

THE MYSTERY OF MONTLEY'S MANOR

by Kimberlee Mendoza



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The Mystery of Montley's Manor

A two-act murder mystery dinner theatre
by Kimberlee R. Mendoza

DEDICATION

For my loving husband, Richard, who introduced me to playwriting; and to my drama team, EMT, for their love and support of this project.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

OLD TOM	An eccentric man in his early 70s
BEVERLY	A businesswoman in her late 20s
CHESTER MONTLEY	The deceased; a powerful, thin man who died in his 80s
THOMAS	The butler; Old Tom when he wasn't so old; in his late 30s
GERTRUDE	The maid; a slightly large German woman in her late 40s
COOK	The cook; a gruff woman in her late 50s
CHARLOTTE GREEN	Montley's nurse; an air-headed woman in her early 20s
GUY NESTOR	A broken-down motorist; a nervous man in his early 30s
FAY BURGESS	Montley's sister; obnoxious, boisterous woman in her 60s
MORA MONTLEY	Montley's ex-wife; sultry, snobbish woman in her 50s
ROBERT MONTLEY	Montley's son; appears to be clean cut man in his early 30s
WILLIAM TROUT	Montley's lawyer; a no-nonsense guy in his late 70s
MR. GREG	Detective; a private eye in his early 40s
RAYMOND JONES	Montley's long time friend; an overweight man in his 60s
SHERIFF	Town sheriff; an overweight man in his late 40s

(For a full description, see Character Profiles.)

CHARACTER PROFILES

MONTLEY: A powerful, well-respected, wealthy man who is believed to have died while getting something out of the cellar. His will and testament prove to be quite shocking. He was a Christian man with a great sense of humor. He would be devastated to see how his family and friends willingly tarnished his memory, allowing greed to take over their good judgment.

THOMAS: Montley found him on the street. Montley took him in, cleaned him up, and made him the head butler. He finds pride in his job, but his past has caused him to be a bit cynical and eccentric.

GERTRUDE: Originally born in Germany, Mr. Montley took her under his wing and helped her establish citizenship. She is a bit klutzy — not really the best maid — but she makes the world's greatest iced tea.

COOK: A bit harsh. She loves a great debate. She originally cooked for the Woman's Army Corp. and for soldiers shipping out to war. She believes in two things: order and tradition.

CHARLOTTE: The nurse Montley hired to help him through the last year of his life. Montley saw her as the daughter he never had. Her blond hair, good figure, and high-pitched voice give her the appearance of being a typical dizzy blond, but secretly she is a cunning businesswoman. She sees the Manor as a business venture and not as a gift from a dead friend.

FAY: Born of privilege, she is quick to speak her mind. She adored her brother, Montley, and is devastated by his passing. She is suspicious of Charlotte and jealous that she is the new owner of her family mansion.

MORA: Montley's ex-wife is a gold digger from the get go. She married Montley for his money, hoping that she would get written into his will. She has a snobbish attitude and cunning personality with little to show for it.

ROBERT: Montley and Mora's son. A businessman who appears to be a clean-cut, upstanding citizen on the outside, but is really nothing but a greedy, snobby rich kid on the inside. He knew his father was dying and began to spend lots of time with his father to see how his will

would read. When he discovered Charlotte would inherit the manor, he wooed her.

WILLIAM: Montley's lawyer. An intelligent man who won the loyalty and friendship of Chester Montley. His company has handled the affairs of the Montley estate since the 1800s. This role may be played by a female as "Wilma Trout."

JONES: Montley's best friend. He is head of the Lions Club where Montley was a member, and he is the owner of a billion dollar industry. He is an overweight man with a quick temper. He was truly sad at the passing of his one true friend.

MR. GREG: The private detective hired to investigate the mysterious happenings at the Montley Manor. His main job is to disprove the theory of ghosts, establish who has the greatest motive to haunt the mansion, and arrest the culprit. He is a veteran in his field and does his job well. This role may be played by a female as "Ms. Greg."

GUY NESTOR: A local historian who supposedly broke down outside the manor the night of the will reading. He sees the value of preserving the manor the way Montley left it. He appears to be a nervous, wimpy man, but then he is not all that he seems.

SHERIFF: The town law enforcement. He is a longtime friend to the Montley family and was quick to respond the night of the fire. He was also the first to arrive the night Montley had his accident.

SUPPORT PERSONNEL

The following persons, though not part of the drama, are vital to the overall success of the evening.

KITCHEN HELPERS: Organizers and cooks to plan the menu and prepare the meal.

WAITERS: Serve the meal in courses and attend to the guests' needs. For added fun, they may dress alike — e.g., white shirts, black pants, black bow ties. You may ask the actors to serve as waiters if it is difficult to find enough helpers.

HOST/HOSTESS: Greets the guests and gives the welcome. May also assist the kitchen staff.

PASTOR: Prays before the meal and concludes the evening.

PRODUCTION NOTES

SETTING: Set in New England in 1972 in an old English-style mansion that dates back to the early 1800s. The play takes place in the living room of the late Chester Montley. There needs to be a front door, a door to the library, a window, and a door to the kitchen. Two couches, an end table, and a lamp with a phone are the only set pieces needed for the script. The rest of the decor may be added to meet the needs and creative ideas of the director.

An additional set is needed for the park scene. A bench and a park backdrop would suffice.

PROP LIST:

ACT ONE: Sack lunch with sandwich, a bag of birdseed, an umbrella, coats for Fay, Guy, and Robert, cups of tea on a tray, hors d'oeuvres, a suitcase, a briefcase, a will (paper), a note pad, a pen, a coffee cup (on fishing wire), a book (on fishing wire), a bag of ice, a feather duster, a suit on a hanger, a gold box, an invitation.

ACT TWO: A hat, golf clubs in a bag, a Bible, a folded piece of paper (with verses), a wheelchair.

SOUND EFFECTS: Creaky door, thunder, rain, crash, doorbell, mood music (optional).

SPECIAL STAGE DIRECTIONS:

Act One, Scene One: Light flashes from backstage. A recording of thunder and a creaky door will be needed.

Act One, Scene Three: Attach fishing wire to a coffee cup and run behind stage. Also attach some fishing wire to a book, so that it appears to be suspended in air.

Act One, Scene Four: A cloud of dust can be made backstage with flour, and sawdust may be used to cover Robert's clothes.

COSTUMES

Era: Present time

OLD TOM: He should appear to be tattered, dressed in baggy pants, a stained white shirt, a cardigan sweater, and an old wool hat.

BEVERLY: She should look dressed for work in a dark, sophisticated suit.

Era: Early 1970s

CHESTER MONTLEY: He should look well groomed, but dressed for bed in a pair of silk pajamas, a dark robe, a neck scarf, and slippers.

THOMAS: He should be sporting a long-tailed tuxedo or a nice dark three-piece suit.

GERTRUDE: She should be dressed in a traditional black and white maid outfit, complete with apron and hat. She also needs nightclothes.

COOK: She could either be dressed in chef whites or wear a white dress, an apron, and a white chef hat.

