of the Earth.
PRISCILLA: So it's Stephie . . . Aunt Letitia . . . Miss Haydock . . . Mrs. Cameron and Miss Sibley . . . and yourself. I'm afraid I can't help but wonder . . .
LAVINIA: Whatever can such different people possibly have in common?
PRISCILLA: Well . . . yes.
LAVINIA: You will find that out tonight. But first there are a few preparations we must make. This, for example . . . (Pulls gown out of bag.) Now you must not laugh, but we do have our little formalities. Here is your gown for the meeting tonight. Oh . . . not that one. This one. (Switches gowns.) That was Melody's: Here, Priscilla. Miss Haydock finished it for you just this morning.
PRISCILLA: For me?
LAVINIA: All the members wear these at the meetings. And these hoodies, also.
PRISCILLA: Like uniforms?
LAVINIA: In a way. Now don't laugh . . . but there is more. We have a little ceremony. Nothing too eccentric, I promise you.
PRISCILLA: It all seems so puzzling.
LAVINIA: I know, my dear. But everything will be clear to you tonight. Here, try on the gown. Melody had to do quite a bit of guess work . . . (RACHEL suddenly appears in the doorway. She has on her hat and coat. LAVINIA sees her and immediately stuffs the gown in the bag.) I thought I told you that you were dismissed for the day!
RACHEL: Just going now, Mrs. Wesson . . .
LAVINIA: In the future you will do as you are told! When I say you are dismissed, you are to leave immediately! Now go!
RACHEL: Yes, mum. I just wanted to ask if Mrs. Whetmore would be coming to your meeting tonight . . .
LAVINIA: That is a private affair! Leave at once! (RACHEL EXITS). Noisy girl! Come along upstairs, Priscilla. We'll try this on you in my room. There's a full-length mirror there. I've some pins if we need to do some quick alterations. (The two EXIT, LAVINIA still talking as they go out into the hall and up the steps.) We'll leave the tea things for now. This is more important. This way, my dear. The first room at the top of the stairs . . . (RACHEL re-enters the room from the hall. She goes to the drapes, pulls them back and unlatches one of the windows leaving it open a crack. She looks up toward the voices. . . RACHEL then arranges the drapes as before, and exits the way she came in.) (BLACKOUT.)
SCENE: Later that night. The drapes are still drawn, two lamps are lit. The six chairs in a semi-circle in the center of the room are now occupied by six figures wearing the gowns and hoods. No one’s face is visible with the hoods on. We hear the voices but can never be sure who is speaking.

VIOLET: Does the girl know what to say, Lavinia? I don’t want this thing to go on forever, you know.

LAVINIA: We rehearsed it this afternoon. She’s quite a dear, really. Took it all very seriously.

VIOLET: Well, I should hope so.

MELODY: How does the gown fit, Vinnie?

LAVINIA: Just a bit long at the sleeves.

MELODY: I knew it would be the sleeves! Just knew it!

LAVINIA: It took nothing to fix them up. It looks lovely on her.

MELODY: You can calculate and guess all you want, but it’s always the sleeves.

VIOLET: Did you bring my salts, Sibley?

SIBLEY: Of course.

VIOLET: It’s so hot in here. I think I’m going to hyperventilate under this hood. I just know it!

SIBLEY: Relax and breathe normally. This won’t take long.

VIOLET: Normally? There isn’t any air in this room!

MELODY: Violet, be quiet and let us get on with things.

LAVINIA: Yes, please. Now if there isn’t any more discussion I think we can ask Priscilla to come in and we can start.

MELODY: Yes. But again I must emphasize one thing: the girl must realize the seriousness of the Daughters of the Earth if she is to ever understand about her poor mother.

SIBLEY: Of course we’ll be serious. Let’s begin.

LAVINIA: You all know your parts for tonight’s ceremony? We’ll start with the hibiscus . . . that’s Melody.

VIOLET: I thought I was hibiscus tonight.

MELODY: You are crocus, not hibiscus.

VIOLET: Crocus? I don’t know the crocus part. Isn’t that truth?

LAVINIA: No, I’m truth. You are crocus . . . fidelity.

VIOLET: Oh, I remember fidelity. So hard to think under this irritating hood!

SIBLEY: It will be over before you know it. Am I still playing begonia?

LAVINIA: Yes. And I am jonquil. Is that clear?

VIOLET: I thought Letitia was jonquil.

MELODY: Not tonight. Letitia is nasturtium.

