

Deadline Dilemma



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Deadline Dilemma

INTERACTIVE MYSTERY/COMEDY. In this topsy-turvy murder mystery, *all* the suspects confess to murdering a disreputable accountant and his secretary. Though all the suspects offer convincing stories, there's only one murderer, and it's up to a mystery writer and the audience to solve the case. Audience members get to question the murder suspects in this fun, interactive mystery.

Performance Time: Approximately 45-60 minutes depending on the time set aside for audience participation, which can be optional.

Characters

(3 M, 5 F)

REBECCA STAR: Best-selling mystery writer who can't figure out how to end her latest novel; female.

JOAN BUTLER: Claims she is the most devious of the murder suspects; has psychic powers and works as a newspaper columnist/blogger; wears outlandish clothing; female.

MARIA LYNN: Murder suspect who is one of the brightest stars on the New York stage; female.

DONALD HILLMAN: Murder suspect and Maria's agent; male.

FATHER BRIAN FITZGERALD: Priest who is a murder suspect and claims he has a strong motive; wears clerical garb with a long overcoat, hat, and watch; male.

FRANK DODSON: Murdered accountant; male.

JANIS MORGAN: Frank's murdered secretary; female.

KATHLEEN: Janis's twin who was separated at birth; female.

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Setting

Office, New York City.

Set

Office of Rebecca Star. The stage should be divided with a desk, a desk phone, and a few chairs on one side, and a separate sitting room area on the other side containing chairs and a sofa.

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Props

File folder
Watch, for Fitzgerald
Tommy-gun (toy)
Thick envelope of money
Handbag, for Maria
2 Handguns (toys)
Notebook
Pen
2 Piece of papers
Envelope

Sound Effects

Telephone ringing
Sound of a Tommy-gun firing
Gunshots

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"Besides the detective,
the only other character
the reader ever remembers
is the murderer."

—Maria

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(AT RISE: Rebecca Star's office. Telephone rings. Rebecca Star enters.)

REBECCA: *(Into phone.)* Hello...Oh, Charlie, I wasn't expecting to hear from you so early...It is?...I'm sorry, I didn't realize it was that late. I was up half the night thinking about this case...Yes, I think I've made some very good progress. I'm right here at the scene of the crime, and I've narrowed it down to four suspects, and in a few minutes I'm going to confront them one at a time. When I'm through questioning them, I'll have the murderer...Yes, I will call you as soon as I know for sure...Don't worry, the police chief is standing by. *(Laughs.)* I'll talk to you later. Goodbye.

(Rebecca hangs up and picks up a folder from the desk. She sits down and begins reading it. After a few seconds, she closes the folder and leans back. She is obviously engrossed in thought and doesn't notice Father Brian Fitzgerald enter. Father Fitzgerald stands behind Rebecca, hesitating. Gathering courage, he steps forward.)

FITZGERALD: Good morning, Mrs. Star.

(Startled, Rebecca turns quickly.)

REBECCA: Father Fitzgerald?

FITZGERALD: Yes. I'm sorry if I startled you.

REBECCA: That's all right. I was just thinking about you. Please, sit down.

(Fitzgerald takes a seat and turns to face Rebecca.)

FITZGERALD: I suppose you want to ask me more questions about the murders.

REBECCA: Yes, is that a problem?

FITZGERALD: No. It's just that today is Wednesday, and I have hospital rounds, so I hope this won't take too long.

REBECCA: I'll be as brief as possible. I'm just as anxious to get this over with as you are.

FITZGERALD: Then let's not waste any more valuable time. I'm prepared to make a full confession. *(Laughs.)* You know, seeing as how I'm usually on the receiving end of a confession.

REBECCA: I'm afraid I'm not in the mood for humorous remarks, Father. Two people have been brutally murdered.

FITZGERALD: *(Casually.)* I know. I killed them. *(Looks at his watch.)* How long do you think this will take? Can I still get to the hospital by ten?

REBECCA: *(Slightly annoyed.)* If you confess to the murders, you'll be in jail by ten.

[END OF FREEVIEW]