The Mysterious Case of the Missing Ring

By Janie Downey Maxwell

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# THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE MISSING RING

By JANIE DOWNEY MAXWELL

CAST OF CHARACTERS

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

TIME: The present.
PLACE: A small queendom.
Scene One: On the set of Mystery-slash-Comedy Theater.
Scene Two: The ballroom of the castle. The morning after the Detective Ball.
Scene Three: Same. Later that day.
Scene Four: The queendom’s news studio. A short while later.
Scene Five: The graveyard. That evening.
Scene Six: The ballroom of the castle. The wee hours of the next morning.

SET DESCRIPTION

There are two minimal sets in this tale. The ballroom of the castle has seating areas all around the edges. DOWN LEFT is a small table holding a typewriter with paper loaded into it and a small black bag; FAR LEFT is a small table with two chairs; UP LEFT is another small table with three chairs; UP RIGHT is a group of four seats, which may be a long sofa or a small sofa and chairs; and FAR RIGHT is a group of three seats. A throne sits UP CENTER. Some of these seats have cardboard or foam gravestones on the back and can simply be turned around backwards for the graveyard set. There is a large painting of the king on the back wall. The painting is on a foam backing, and the king’s face is cut out so it can be removed.

The graveyard is made up of large foam core headstones and perhaps a couple of foam core dead-looking trees.

Scene One and Scene Four are played in front of the CURTAIN.
The Mysterious Case of the Missing Ring - Set Design

The mysterious case of the missing ring - Set Design

For preview only
THE MYSTERIOUS CASE OF THE MISSING RING

Scene One

1 BEFORE LIGHTS UP: ALL ACTORS ENTER LEFT and stand in an uneven line in front of the CURTAIN. ALL hold flashlights under their chins. They turn their FLASHLIGHTS ON when they speak, then turn them back OFF once their lines are delivered.

5 QUEEN: Welcome to… Mystery-slash-Comedy Theater.

   PROFESSOR: Tonight you will witness a great mystery, filled with…

   LEE: Betrayal.

   OLIVER: Terror.

   NANCY: Fear.

10 WILLIAM: Intrigue.

   MAXIMUM: Humor.

   BBQ BOB: Suspense.

   AGENT 98: Thievery.

   WILEY: Silliness.

15 HENRIETTA: Frustration.

   JULIA: Suspects.

   MS. SCARLET: Clues.

   MAGGIE: Weapons.

   JAMIE: Surprise.

20 CHANGE: And romance, blooming like a lotus in springtime…

   ALL: (Turn FLASHLIGHTS ON and leave them on.) What?

   CHANGE: Just kidding.

   GYPSY ROSE: You there in the front row, be afraid. Be very afraid…

   KAT: Welcome to… (Moves away from GYPSY ROSE, looks scared.)

25 Mystery-slash-Comedy Theater…

   ALL: (Evil laugh. FLASHLIGHTS OUT. ALL skulk OFF LEFT.)

End of Scene One

Scene Two

AT RISE: The ballroom, the morning after the Detective Ball. The LIGHTS are LOW. JULIA and MAGGIE stand at attention LEFT. There are party remains strewn around on the floor (streamers, balloons, used paper plates). WILLIAM, who is dressed all in black, ENTERS LEFT and sneaks around, picking things up as he looks around and over his shoulder. (OPTIONAL “SNEAKING AROUND” MUSIC.) He circles around the room, then goes to the table DOWN LEFT and finds
the black bag, which he slips into his jacket pocket. Pats his pocket. Stops at the typewriter and types a quick note, laughs an evil laugh and heads to EXIT LEFT. As he passes JULIA and MAGGIE, he gives them each a high-five, then scurries OFF LEFT.

LIGHTS COME UP FULL as the QUEEN ENTERS LEFT. JULIA and MAGGIE salute the QUEEN with their feather dusters. The QUEEN appears distraught as she hurries about the room, asking JULIA and MAGGIE to pick things up. JULIA and MAGGIE stay right on the QUEEN’S heels picking up stray items and placing them in their large apron pockets as they go.

QUEEN: Pick this up. (Points with big motions.) No, this. No, this. Put that away. (Gesticulates.) Royal parties can be such a mess. (Continues pacing about.)

JULIA: (Follows close on her heels.) Your Highness, we have to talk to you about something.

MAGGIE: (Right behind JULIA, circles about the room, following the QUEEN.) Yes, about something that’s very important, Your Highness.

JULIA: We’re very sorry.

MAGGIE: We’ve been cleaning up all morning, and we just can’t find it anywhere.

QUEEN: You can’t find what anywhere?

JULIA: It’s the Royal Ring, Your Highness. It’s… (Looks out at the AUDIENCE and hisses the word missing.) …missssssing.

QUEEN: (Stops in her tracks. Also looks at AUDIENCE and hisses.) The Royal Ring is missssssing?