CHARLOTTE GREEN: Act One, Scene One, she could be wearing a nurse uniform, but for the rest of the play she should be dressed in form-fitting dresses and high heels. She should have a different one for every time she enters the set. (Her jewelry should get more extravagant as the play progresses.)

GUY NESTOR: He should be dressed in a ruffled suit with a gaudy tie that is loosened at the neck.

FAY BURGESS: She should wear expensive-looking dresses, big jewelry, scarves or furs, and large hats. (She should be in different clothes every time she enters the set.) She should also wear brightly colored lipstick.

MORA MONTLEY: She should be dressed in bright suits, high heels, big hats, and lots of jewelry. She needs a coat.

ROBERT MONTLEY: He should wear expensive-looking business suits. He needs a coat.

WILLIAM TROUT: He should wear a dark suit and thick-rimmed glasses.

MR. GREG: He should be in a brown suit and a matching brown hat.

RAYMOND JONES: He should be dressed in a white shirt, a long black coat, dark pants, and a black hat. He should carry an umbrella.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

The meal may be interspersed with the drama in several different ways. Here is one suggestion:

Guests arrive

Appetizers and beverages

Salad

Act One, Scene One

Entre

Scene Two

Scene Three

Scene Four

Scene Five

Coffee and dessert

Act Two

Guests depart

Or you may wish to forego appetizers and serve the salad and entre before the play begins. Coffee and dessert should always be served in the intermission between Act One and Act Two.

ACT ONE
SCENE ONE

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(The appetizers [if any] have been served, and the waiters distribute the salads. Begin this scene shortly after all the guests have received their salads. Scene opens with OLD TOM sitting on a park bench, holding a bag of birdseed. BEVERLY enters with a sack lunch and casually sits at the end of the bench. She opens her bag and pulls out a sandwich.)

11

TOM: *(Lost in his thoughts, is startled when he finally notices her.)* Oh, hello there. I didn't see you. It's always nice to have company. The name's Tom.

12

13

14

BEVERLY: Beverly.

15

TOM: Nice to meet you, Beverly. I was just feeding the birds.

16

(Looks around.) Though there doesn't seem to be many around today. Seems there are less and less birds all the time. I suppose they have moved on. South, probably. Though it doesn't get all that cold here. I suppose I should join them. Move on, mean. Not necessarily south — north. I suppose that would be the best way to describe heaven. I've been on this good earth quite long enough. I have seen more than my share, and I am not in any hurry to see more. Some might judge me by my appearance. I suppose I would too ... many years ago. Many years ago I worked for the elite. Believe me when I say the closest I got to a park bench was walking a billionaire's dog. I was surrounded by money and luxury, and all my needs were met. Master Montley was his name. He found me on the street after I lost my wife in a car accident. I was a mess, but Montley was that kind of man. He took me in and I became the head butler. *(Lights come on Center Stage. The characters are frozen into the same positions as they will be at the opening of Act Two. FAY is leaning with her back over the couch as*

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1 *CHARLOTTE leans into her, attempting to strangle her, while*
 2 *ROBERT restrains CHARLOTTE, by holding both of her*
 3 *arms. JONES is on the couch and is trying to avoid having*
 4 *FAY sit on his lap. THOMAS and MORA look on, amused.*
 5 *WILLIAM is stepping forward in order to help. MR. GREG*
 6 *is nowhere to be found.) That's me there. The skinny man*
 7 **in the penguin suit. They called me Thomas back then.**
 8 **Everyone was pretty upset, and ... wait ... for this story**
 9 **to make much sense, I really have to go back much**
 10 **further.** (*Lights off Center Stage, characters exit. THOMAS*
 11 *enters in dark and lies on the floor by the couch. GUY opens*
 12 *the front door. Lightning flashes behind him with thunder*
 13 *sounding as he opens the door. He fiddles with the light by*
 14 *the door, but it doesn't work. He lights a match and stumbles*
 15 *into the living room.)*

16 **GUY: Hello? Hello? Is anyone at home?** (*He finds a lamp on a*
 17 *table and flips it on.) Hello? It's Mr. Nestor — the town*
 18 **historian. I, uh, work at the museum. I broke down**
 19 **outside your house and I just wanted to use your phone.**
 20 (*He trips over THOMAS' body that is lying on the floor. He*
 21 *screams and then begins to tremble.) Um ... oh my ... uh*
 22 **never mind ... I'll just let myself out.** (*Starts backing up*
 23 *towards the door, tripping as he does.)*

24 **THOMAS:** (*Turns over and sits up.) What's all the racket? Can't*
 25 **a man get any sleep around here?**

26 **GUY:** (*Screams again.) Aahh ... you're alive?*

27 **THOMAS:** Well, for now, anyway. (*He works himself up and*
 28 *onto the couch.) Did it occur to you that you are*
 29 **trespassing in my living room?**

30 **GUY:** (*Flustered*) Uh, yes ... I, uh ... broke down. Needed to
 31 **use a phone. I knocked many times and ...**

32 **THOMAS:** You need to relax.

33 **GUY:** Excuse me?

34 **THOMAS:** You're much too tense. Here, sit on the sofa. The
 35 **phone's right there. Tea?**

1 GUY: Hmm?

2 THOMAS: Tea? Would you like some tea? Gertrude, the
3 maid, could bring you some tea.

4 GUY: Tea, uh, no thank you. I just need to use your phone.

5 THOMAS: Then please use it. *(Then very loud, making GUY*
6 *jump.)* Gertrude! Gertrude, where are you?

7 GUY: Hmm. *(He picks up phone, fiddles with the receiver.)* The
8 phone is dead.

9 THOMAS: As many things are.

10 GUY: I'm sorry.

11 THOMAS: It's been that kind of week.

12 GERTRUDE: *(Walks in, pulling at her dress.)* Yes, Thomas.

13 THOMAS: Could you please prepare some tea? The guests
14 will be arriving at any time. *(GERTRUDE exits and*
15 *THOMAS talks quietly.)* She's not that great of a maid, but
16 her tea is the best around.

17 GUY: Oh, I'm sorry. I was not aware you were having
18 company.

19 THOMAS: Weren't you? I was sure you were here because
20 you *did* know.

21 GUY: No, I told you I am here because my car broke down.

22 THOMAS: Then you aren't here about the deceased?

23 GUY: Um, no ... look, I just need to catch a ride into town.
24 Do you know where I might be able to find a phone?

25 THOMAS: In town, I suppose. *(Beat)* We are the only house
26 between here and there. And I don't mind saying I like
27 it that way. Now, look, since you're here, why don't you
28 join us for some hors d'oeuvres? We have a whole
29 houseful of guests coming to hear the reading of the
30 will.

31 GUY: No really, I must find a way back to town. I ...

32 THOMAS: Now Mr. Nestor, don't you worry about a thing. I
33 will make sure one of the guests gives you a ride home.
34 I'll just let the cook know you'll be staying.