LAVINIA: And she’ll explain to Priscilla about her mother.
VIOLET: Then who is Stephanie?
STEPHANIE: I am geranium, but...
LAVINIA: But Stephanie isn't feeling well so she's asked that the geranium part be dropped.
STEPHANIE: If it is all right?
MELOY: Of course, dear.
VIOLET: Can we do this proper without a geranium?
LAVINIA: Of course. Didn't we do without a crocus that week you were laid up with your ankle?
VIOLET: I suppose so. Can't we open a window? I'm going to pass out as sure as...
LAVINIA: No! Now shall we begin?
SIBLEY: Yes. Please.
VIOLET: I shall never get through this. I just know it.
SIBLEY: Hush! *(LAVINIA rises from her place, goes to the hall door and opens it.)*
LAVINIA: You can come in, dear. *(PRISCILLA ENTERS; wearing the gown. She carries the hood. LAVINIA brings her to the center of the room, then resumes her seat.)*
MELOY: You now stand before the Daughters of the Earth. Why have you come?
PRISCILLA: I... I...
LAVINIA: It's all right, Priscilla, dear.
PRISCILLA: I... come to become one of you.
MELOY: Before you can enter into such a membership you must embrace the four essential elements of the Daughters of the Earth. Do you know what these elements are?
PRISCILLA: I... Yes.
MELOY: Name them.
PRISCILLA: Well, Knowledge, Truth... Fidelity, and...
LAVINIA: And the most important.
PRISCILLA: Oh! Secrecy.
LAVINIA: Very good.
MELOY: The Daughters of the Earth have planted these elements into the soul of the earth and flowers of allegiance have blossomed forth.
LAVINIA: In order for you to learn of the Daughters of the Earth, these flowers will speak to you now.
MELOY: *(Rises.)* I am the hibiscus that gently draws in the breezes on the hill to learn all things. The knowledge of the world floats upon my delicate petals and I retain all that my fragrances can bear.
LAVINIA: You have heard of Knowledge from the hibiscus. Now listen to the crocus. *(Pause.)* Violet!
VIOLET: What?
LAVINIA: The crocus.
VIOLET: Oh! How can you expect me to remember when it's so stuffy in here.

MELODY: Violet!

VIOLET: I know it. I know it. The crocus. I am the crocus that remains forever faithful to nature. The changing earth cannot alter my steadfast blossom which thrives only for true fidelity in all things.

MELODY: You have heard of Fidelity from the crocus. Now hear the words of the jonquil.

LAVINIA: I am the jonquil that perfumes the air even after the setting of the sun. My fragrances are as pure and as simple as Truth itself and cannot be altered no matter how brutal the strong winds or torturous the hot sun.

MELODY: From the Truth of the jonquil we listen to the words of the begonia. Miss Sibley?

VIOLET: Sibley, it's your turn.

SIBLEY: Hush! I am the begonia that hugs the earth close to my bosom, holding forever secret the mysteries of life. My bloom is but a disguise to ward off those who must never know the secret of my roots.

LAVINIA: Secrecy, as the begonia tells us, is the essential element of the Daughters of the Earth. Are you willing to retain that secret all the days of your life?

PRISCILLA: I am.

MELODY: Are you willing to accept Knowledge, Truth and Fidelity and hold them as dear as your soul?

PRISCILLA: I am.

LAVINIA: Your sacred oath is all that stands before you and membership in the Daughters of the Earth. Do you swear?

PRISCILLA: I swear.

LAVINIA: *(Takes off hood; embraces PRISCILLA.)* Welcome, dear!

PRISCILLA: That is all?

LAVINIA: That is all of the formal part of the ceremony.

PRISCILLA: But . . .

MELODY: She is still quite confused. Aren't you, dear?

PRISCILLA: Yes, but . . .

MELODY: *(Takes off hood, embraces PRISCILLA.)* Welcome also, dear Priscilla. Don't worry. Your Aunt Letitia will now explain everything.

LAVINIA: Oh, how long I have waited for this . . . to have you among us!

MELODY: We all have waited. For several years. This is an important day for us all.

PRISCILLA: Aunt Letitia?

LAVINIA: Come here and sit next to your aunt.