MAGGIE: Yes, Your Highness. (Looks at AUDIENCE as she hisses the word missing.) It’s missssssing. We’ve looked everywhere. Honest we have.

JULIA: Well, we haven’t actually looked everywhere, but we’ve looked around a good bit, and it appears to be gone. (She and MAGGIE smile at each other behind the QUEEN’S back. There is silence.)

QUEEN: (Builds to a loud scream.) Nooooooo! (Gesticulates.) Not the Royal Ring… not the Royal Ring. (Dabs at her eyes, looks demure, then speaks sternly as she stamps her foot.) Keep looking. (Resumes pacing.)

MAGGIE: (Follows the QUEEN.) Your Highness, we’ve looked everywhere.

JULIA: (Follows MAGGIE.) There’s no way we can find this on our own.
QUEEN: (Stops abruptly, her back still to the MAIDS. Unseen by the QUEEN, MAGGIE almost careens into her. JULIA almost smashes into MAGGIE. Dramatic.) Are you saying that we must bring in... the Royal Detectives? (JULIA and MAGGIE look at the AUDIENCE and sing “Da-Dah.”)

MAGGIE: Oh, yes, Your Highness.

JULIA: You know they’re so good at finding things. (She and MAGGIE smile at each other again behind the QUEEN’S back.)

QUEEN: Very well, then. Send a message out to everyone who was here last night at the Detective Ball. (Dictates.) “Come at once if convenient. If inconvenient, come all the same.” (Sobs.) And make sure they are quick about it. I must get the Royal Ring back. (BLACKOUT.)

End of Scene Two

Scene Three

LIGHTS UP: The ballroom, later that day. The QUEEN sits in her throne UP CENTER, head in hands, waiting anxiously. JULIA and MAGGIE stand DOWN CENTER looking out towards AUDIENCE through a pretend window. WILLIAM stands off to the side and watches. He pats his pocket, laughs evilly and winks at JULIA and MAGGIE.

MAGGIE: Your Highness, the detectives are starting to arrive. (WILLIAM goes behind the large painting of the king on the back wall. He removes the face-shaped piece and peeks out through the hole, his head appearing over the king’s body. From this vantage point, he watches the action.)

JULIA: (Introduces the DETECTIVES to the AUDIENCE as each ENTERS.) Here come Maximum Smarts and Agent 98. He’s got the name, but she’s the one who’s really got the smarts. Maximum has a lot of equipment that he never seems to know quite what to do with. Oh, and he slips and falls a lot. Watch out there in the front row.

AGENT 98: (ENTERS LEFT with MAXIMUM SMARTS. To the QUEEN.) Your Highness, we came because we heard the call. We came to fight the forces of evil and serve on the side of niceness.

MAXIMUM: Plus we needed the work.

QUEEN: Welcome.

AGENT 98: (Aside to MAXIMUM.) Maximum, you realize that we’ll be facing every kind of danger imaginable on this case?

MAXIMUM: And loving it. (They sit at table UP LEFT.)

MAGGIE: (To AUDIENCE.) Here come the big-dogs in town—Detective Wiley Jones and his hunky sidekick, Oliver. At least
we'll get to spend some time with Oliver. (Calls OFF LEFT.) Hello, Detective Jones!

WILEY: (ENTERS LEFT, disguised with a large mustache and beard. Ignores MAGGIE and goes right to the QUEEN. Kneels and speaks with a courtly British accent.) Good afternoon, Your Highness. Detective Wiley Jones at your service.

QUEEN: Detective Jones. Why, I didn’t recognize you.

WILEY: (Looks around.) I’m in disguise. Not a word to anyone about my true identity, please. (Stands.) We are here to solve the crime, and nothing will stand in our way. Right, Oliver? Oliver? Oliver! (Shouts OFF LEFT.) Oliver, come inside!

OLIVER: (Runs ON LEFT, trips over a large suitcase he’s carrying and lands just in front of the QUEEN.) Boss, Boss! I gotta talk to you. I gotta talk to you right away.

WILEY: Not now, Oliver. We’re on a case.

OLIVER: (Looks down at the suitcase under him.) Oh, I’m on the case all right. You can count on me, Boss.

WILEY: (Pulls OLIVER up.) Not that case, Oliver. We’re here to help the queen find the Royal Ring.

OLIVER: But, Boss. I have to tell you. I have to tell you…

WILEY: What, what is it Oliver? Have you found a clue to this crime already? Can you help the queen solve this insidious riddle? Have you found the Royal Ring?

OLIVER: No, Boss. I gotta tell you… I got new socks today. (Pulls up his pants so we can all see his fancy new socks.)