35 GUY: No, really ... *(Stops.)* Hey, how'd you know my name?

- 1 THOMAS: You said it at the door, don't you remember?
2 GUY: I thought you were asleep.
3 THOMAS: Things are never as they appear, are they?
4 GUY: What will?
5 THOMAS: What will what? What will I do? What will you
6 do? What will what?
7 GUY: No, what will were you speaking about?
8 THOMAS: I wasn't speaking of any Will, but since you
9 mentioned him, yes, William will be here.
10 GUY: William? No, what "will"? What will?
11 THOMAS: There you go again. You really are a strange little
12 man. But I think I'm beginning to like you. So tell me,
13 Mr. Nestor, what is your first name?
14 GUY: Guy.
15 THOMAS: (*Laughs.*) I know you're a guy, that is quite
16 obvious. But what is your name?
17 GUY: Look, I only wanted to use your phone. I didn't mean
18 to crash your party, and I don't really want to stay. I
19 just wanted to know what kind of will your friends were
20 coming to hear, and I don't expect ...
21 THOMAS: Oh, the "will." I get it. You wanted to know about
22 the reading of the will. Well, it's for Montley, of course.
23 GUY: Montley?
24 THOMAS: You are in the Montley Manor, are you not?
25 GUY: Uh, yes, I assumed, but I thought you were he.
26 THOMAS: Montley? (*Laughs.*) Hardly. I am merely the butler.
27 I could never be Montley. He was a powerful man,
28 though he had a lot of secrets. Especially the way he
29 died.
30 GUY: The way he died? Was he murdered?
31 THOMAS: Goodness, no. Boy, you really do have an active
32 imagination. Someone needs to cut back your *Hardy*
33 *Boys* air time. No, Mr. Montley was eighty-three years
34 old. He was old. One scare and he was out.
35 GUY: Out?

- 1 **THOMAS:** (*Perturbed*) Yes. You know, kaput, passed on,
2 moved on to the land of glory. You really are a dense
3 person, you know that? And much too tense. Here — let
4 me have your coat, and you can take a seat in the
5 parlor. I'm sure that after an ice-cold glass of Gertrude's
6 tea, you will begin to feel much better.
- 7 **GUY:** And you said he was scared?
- 8 **THOMAS:** Quite. This is an old house. Who knows what's
9 lurking about?
- 10 **GUY:** Well, that all sounds really great, but I think I will just
11 let myself out. (*He walks to the door and opens it and bumps*
12 *into FAY.*) Oh, excuse me. I am so sorry ...
- 13 **FAY:** You should be. Now, here. (*She hands him her coat and*
14 *umbrella.*) Air this out; it's pouring out there.
- 15 **GUY:** Excuse me?
- 16 **FAY:** (*Walking past him*) You're excused.
- 17 **GUY:** (*Looks dumfounded at the things in his arms and then*
18 *follows her.*) There's been some mistake, you see ...
- 19 **FAY:** The mistake was my brother's poor judgment when
20 hiring the help.
- 21 **GUY:** I am not "the help."
- 22 **FAY:** No, you are not. You are a nuisance. (*GUY drops her*
23 *things. FAY gasps. THOMAS snickers, but rushes to her*
24 *rescue and picks up her stuff.*)
- 25 **THOMAS:** Sorry, Ms. Burgess. Guy here is a guest, not a
26 servant. Aren't you, Guy? A guest?
- 27 **GUY:** No, just a broken down ...
- 28 **FAY:** That I would believe. (*Knock at the door.*)
- 29 **THOMAS:** If you'll excuse me, I need to answer the door. It
30 is my job, after all.
- 31 **GUY:** (*Sarcastically*) Is it really?
- 32 **THOMAS:** (*Opening door*) Why, hello Robert, how are you this
33 evening?
- 34 **ROBERT:** As well as can be expected under such
35 circumstances.

- 1 **THOMAS:** I understand. May I take your coat?
- 2 **ROBERT:** Yes, thank you. (*Hands him coat.*) Hello Aunt Fay,
3 how are you?
- 4 **FAY:** As well as you can imagine, considering the fact that
5 my only brother has passed this great earth of ours.
6 When I heard, I was ... well, I was completely ... (*Breaks*
7 *down and sobs on ROBERT's shoulder.*)
- 8 **GUY:** You're Montley's sister? (*FAY stops crying and eyes him.*)
9 I thought Montley was eighty-something years old. You
10 can't be more than ...
- 11 **FAY:** Well, aren't you sweet? (*Knock at door. GUY moves to*
12 *answer it, just as CHARLOTTE enters from stairwell*
13 *sniffling and holding a suitcase. FAY glares at her.*) And just
14 where do you think you are going?
- 15 **CHARLOTTE:** Well, it is obvious that my services are no
16 longer needed here, so I was just going to go.
- 17 **FAY:** If you're such a great nurse, why is my brother dead?
18 I say we call my brother's lawyers and sue you for
19 malpractice.
- 20 **ROBERT:** Now Aunt Fay ...
- 21 **FAY:** I only speak the truth, Robert. I think our little nurse
22 doesn't have enough brain cells to have really done an
23 effective job.
- 24 **ROBERT:** Aunt Fay!
- 25 **FAY:** Now Robert, you know I never say anything that I
26 don't mean.
- 27 **CHARLOTTE:** (*Whimpering*) You mean that you only say
28 things that *are* mean.
- 29 **FAY:** Oh, toughen up. Your tears mock my pain. (*Knock at the*
30 *door. THOMAS opens the door. JONES and MORA enter.*)
- 31 **FAY:** Oh, great. Tweedle Dee and Tweedle *Dumb* have
32 arrived.
- 33 **MORA:** Why Fay, is that a new wig?
- 34 **FAY:** Detective, we have our murderer! Stop the investigation!
- 35 **JONES:** Murder? Investigation? I thought Montley had a

1 heart attack and we were just here for the reading of
2 Montley's will.

3 THOMAS: You are. (*Knock at the door.*) Must be Mr. Trout,
4 Montley's lawyer. Everyone else is here. (*Opens the door.*)
5 Hello, Mr. Trout. Please come in. (*ROBERT kisses his*
6 *mother MORA's cheek.*)

7 WILLIAM: Well, it appears everybody is here, so let's get
8 started ...

9 JONES: I would just like to say that I didn't do it.

10 FAY: Thousands of convicted murderers on death row would
11 say the same thing.

12 JONES: I was his best friend. Surely you don't believe ...

13 FAY: Oh, loosen your belt and have a jelly donut, Jonesy.
14 Montley *wasn't* murdered.

15 JONES: Oh, whew, that's a relief.

16 WILLIAM: Why Fay, you haven't changed a bit.

17 FAY: William, it's good to see you. (*WILLIAM kisses her cheek.*)

18 WILLIAM: Sorry it's under such unfortunate circumstances.
19 The firm was sad to lose such a long-time friend.

20 MORA: Don't you mean his money?

21 WILLIAM: Why Mora, I see you haven't changed a bit either.

22 MORA: Do I know you?

23 WILLIAM: I was your ex-husband's lawyer. Don't you
24 remember me from your divorce proceedings? (*She*
25 *shakes her head.*) Besides, there's a picture of you in his
26 file.