VIOLET: Can we take these off now?
SIBLEY: Yes. Please. *(SIBLEY and VIOLET take off hoods.)*
MELODY: Letitia, this is your moment. Only you can tell Priscilla
the full meaning of her joining us.
LAVINIA: Listen carefully to your aunt, dear.
VIOLET: Letitia, take off that hood or you'll die of it. Stephanie,
you too. *(STEPHANIE takes off hood.)*
PRISCILLA: Stephie! Oh, my dearest! *(They embrace.)*
LAVINIA: Letitia, are you feeling all right?
SIBLEY: Mrs. Whetmore! Mrs. Whetmore! Take off your hood.
PRISCILLA: Aunt Letitia!
VIOLET: *(Takes off hood with MELODY.* Goodness, Letitia, what's
the matter with you?
MELODY: She's fainted!
LAVINIA: Fainted!
VIOLET: Fainted! Gracious! Sibley, my salts! Where are my salts?
LAVINIA: Poor dear. Letitia! Letitia!
PRISCILLA: Auntie?
VIOLET: Where are those smelling salts?
STEPHANIE: *(Hands them to VIOLET.)* Are these them?
SIBLEY: It's of no consequence. She's dead.
LAVINIA: Dead!
PRISCILLA: Aunt Letitia!
VIOLET: Dead! Oh! My salts! I feel faint! Dead?

**BLACKOUT**

**Scene Three**

**SCENE:** About midnight, that same night. The furniture, lights, win-
dows and drapes are exactly the same. The six chairs are still
in a semi-circle but are empty. INSPECTOR GREENE and
HUGH TRAVIS are the only ones in the room. TRAVIS reads
from a notebook while GREENE moves about the room look-
ing at what TRAVIS is reading about.

TRAVIS: "Drapes fully drawn, right middle window unlatched but
closed, various prints on door and window handles . . ."
GREENE: Not much chance of identification there.
TRAVIS: "No prints on exterior door handles . . ." wiped clean,
I say. No doubt the murderer used the handkerchief to wipe
off the prints then . . .
GREENE: What handkerchief? For that matter, what murderer?
TRAVIS: Well, just a hypothesis at this point.
GREENE: No hypothesis yet, Travis. Just the report, if you please.
No prints on the exterior door handles?
TRAVIS: Yes. "Six tea cups, various prints on all. Tea pot, var-
ious prints on handle. Biscuit tin and serving tray, two distinct
sets of prints." Probably the maid and the Wesson woman who . .

End of Script Sample
GREENE: It wasn’t until tonight . . . when you spoke of how you suspected the Stewart-Wayne murder . . . that I realized your real hobby was not just crime detection, but crime. My guess is that you threatened Mrs. Whetmore with your theory about Mrs. Stewart-Wayne and the so-called suicide. You forced her to make you a member. You couldn’t tolerate not being involved in the only murder this town ever saw. Well, Miss Haydock, you are certainly involved in one now.

VIOLET: I can’t believe it!
PRISCILLA: But . . . why?
GREENE: My last question also, Miss Stewart-Wayne. (To MELODY.) Why murder Letitia Whetmore? For what purpose?
MELODY: (Laughs.) A simple one, Inspector. A very simple one. (Seriously.) She laughed at me. She laughed at me when I told her my theory about the Stewart-Wayne murder. But I was right, wasn’t I? She laughed at me when I suggested that I join the club. But I did join, didn’t I? She laughed at all my theories and looked down on me as if I were nothing but dirt in her precious garden! Silly Melody Haydock! The silly old spinster with too much imagination! She was always laughing at me! Always better than me, she thought. Always so superior! Letitia Whetmore! I hated her! The more I smiled and pretended to be her friend, the more I hated her! (Laughs.) One day I told her I could plot a murder and no one would ever suspect. She laughed! So I decided to show her. She never believed in detective fiction. But she believed in this one! (MELODY starts to laugh hysterically, rushes to the French doors, where TRAVIS grabs her. She falls to the floor laughing. MISS SIBLEY rises to go to her, stops, then faints to the floor. VIOLET cries out.)

VIOLET: Sibley? Sibley! Oh, she’s fainted! My salts! Where are my salts!

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY

PROPERTIES

Act 1

Vase (Rachel); Duster (Rachel; Settee; six dining chairs; lamps; tea table; platter with lemon slices; two tea sets, serving six; tin of biscuits; tea tray; large bag with handles (Melody); towel (Rachel); coat and hat (Rachel); notebook (Travis); pipe (Greene)

Act 2

Smelling salts (Sibley); glass of water (Melody)
Murder in Bloom
A Mystery Comedy in Two Acts

By Thomas Hischak

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