WILEY: Oliver. Concentrate. We are here to help the queen. (Points to the QUEEN.) Now please be quiet and start looking around for clues. (He and OLIVER pull out large magnifying glasses and start looking at items and people on the stage. OLIVER hums “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as he looks around. MS. SCARLET slinks ON LEFT, looking around her and checking a small pad in her hand. She is dressed all in red, with lots of jewelry and high-heeled shoes, and carries a small pencil and a large, stuffed handbag.)

MAGGIE: (To AUDIENCE.) Oh, it’s Ms. Scarlet. She can be such a nuisance. Never takes more than six steps at a time. Never moves diagonally. So many rules. And always announcing her suspicions. (To MS. SCARLET.) You’re Ms. Scarlet, aren’t you?

MS. SCARLET: They used to call me Snow White… but then I drifted. Yes, I’m Ms. Scarlet, here to look for suspects, rooms and weapons. I’ll be marking them off here on my pad with my small yellow pencil. Who, where and how. (Rummages through her
handbag and takes out a small compact with a mirror. Holds up mirror to check her hair and makeup. Sees Wiley in her mirror and turns to face him.) Oh, I see that Detective Wiley Jones is here. Hello, Detective Jones.

WILEY: Drat. She saw through my disguise. I'll have to get another one... (Moves to sofa or chair RIGHT and sits, OLIVER beside him. During the following dialogue he removes his fake mustache and beard and, with OLIVER'S help, puts them in the suitcase.)

MS. SCARLET: (Bows to the QUEEN.) Your Highness, I suggest we start by looking for an envelope. It's usually left in the stairway, marked with an “X.” I'll go look. (Searches around behind the chairs.)

JULIA: (BBQ BOB ENTERS LEFT, pretending to "walk" a dog on the end of a stiff wire. He is dressed sloppily, his shirt untucked and misbuttoned. To AUDIENCE.) Here comes Sheriff Barbeque Bob. (To those in the front of the AUDIENCE.) Watch out for his dog. Sometimes he bites. Oh, and don’t let the sheriff get too close to your popcorn.

BBQ BOB: Mind if I come in? (Looks around.) Well, howdy, Queen. (Moves to shake the QUEEN'S hand, but she folds her arms and looks away. Takes no notice of the QUEEN'S snub.) I understand we were invited up here for tea today. Mighty nice of you after you just had that big-ol’ party last night. Hope you don’t mind I brought mah dog here. (Reaches down to pet his imaginary dog, then sniffs the air like a dog.) Ummm. What smells so goooood? You didn’t go and make a cake for us, did ya?

QUEEN: (Exasperated.) We are not serving food today, Sheriff. I have an emergency on my hands, and I need your full focus to be on me.

BBQ BOB: Well, shucks, Queen. My full focus requires some fuel. But let’s see what I have here to snack on... (Reaches deep down in his pocket and pulls out something that looks like part of a donut.) Part of a donut. Well, that'll have ta do! I'll just pick this bit of lint off. Whoa there, boy. There's plenty fer both of us. (Tosses an imaginary crumb to his imaginary dog and tosses the partial donut into his mouth.) Good dog. (To the AUDIENCE.) They call me a slob, but I do my job. (Burps.) Ummm. Tuna. (Hums "This Old Man Came Rolling Home" to himself as he looks around the stage for clues. MAGGIE and JULIA fan themselves as if BBQ BOB smells funny as he passes by them. JULIA pretends to “open” the imaginary window at the front of the stage. MS. SCARLET almost bumps into BBQ BOB as he heads toward table UP LEFT and seats himself with MAXIMUM and AGENT 98, who silently react
to their malodorous tablemate. MS. SCARLET recoils with disgust and takes a seat as far away from BBQ BOB as possible, at FAR RIGHT. INSPECTOR CHANGE ENTERS LEFT, wearing a long Chinese robe, and bows slowly and deliberately to the QUEEN.)

MAGGIE: (To AUDIENCE.) Inspector Change is a wise man and a healer. He knows all secrets.

CHANGE: Your Majesty. I am your humble servant.

QUEEN: Inspector Change, I’m so glad you are here to help.

CHANGE: Have no fear, Queen. I can hear clues on the wind.

QUEEN: (Leans toward him with her hand cupped to her ear.) And what is the wind saying?

CHANGE: (Also cups his hand around his ear and scrunches up his face.) It says, “When wind blow too hard—must close window.” (Pantomimes closing the window JULIA just opened. The QUEEN looks disappointed. Indicates the DETECTIVES already in the room, to the AUDIENCE.) Ship with too many pilots sometime have difficulty reaching port. (Settles himself at table FAR LEFT.)

JULIA: (To AUDIENCE.) Drat, the professor is here. No doubt she can solve this crime, but will we be able to understand the solution she comes up with?

PROFESSOR: (ENTERS LEFT with a bold stride. Does not bow to the QUEEN.) Good afternoon, Your Highness. I understand you need my help. Again. (Big sigh.) Give me problems! I crave problems! I play the game for the game’s own sake.