27 MORA: Really? Taken from which side? (*To everyone*) I never
28 take good pictures from my right side.

29 FAY: Who cares? Mug shots are taken from all sides.

30 MORA: You really are loud and obnoxious.

31 FAY: It's better than empty-headed.

32 WILLIAM: OK, enough cattery. If you two ladies will put
33 your claws away, we can get on with this and get home
34 sometime tonight. (*They turn away from each other.*) Very
35 well. (*He pulls the will from his briefcase and clears his*

1 throat.) “I, Chester Robert Montley, being of sound
2 mind, do leave this letter as my final will and testament.
3 Dear family and friends, it appears that I have passed
4 on and joined my Savior, so please don’t be sad. I am
5 not. Now that I am gone, I am sure that you’re all
6 salivating over who gets what. Also, I am pretty sure
7 that you have all been bickering for the past half hour,
8 so I guess I should tell you who gets what so you can
9 leave each other’s company.”

10 **MORA:** Even in death, he thinks he has to be funny.

11 **ROBERT:** Mother!

12 **MORA:** Sorry, Robert. Please continue, Mr. Trout.

13 **WILLIAM:** Thank you. *(Then reads)* “To my good friend
14 Jones, you have always been my advice king, and I
15 know I will miss our long talks. Since I will have no use
16 for it any longer, I bequeath my Supreme Pubah Lions
17 Club hat to you. May you wear it with pride. Next, I
18 give you my golf clubs. Maybe they will help your game.
19 And lastly, my friend, I give you my Bible. It is my hope
20 that you will find the answer to the rest of life’s
21 questions and come join me someday. To my sis ... ”

22 **JONES:** A hat, golf clubs, and a *Bible*? Hmmm ... It’s not that
23 I need anything more. I just assumed ...

24 **FAY:** If you were my friend, you’d be lucky to get a stick of
25 gum.

26 **JONES:** If I were your friend, we’d be reading my will,
27 because I would kill myself.

28 **WILLIAM:** OK, enough ... May I finish?

29 **JONES:** Well, I am going to go. I have a meeting in the
30 morning. *(He stands and moves to the door.)* I’ll pick up my
31 goods some other day. Good night. *(THOMAS gets him
32 his coat and JONES exits.)*

33 **WILLIAM:** “To my sister Fay, what can I say? It is my hope
34 that you will knock the chip off your shoulder, but then
35 I’d probably die holding my breath. Ha ha. I leave you

1 my Rolls Royce, so that you can put on airs. To Mora ...
2 ”

3 **FAY:** That’s it? A car? I thought for sure I would get the
4 manor. After all, my great-grandfather built it.

5 **WILLIAM:** Sorry, Fay, only the car.

6 **FAY:** Unbelievable. After all I have done for him.

7 **MORA:** Annoying him doesn’t count for much, does it? (*FAY*
8 *glares at her.*)

9 **WILLIAM:** (*Clears throat.*) “To Mora, my dear. I return to you
10 all your clothes and China that you have been asking
11 for since the divorce. To ...”

12 **MORA:** Great, he gives me what’s already mine. I should
13 have known.

14 **WILLIAM:** “To my boy Robert, I give all my money, stocks,
15 and annuities. Though we were never close, I’m glad
16 you came around in the end ... To Charlotte ...”

17 **MORA and FAY:** (*Together*) Charlotte?!

18 **FAY:** But Charlotte isn’t family.

19 **MORA:** For once I agree with Fay.

20 **FAY:** Button your lip, Mora. Neither are you.

21 **MORA:** I was siding with you, Fay.

22 **CHARLOTTE:** Look, I don’t expect ...

23 **WILLIAM:** Need I remind all of you that this is a legal
24 document? Now be quiet so I can finish. “To Charlotte,
25 I give the manor.” (*Everyone looks shocked.*)

26 **FAY:** What?! I won’t have it!

27 **WILLIAM:** It’s a legal ...

28 **FAY:** I know, it’s a legal document, but I don’t care.

29 **MORA:** Oh Fay, you’re acting like a child. Mr. Trout, please
30 finish.

31 **WILLIAM:** Thank you, Mora. “Charlotte, you have been like
32 a daughter to me. You took care of me when no one else
33 cared if I was still alive. You deserve a good home, and
34 so I give you mine. However, I do have one stipulation.
35 To my staff, I give a lifetime of employment. Charlotte,

- 1 you may keep the estate only if you continue to employ
2 them. If you ever fire one of them, the servants will
3 assume the property. God bless you all.”
- 4 **FAY:** That impertinent man. How dare he give away my
5 childhood home to some outsider?
- 6 **MORA:** I’m going home. Who needs this old shack anyway?
7 It’s haunted, you know. Have fun chasing ghosts,
8 Charlotte. Montley just added another one.
- 9 **CHARLOTTE:** I don’t believe in ghosts.
- 10 **MORA:** (*Sings words as she exits.*) You will.
- 11 **CHARLOTTE:** Look, I’m sorry, Fay. I know ...
- 12 **FAY:** (*Cutting her off.*) Snip it, Miss America. You’ll be
13 hearing from my lawyer. Good night! (*FAY exits with*
14 *ROBERT trailing after her.*)
- 15 **ROBERT:** Mom — Aunt Fay — wait a minute.
- 16 **WILLIAM:** Well, I guess I’d best be on my way as well.
17 Congratulations, Charlotte.
- 18 **CHARLOTTE:** Oh dear. I am so embarrassed. They all think
19 I put him up to it. I had nothing to do with it, really.
- 20 **WILLIAM:** Don’t worry about it, Charlotte. They’re all just
21 jealous. Good night. (*WILLIAM exits.*)
- 22 **GUY:** (*Stepping out from behind the mantle*) Well, that was more
23 entertaining than an episode of *The Partridge Family*, I
24 must say. Now Thomas, about that ride home?
- 25 **THOMAS:** Mr. Nestor, what are you still doing here? The
26 guests have all gone.
- 27 **GUY:** Sorry. I didn’t want to interrupt.
- 28 **GERTRUDE:** I can take him to town, Thomas. Cook wants
29 me to pick up some milk, anyhow.
- 30 **THOMAS:** Fine, Gertrude. Good night, Mr. Nestor.
- 31 **GUY:** Yes, good night. (*GUY and GERTRUDE exit.*)
- 32 **THOMAS:** Well, tomorrow is Tuesday and I have to get to
33 the cleaners, so “boss,” is there anything I may get for
34 you before I retire for the evening?
- 35 **CHARLOTTE:** An explanation.

1 *(The salad plates are cleared away and the entree is served.)*

2

3

ACT ONE

4

SCENE TWO

5

6 *(Lights on park bench)*

7 **BEVERLY:** If you had employment for the rest of your life,
8 how in the world did you end up here?

9 **TOM:** You would think that everyone would have just let
10 things be as ole Montley wanted them. They all claimed
11 to love him, so they should have respected his
12 decisions, but greed has a funny way of making people
13 act strange. Events that occurred in that home were
14 wrong, dead wrong. *(Lights off park bench and on Center*
15 *Stage. CHARLOTTE enters with clipboard in hand. She*
16 *walks around looking at the room, writing notes. COOK*
17 *enters and watches her.)*

18 **COOK:** Whatever are you doing?

19 **CHARLOTTE:** *(Startled)* Cook! You scared me!

20 **COOK:** Sorry, not intentional. *(CHARLOTTE sits on couch.)*
21 Once again I ask, what are you doing?

22 **CHARLOTTE:** Writing notes.

23 **COOK:** This I can see. What sort of notes are you writing?

24 **CHARLOTTE:** You never used to ask Mr. Montley what he
25 was doing.

26 **COOK:** So?

27 **CHARLOTTE:** Will you please treat me with the same
28 respect?

29 **COOK:** No.

30 **CHARLOTTE:** What?

31 **COOK:** Did you not understand my answer?

32 **CHARLOTTE:** No, I did not.

33 **COOK:** And yet, you answer me with the same word. So
34 obviously you are aware of its meaning. No. Nyet. Nein.
35 *(Signs "no" with her fingers.)* Any language you'd like. It

1 still means the same thing.

2 CHARLOTTE: I know what the word “no” means. I meant,
3 I don’t understand your insubordinate attitude.

4 COOK: You may be my employer, Miss Green, but you will
5 never be my *boss*.

6 CHARLOTTE: There’s a difference?

7 COOK: Quite certainly. Chester Montley was a well-
8 respected man. He had years of education, the initiative
9 to become a billionaire, and was well-liked by
10 everyone, including myself. He *earned* his respect. You,
11 my dear, are nothing but a poor girl who has been
12 handed a present she doesn’t know what to do with.
13 (*Voice rises as she talks.*) I will cook your favorite meals,
14 throw your dinner parties, and even bring you cookies
15 and milk in bed if you so desire, but I will never be
16 quiet for the sake of respect. Do I make myself clear?

17 CHARLOTTE: Crystal.

18 COOK: Good. (*Quieting down*) Now, what are you doing?

19 CHARLOTTE: Well, this is such a big house for only me.
20 (*COOK clears throat.*) OK, my staff and me. It’s a waste
21 for such a beautiful mansion, and I know for a fact that
22 people would pay big bucks to stay in such a place.
23 And let’s face it, I could use the money now that I’m
24 out of a job.

25 COOK: So go work at the hospital. You are a nurse.

26 CHARLOTTE: Forget it. My nursing days are over. I’m
27 going into the hotel business.

28 COOK: Over my dead body.

29 CHARLOTTE: It’s my home. Stay or leave, I don’t care.

30 COOK: If I leave, you lose the house and I benefit anyway.

31 CHARLOTTE: No, if I “fire” you, I lose the house. The will
32 said nothing about you quitting.

33 COOK: So you plan to turn Mr. Montley’s prized mansion
34 into a tourist trap?

35 CHARLOTTE: No, a beautiful hotel for the elite. The best

- 1 around, that caters only to those who can afford it.
- 2 **COOK:** You really aren't playing with a full deck, are you?
- 3 **Mr. Montley would never approve.**
- 4 **CHARLOTTE:** It doesn't really matter now because he's
- 5 **dead.** (*Knock at the door. THOMAS comes busting through*
- 6 *just as COOK is about to belt her.*)
- 7 **THOMAS:** (*Walking to the door*) **Sorry to butler in, but I do**
- 8 **have a job to do.** (*THOMAS opens door, revealing a very*
- 9 *angry FAY.*)
- 10 **FAY:** Where is she?
- 11 **THOMAS:** Who, Madam?
- 12 **FAY:** (*Spotting CHARLOTTE, she pushes her way through the*
- 13 *door.*) **There you are, you little ingrate.**
- 14 **COOK:** This is going to be good.
- 15 **THOMAS:** Back to the kitchen, Cook.
- 16 **COOK:** Thomas ...
- 17 **THOMAS:** (*Mocking*) **Cook ...** (*COOK exits.*)
- 18 **CHARLOTTE:** Hi, Fay. What a pleasant ...
- 19 **FAY:** My decorator has just informed me that you are
- 20 **planning to turn my family's house into some sort of**
- 21 **resort hotel. This was my brother's home, not some**
- 22 **moneymaker. How dare you slap him in the face like**
- 23 **this! He gives you his home out of the kindness — not**
- 24 **to mention stupidity — of his heart, and this is how you**
- 25 **repay him? Is there not a brain cell in that head of**
- 26 **yours? No, I guess all the peroxide burned them up.**
- 27 **CHARLOTTE:** Now Fay, I know you're upset ...
- 28 **FAY:** Upset? Listen, Gidget, don't presume anything. I will
- 29 **not let you get away with this, understand?** (*She turns*
- 30 *around and storms out.*)
- 31 **CHARLOTTE:** Why is everyone so mad at me?
- 32 **THOMAS:** Boy, that's a toughie. (*Lights out*)
- 33
- 34
- 35

ACT ONE
SCENE THREE

1
2
3
4 (*GERTRUDE enters in her night clothes, with a book and a*
5 *cup of coffee. She walks to the couch, then stops when she*
6 *thinks she hears a noise. Convinced she heard nothing, she*
7 *sits on the couch and opens up her book. She hears it again*
8 *and is slightly frightened. Then her cup moves, apparently by*
9 *itself. See Special Stage Directions on page iv. She doesn't*
10 *notice, but while reading her book, she can't find it with her*
11 *hand. She looks up, picks up the cup, takes a drink, and puts*
12 *it back down again. It moves again. This time she eyes it and*
13 *jumps up screaming, flailing her arms and speaking*
14 *German.*)

15 **GERTRUDE:** Ghost! Ghost! (*CHARLOTTE, THOMAS, and*
16 *COOK rush into the room.*)

17 **THOMAS:** Gertrude, what's wrong?

18 **GERTRUDE:** My cup ... m-m-my cup ... The ghost wanted a
19 drink.

20 **CHARLOTTE:** Oh, fiddlesticks. There's no such thing as
21 ghosts.

22 **COOK:** Fiddlesticks? What are you, a farmer? (*A book goes*
23 *flying by on a wire.*)

24 **THOMAS:** You were saying, Charlotte? (*Everyone runs out of*
25 *the room screaming. Lights out.*)

ACT ONE
SCENE FOUR

31 (*CHARLOTTE enters with a bag of ice on her head.*
32 *GERTRUDE is dusting and almost knocks over a lamp.*)

33 **GERTRUDE:** Good morning, Madam. Did you sleep well?

34 **CHARLOTTE:** No. I kept hearing noises all night.

35 **GERTRUDE:** Me too. But we were warned, weren't we?