QUEEN: (Grabs the PROFESSOR’S hands.) The Royal Ring is missing, and we have no clues.

PROFESSOR: (Pulls her hands away.) No clues, you say? Why, detection is, or ought to be, an exact science. But, I weary you with my hobby. I’ll find your clues, and I’ll find the Royal Ring. When these detectives are out of their depth—which is, by the way, most of the time—the matter is laid before me.

CHANGE: (To PROFESSOR.) Little knowledge sometimes very dangerous thing. (PROFESSOR glares at CHANGE, then settles herself in sofa or chair FAR RIGHT. NANCY and JAMIE ENTER LEFT. They are dressed in conservative, neat clothing and radiate sincerity.)

MAGGIE: (To AUDIENCE.) And now the girl detectives arrive. These two never fail. (Snaps her fingers as if to say “drat.”) I forgot we had so many detectives in the queendom!

NANCY: (Curtsies to the QUEEN.) Hello, Your Highness. We’re here to help you crack the case of the missing Royal Ring.

End of Script Preview
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

BROUGHT ON, Scene One:
One flashlight per character (18 total)

ONSTAGE, Scene Two: Three small tables (one which holds a typewriter with a piece of paper loaded in it and a small black bag); five chairs; seven seats (sofa and/or chairs); throne; large painting of king on wall, with face cut out for easy removal; party remains (streamers, balloons, used paper plates) strewn on floor.

BROUGHT ON, Scene Two:
Feather dusters (JULIA, MAGGIE)

BROUGHT ON, Scene Three:
Feather dusters, handkerchiefs (JULIA, MAGGIE)
Fake mustache and beard, magnifying glass (WILEY)
Suitcase, magnifying glass (OLIVER)
Small pad and small yellow pencil, large handbag, small compact with mirror, lead pipe, length of rope, large wrench (MS. SCARLET)
Stiff wire leash with dog collar at end, part of donut (BBQ BOB)
Small brown paper bag, hand sanitizer, large red bandana (KAT)
Backpacks, notebooks and pens (HENRIETTA, LEE)
Large tote bag, crystal ball, safety goggles, crow puppet (GYPSY ROSE)
Coins (MAGGIE)
Plastic tomato (JULIA)

BROUGHT ON, Scene Four:
Chairs, large handheld microphone (WILLIAM, HENRIETTA, LEE)
Cardboard “TV screen” (MAXIMUM, AGENT 98)

ONSTAGE, Scene Five: Foam core gravestones (some are on the backs of chairs), small standing sign (“King’s End. Population: 0”), eight large footprints (cut from black paper, about the size of OLIVER’S feet) taped to the floor in a wide circle around CENTER STAGE, small paper bag, small cardboard shoebox-sized box with lid.

BROUGHT ON, Scene Five:
Flashlights (JULIA, MAGGIE)
Small tape recorder (WILLIAM)
Crow puppet (GYPSY RSE)
Backpacks, notebooks and pens (HENRIETTA, LEE)
Magnifying glass (WILEY)
Bag with hole in bottom (OLIVER)
Wire leash, telescope, handkerchief (BBQ BOB)
Large umbrella (AGENT 98)
Small water gun, metal pen (MAXIMUM)
Large metal horseshoe (KAT)

BROUGHT ON, Scene Six:
Set of cards in small envelope (MS. SCARLET)
Tray with tea cups, cell phone (WILLIAM)

COSTUMES
QUEEN wears a crown.
JULIA and MAGGIE wear aprons with large pockets.
WILLIAM wears all black until Scene Six, where he should be dressed in his butler attire—possibly just change to a white shirt.
OLIVER wears fancy socks. In Scene Five he wears large boots.
WILEY wears shoes with laces.
SCARLET is dressed all in red, with lots of jewelry and high-heeled shoes.
MAGGIE and SCARLET wear easily removable shoes.
BBQ BOB is dressed sloppily, shirt untucked and misbuttoned.
CHANGE wears a long Chinese robe.
NANCY and JAMIE wear conservative, neat clothing.
KAT also wears conservative clothing.
GYPSY ROSE wears a flowing skirt and scarves.
MAXIMUM SMARTS and AGENT 98 wear attire fitting two seasoned detectives.
PROFESSOR wears a watch.
HENRIETTA and LEE wear matching school uniforms.

SOUND EFFECTS
Sneaking around music (optional), news music, cell phone ring, thunder, mysterious music, crazy cell phone ring.

SPECIAL EFFECTS
Flashing lights for lightning.
The TV screen in Scene Four is a large cardboard frame that can be held in front of the actor speaking to make it look like he/she is on television. It might be necessary to have light wood slats on the back of the frame to help stabilize it.
We hope you’ve enjoyed this script sample.

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