- 1 CHARLOTTE: No, it's OK. A haunted mansion is good.
2 People love stuff like that. *(There is a big crash from*
3 *behind the stage, and ROBERT enters through the front door,*
4 *covered in dust.)* Robert? What happened to you?
- 5 ROBERT: I was ready to ring the bell and the awning caved
6 in. You'd better have this place checked for termites.
- 7 CHARLOTTE: Oh dear, that will put me behind schedule,
8 won't it?
- 9 ROBERT: Charlotte, about turning this place into a hotel ...
- 10 CHARLOTTE: Look, Robert, I know you aren't convinced ...
11 *(THOMAS enters.)*
- 12 THOMAS: Master Robert, whatever has happened to your
13 clothing?
- 14 ROBERT: I've had an accident of sorts. Could you please
15 bring me one of my father's suits?
- 16 THOMAS: Certainly. *(THOMAS exits.)*
- 17 ROBERT: So how are you getting along, Charlotte?
- 18 CHARLOTTE: I don't know. Weird stuff is going on.
- 19 ROBERT: Like what?
- 20 CHARLOTTE: Please sit. I'll have the cook bring you some
21 tea.
- 22 ROBERT: Boy, you fit right in, don't you?
- 23 CHARLOTTE: Well, I am trying ... for you. *(Goes to hug him,*
24 *but he pushes her away.)*
- 25 ROBERT: It's too soon. My father has only been dead a
26 month. What would everyone think?
- 27 CHARLOTTE: I don't understand. What's to think? All that
28 matters is that I love you, Robert.
- 29 THOMAS: *(Enters, clearing his throat.)* Here you are, sir.
30 *(Hands him a suit.)* You can change in the ...
- 31 ROBERT: I grew up here, remember?
- 32 THOMAS: Certainly, sir. *(ROBERT exits.)*
- 33 CHARLOTTE: Why do you all treat him with respect and
34 not me?
- 35 THOMAS: It's different.

- 1 **CHARLOTTE:** I'm not following.
- 2 **THOMAS:** Why am I not terribly surprised? *(She frowns.)*
- 3 **OK,** let's see ... *(Pause)* How can I say this tactfully?
- 4 *(Pause)* Charlotte, only a month ago you were one of us.
- 5 A servant to Mr. Montley. Now, in our eyes, you are
- 6 nothing but a *lucky* servant. Robert, Fay, any of
- 7 Montley's family or friends, they were born into this
- 8 privilege. It is different. Tell me, Charlotte, if you were
- 9 in my shoes, and I inherited this place, would you call
- 10 me Master?
- 11 **CHARLOTTE:** Uh, I don't know ...
- 12 **THOMAS:** I don't think you would. Now if you'll excuse me,
- 13 I have to get *Master Robert's* things to the cleaners.
- 14 *(THOMAS exits.)*
- 15 **CHARLOTTE:** *(Yelling)* Gertrude!
- 16 **GERTRUDE:** *(Entering)* Yes, Madam?
- 17 **CHARLOTTE:** Bring me some tea, please.
- 18 **GERTRUDE:** Yes, Madam. *(GERTRUDE exits.)*
- 19 **CHARLOTTE:** Well, at least she treats me with respect.
- 20 *(ROBERT enters having changed his clothes.)*
- 21 **ROBERT:** Problem with the help, my dear?
- 22 **CHARLOTTE:** They don't respect me.
- 23 **ROBERT:** When we're married, they'll change their tune.
- 24 **CHARLOTTE:** *(Rushing into his arms)* Oh Robert, do you
- 25 mean it? We can get married?
- 26 **ROBERT:** Soon enough, dear. Soon enough. For now, I need
- 27 that gold box my father kept in the safe.
- 28 **CHARLOTTE:** What's in it?
- 29 **ROBERT:** It's a family heirloom. Now would you please get
- 30 it?
- 31 **CHARLOTTE:** Sure. I'll only be a moment. *(CHARLOTTE*
- 32 *exits. ROBERT is just about to sit on the couch when*
- 33 *CHARLOTTE comes rushing back in, screaming.)* **G-g-gho**
- 34 — there's ...
- 35 **ROBERT:** What's wrong with you, Charlotte? You look like

1 you've seen a ghost. (*She nods frantically.*) Nonsense,
2 dear. There is no such thing. Now tell me what you
3 saw.

4 **CHARLOTTE:** Montley.

5 **ROBERT:** That's not funny, Charlotte. My father is dead.

6 **CHARLOTTE:** His ghost then.

7 **ROBERT:** My father was a Christian man, Charlotte. He
8 would not come back as a ghost. You are seeing things.
9 Now lie down on the couch, and I will go get the box
10 myself. Is the safe open?

11 **CHARLOTTE:** Y-y-yesss ... (*CHARLOTTE sits and ROBERT*
12 *exits.*)

13 **GERTRUDE:** (*Enters with tea.*) Madam.

14 **CHARLOTTE:** (*Trembling*) Thank you. (*ROBERT enters with*
15 *box. GERTRUDE exits.*)

16 **ROBERT:** See, Charlotte, nothing to worry about. No ghosts.

17 **CHARLOTTE:** Then what did I see? And who moved the
18 coffee cup and the book? And the awning? Why did
19 that fall down all of a sudden?

20 **ROBERT:** Termites. I told you that. The rest? Someone is
21 playing with your mind. Someone wants you to leave
22 and give up the estate.

23 **CHARLOTTE:** Who would do that?

24 **ROBERT:** The list is endless. Anyone who knew my father
25 knows how much this property is worth. Anyone who
26 was here at the reading would want this place. Think
27 of the motives. If the staff can get you to fire them, they
28 get it. My aunt can't bear you having it, and my mother,
29 Mora, loves revenge. Trust me, the list is endless.

30 **CHARLOTTE:** Well, I'm staying.

31 **ROBERT:** That's my girl.

32 **CHARLOTTE:** Robert?

33 **ROBERT:** Yes, Charlotte?

34 **CHARLOTTE:** Do you suppose I could use this?

35 **ROBERT:** What — capitalize on the mysterious happenings?

1 **CHARLOTTE:** I know it probably sounds like a stupid idea,
 2 but I thought it would help publicize this place. I mean,
 3 think about all the press here and the mysterious ghost
 4 and ...

5 **ROBERT:** Charlotte, I don't really have time to talk about
 6 this now. I must get back to the office. (*ROBERT kisses*
 7 *her cheek and exits. CHARLOTTE picks up the phone.*)

8 **CHARLOTTE:** Yes, information? Give me the *Old Post*
 9 *Herald*, please. (*Pause*) Yes, may I have the editor?
 10 (*Pause*) Hello, Mr. Ramsey, my name is Charlotte Green.
 11 I just inherited the old Montley Manor. (*Beat*) Yes, well,
 12 I think I may have a story for you. (*Lights out, then back*
 13 *on so entre plates may be cleared.*)

14

15

16

ACT ONE

17

SCENE FIVE

18

19 (*THOMAS is once again asleep on the floor. FAY knocks at*
 20 *the door several times before letting herself in.*)

21 **FAY:** Thomas, where are you? Thomas! (*THOMAS jumps.*)
 22 What are you doing on the floor? I had to let myself in.

23 **THOMAS:** Sorry, Madam.

24 **FAY:** Would you mind telling me the meaning of this? (*Holds*
 25 *out invitation.*) I received this from a messenger this
 26 morning.

27 **THOMAS:** (*Taking the card*) "Your presence is required at the
 28 Montley Manor, Friday at two p.m. No exceptions."
 29 (*Looks up.*) Well, that is a bit harsh, but yes, there will
 30 be an investigation this afternoon.

31 **FAY:** Investigation? Whatever for? My brother wasn't
 32 murdered.

33 **THOMAS:** There have been some weird things happening
 34 around the manor, and Charlotte has hired an
 35 investigator to discover who is responsible.

- 1 **FAY:** Unbelievable.
- 2 **THOMAS:** Miss Fay, there's more. I know it's not usually my
3 place to say it, but ... *(He looks around.)* Charlotte and
4 Robert are together. From the looks of it, Robert plans
5 to marry her.
- 6 **FAY:** *(A bit loudly)* What?!
- 7 **THOMAS:** Shhh! Listen. I overheard them talking. I hate to
8 say it, but I think Robert is after the entire estate.
9 Marrying Charlotte is genius. That way, he'll get it all.
- 10 **FAY:** I'm leaving. *(Starts for door.)* I won't stand for that
11 woman calling me Aunt.
- 12 **THOMAS:** Miss Fay, you can't leave. We are all under
13 investigation. *(She looks at him to continue.)* Floating
14 books, moving pictures, and noises in the night, not to
15 mention breaking staircases and falling roofs. For
16 almost two weeks now, there have been some spooky
17 activities. Charlotte thinks she saw Mr. Montley himself
18 in the library.
- 19 **FAY:** *(Dryly)* You don't say?
- 20 **THOMAS:** Anyone who may have a motive has been asked
21 to be here. Please stay, Madam. If you don't they'll pin
22 it on you for sure.
- 23 **FAY:** Pin it on me? How absurd.
- 24 **THOMAS:** Just the same, you'd better stay.
- 25 **FAY:** *(Sighs.)* Well, it's only a couple of hours from now. I
26 might as well stick around. I'll just spend some time in
27 my brother's garden for now. Please have Gertrude
28 bring some cucumber sandwiches and some of her
29 famous tea to the gazebo.
- 30 **THOMAS:** Certainly, Madam. Do you need to freshen up? I
31 could prepare you a room.
- 32 **FAY:** Thomas, my boy, if I wasn't already fully staffed, I
33 would bring you to work for me. You are a saint.
- 34 **THOMAS:** Yes, Madam.
- 35 **FAY:** Thomas?

- 1 THOMAS: Yes, Madam?
- 2 FAY: Did she happen to say who the detective was?
- 3 THOMAS: Mr. Greg, I believe.
- 4 FAY: Thomas, have my tea brought to the library instead. I
5 need to make a phone call.
- 6 THOMAS: Yes, Madam.
- 7 FAY: *(Trips over fishing line.)* What is this?
- 8 THOMAS: *(Takes it from her.)* It appears to be some fishing
9 line, Madam.
- 10 FAY: I can see that. I meant, what is it doing down here?
- 11 THOMAS: Well, you know how old Montley loved to fish.
12 Now if you'll excuse me, Madam, I will get you that tea.
13 *(FAY exits into the library. THOMAS exits to kitchen just as
14 CHARLOTTE enters with GERTRUDE.)*
- 15 CHARLOTTE: Yes, Gertrude, I tell you once again. I saw
16 Montley's Ghost!
- 17 GERTRUDE: But Madam, he's dead.
- 18 CHARLOTTE: Why does everyone insist on telling me that?
- 19 GERTRUDE: Because he's dead?
- 20 CHARLOTTE: Listen, I know what I saw. I don't care what
21 any of you people think. *(Sigh)* Look, just make sure
22 that this place is cleaned up and all the rooms are
23 locked. *(Starts to walk away and then stops.)* Oh yeah, the
24 detective I talked to this morning will be back in an
25 hour. Will you call me when he gets here?
- 26 GERTRUDE: Yes, Madam. *(GERTRUDE exits. There is a knock
27 at the door.)*
- 28 CHARLOTTE: Thomas! *(No answer.)* Thomas! *(Still no answer.)*
29 Oh, I guess I will have to open it myself. I am supposed
30 to be a lady now. *(She opens door, but there is no one
31 there.)* Hello? Who was knocking, please?
- 32 THOMAS: *(Enters and speaks in a Southern tone.)* Problem, Ms.
33 Charlotte? Ghosts in Tara again?
- 34 CHARLOTTE: Did you hear someone knock?
- 35 THOMAS: No, I only heard you yelling.

- 1 CHARLOTTE: I must be losing my mind. (*FAY enters.*)
- 2 FAY: Some would say you never had one, Farrah.
- 3 CHARLOTTE: (*Ignoring her*) Well, I kept calling for you,
- 4 Thomas, and then I had to open the door myself, and
- 5 ...
- 6 FAY: Did you break a nail?
- 7 CHARLOTTE: Why are you so nasty to me? I think ...
- 8 FAY: Since we've already established that thinking is not
- 9 your strong suit, deal with it, Barbie.
- 10 CHARLOTTE: My name is Charlotte! (*MORA and JONES*
- 11 *enter through the open door.*)
- 12 JONES: Nice to be greeted so thoroughly. Now, would one
- 13 of you like to explain why we are all here again?
- 14 MORA: (*Looking at FAY*) Fay?
- 15 FAY: We're here because you have all been doing some
- 16 nasty little things to the poor mistress of the house.
- 17 MORA: What are you talking about?
- 18 FAY: Innocent as doves, cunning as serpents.
- 19 JONES: Fay, leave her alone.
- 20 FAY: Look, chubby, I'm sure there will be food later, so you
- 21 can relax.
- 22 MORA: Just tell us why we are here.
- 23 FAY: Oh, all right. It appears our humble host and the
- 24 owner of this manor has hired a private detective to see
- 25 which one of us has been haunting her home. (*THOMAS*
- 26 *shuts door and takes their coats. The party moves to the*
- 27 *sofas.*)
- 28 JONES: Is that true, Charlotte?
- 29 CHARLOTTE: Yes. All of you have a problem with me
- 30 opening a hotel. I know you do. So one of you must be
- 31 responsible for the mysterious ghost and damage to my
- 32 property.
- 33 MORA: I told you there were ghosts in this house. You
- 34 wanted the house, so now you've got them.
- 35 FAY: Case closed. Can we go home now? (*MR. GREG knocks*

- 1 *at the door.*)
- 2 **THOMAS:** *(Opening door)* Good day, Inspector Greg. Won't
3 you come in?
- 4 **MR. GREG:** Thank you. Is everyone here yet? *(ROBERT*
5 *knocks at the door. THOMAS opens it. ROBERT enters, but*
6 *just before THOMAS can shut the door, WILLIAM steps up*
7 *to it and enters.)*
- 8 **THOMAS:** Now everyone is.
- 9 **MR. GREG:** No one is to leave until I'm finished. Is that
10 understood?
- 11 **EVERYONE:** *(Mumbling ad-lib)* Yes, yeah, sure, etc.
- 12 **COOK:** *(Rushes in frantically, screaming.)* There's a fire in the
13 pool house! *(EVERYONE jumps up and rushes to the*
14 *window.)*
- 15 **MORA:** Oh my goodness! Should we leave?
- 16 **CHARLOTTE:** My pool! It'll be destroyed!
- 17 **FAY:** *(Shoots CHARLOTTE a dirty look.)* Someone dial nine
18 one one, before my family's history goes up in smoke.
- 19 **THOMAS:** I will. *(THOMAS exits through kitchen. EVERYONE*
20 *is frantic.)*
- 21 **MR. GREG:** Everyone remain calm. We are safe here for
22 now.
- 23 **MORA:** Who wasn't here?
- 24 **ROBERT:** We were all here, Mother.
- 25 **FAY:** Yes, but some people were late.
- 26 **CHARLOTTE:** And the cook came in to announce the fire.
27 She could have set it.
- 28 **GERTRUDE:** No, Madam, I saw her in the kitchen only a
29 moment before.
- 30 **CHARLOTTE:** All you servants are in this together. I say
31 you kept watch.
- 32 **MR. GREG:** Now, Miss Green, let's not start pointing
33 fingers. I have an investigation to conduct first. In the
34 meantime, I suggest we ...
- 35 **THOMAS:** The fire department is already here. Apparently

- 1 someone called them.
- 2 **CHARLOTTE:** What a relief.
- 3 **THOMAS:** That's not all who's here, however.
- 4 **CHARLOTTE:** Oh?
- 5 **THOMAS:** There's a swarm of press out on the lawn, just
6 below the balcony. They suggest that you invited them.
7 *(He points to CHARLOTTE.)*
- 8 **FAY:** Is that true, Blondie?
- 9 **CHARLOTTE:** Not really. I mean, I may have suggested ... I
10 only meant ... well, it's good publicity.
- 11 **FAY:** So you deliberately set the fire?
- 12 **CHARLOTTE:** No! I meant the investigation was good
13 publicity. I don't know who set the fire, or for that
14 matter, who is haunting my mansion. But free
15 advertisement is free advertisement.
- 16 **FAY:** You only pretend to be stupid, don't you? You know
17 exactly what you're doing.
- 18 **CHARLOTTE:** I am only trying to make this place great. It's
19 one of you who is trying to destroy it.
- 20 **JONES:** Why am I here? I have no ties to this estate, and I
21 surely wouldn't want to tarnish the memory of my good
22 friend just to scare someone.
- 23 **FAY:** I wouldn't put anything past you, Jonesy.
- 24 **JONES:** Fay, it seems to me you have the biggest motive of
25 all. You hate Charlotte, you feel you deserve this
26 mansion, and let's not overlook the fact that you have
27 a terrible mean streak.
- 28 **FAY:** Regardless of whom I like or dislike, I would hardly
29 destroy my grandfather's mansion just for the sake of
30 revenge. And what good would it do me to burn it
31 down? Who wants a property of ashes? *(Looking around,*
32 *she re-asks, but not as a rhetorical question.)* Who does
33 want the property of ashes?
- 34 **CHARLOTTE:** Let's not disappoint the press.
- 35 **MR. GREG:** Charlotte, this is supposed to be a private

1 investigation.

2 **CHARLOTTE:** Sorry, Mr. Greg, I didn't mean to ruin it for
3 you. I just thought it would help you ...

4 **FAY:** There she goes again, thinking.

5 **CHARLOTTE:** Now come on, everyone, let's all move onto
6 the balcony and I'll open the doors. *(No one moves.)*

7 **JONES:** Well, I have nothing to hide. Come on then. *(JONES
8 follows CHARLOTTE to the edge of the stage. Everyone looks
9 at each other and moves reluctantly.)*

10 **CHARLOTTE:** You may want to grab a chair so you'll be
11 more comfortable. *(CAST grabs chairs. CHARLOTTE
12 begins talking to the audience.)* Members of the press,
13 thank you for coming out today. I am sure you are all
14 curious about the rumors here at the Montley Manor
15 and whether or not it is a ploy to make money. I am
16 just as intrigued as you. So please, ask thoughtful
17 questions so that we may be able to get to the bottom
18 of this. Who has the first question? *(Audience members
19 are allowed to ask CAST members questions about the
20 mystery at the manor. CAST members are to answer
21 impromptu [see the appendix on page 34 for help], without
22 giving away the ending. After a while, MR. GREG will wrap
23 up.)*

24 *(If the audience doesn't ask some of the questions on page
25 34, the cast is to try and work them into the conversation.
26 Option: Have the audience write down who they think the
27 culprit[s] are and hand them in during the intermission.)*

28 **MR. GREG:** Thank you all for attending here tonight. I
29 know you need to get back to your newsrooms in order
30 to make the morning paper. Good evening. *(Lights out.
31 Intermission. Any remaining entre plates may be cleared at
32 this time. Coffee and dessert should be served just prior to
33 the beginning of Act Two.)*

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ACT TWO

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(The scene opens with all the characters frozen. FAY is leaning with her back over the couch as CHARLOTTE leans into her, attempting to strangle her, while ROBERT restrains CHARLOTTE, by holding both of her arms. JONES is on the couch and is trying to avoid having FAY sit on his lap. THOMAS and MORA look on, amused. WILLIAM is stepping forward in order to help. MR. GREG is nowhere to be found. This scene is the same as the beginning of Act One, Scene One. At once the characters come to life.)

FAY: Take this woman to the zoo so she can play with the other animals.

CHARLOTTE: I've had enough of your insults. *(ROBERT pulls CHARLOTTE away and JONES moves.)*

MORA: We're not getting anywhere. When is Mr. Greg going to return? *(Turns to WILLIAM.)* William, do something.

WILLIAM: Keep me out of this, Mora. I think you're all crazy. Now, if you'll excuse me, I will be back in a moment. *(WILLIAM exits.)*

FAY: The reason we aren't getting anywhere is because the guilty parties refuse to tell the truth.

MORA: Fay, I never knew you were such a great actress. You act so innocent, but everyone knows that you have the biggest motive of all. You want your family mansion. Case closed.

FAY: You forget one very important fact, Mora. Nothing I do is going to help me acquire this place. It seems to me that all of this begins with Goldilocks.

ROBERT: I assume you are speaking about Charlotte.

FAY: Yes, Robert, your fianc. *(MORA gasps.)* Don't act so innocent, Mora. I'll get to you soon enough. *(Dramatic pause)* Now, Charlotte ... I had Mr. Greg do a little digging for me. I wasn't supposed to say anything ... but since he seems to have disappeared ...



Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:
MYSTERY OF MONTLEY'S MANOR
by Kimberlee R. Mendoza.

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