

**DETECTIVE PLANT AND HIS TRUSTY SIDEKICK, MR. MISTER:
THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE SUSPICIOUS STABBIN’
by Ben Herlocker**

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SYNOPSIS: A farce set in Chicagalo, Illinois which satirizes both classic film noir and modern police procedurals. In the play, two cops of the Chicagalo Police Department (CPD) investigate the murder of Random Citizen. During their investigation, Detective Plant, the only intelligent character, fights an uphill battle against the absurdity of the world and the glaring incompetence of the law.

DURATION: 30 minutes.

SETTING: A sidewalk on the street in the satirical city of Chicagalo, Illinois.

TIME: Modern day. Midday. And Midnight.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male, 7 either, 2-6 extras)

DETECTIVE PLANT (m/f).....	A master-class detective of the Chicagalo Police Department, who is also a potted plant. The voice of reason in a world of morons. 30ish to 40ish, any gender. <i>(39 lines)</i>
MR. MISTER (m).....	The moronic sidekick of Detective Plant. Terrible at his job, for the most part. Middle-aged, male. <i>(32 lines)</i>
NARRATOR (m/f).....	A narrator of what goes on. Egotistical and self-righteous. Adult, any gender. <i>(24 lines)</i>
RANDOM CITIZEN (m/f).....	A random pedestrian who is killed in the street. Knows a little bit about Tom and Jerry. Adult, any gender. <i>(4 lines)</i>

- STABBER (m/f)..... A murderer who the cops try to identify and bring to justice. Adult, any gender. (14 lines)
- SERGEANT MEH COP (m/f)..... A cop. Appears to be the main voice of authority over Officer Bad Cop and Good Cop. Can't read. Adult, any gender. (17 lines)
- OFFICER BAD COP (m/f)..... A mean cop, sometimes feral. Can't read. Adult, any gender. (4 lines)
- OFFICER GOOD COP (m/f)..... A nice cop with bad eyesight. Adult, any gender. (5 lines)

EXTRAS:

COPS ENSEMBLE: 2-6 people. A bunch of generic cops. Can also function as the stage crew. Adult, any gender. (*Non-Speaking*)

OFFICER RAD COP (m/f)..... A pretty rad cop. Rolls in on a skateboard. Adult, any gender. (*Non-speaking*)

HELI-COP-TER (m/f)..... A police helicopter. Lowered from a rig above stage, if possible. Adult, any gender. (*Non-Speaking*)

DR. LAMP POST (m/f)..... A tall, lanky guy dressed up as a lamp post. Replaces the lamp post prop. Holds a doctorate in something. Adult, any gender. (*Non-Speaking*)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1: An unnamed street. Midday.

SCENE 2: An unnamed street. Midnight.

SCENE 3: An unnamed street. Midnight.

SET: The street is a damp, squalid, and generally wretched urban sight, with a lamp post somewhere stage right.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

For the shotgun gag, an actor can hold fake shotgun shells in their hand while holding the shotgun, and toss them as they mimic the recoil. Gunshot sound effects can be replaced by the actors screaming “bang,” “pow,” etc. Prop guns can also be replaced with finger guns or mimed. When Stabber drops the knife on Random Citizen, it can also just bounce off, and have Random Citizen yelp and flinch. The blood from Random Citizen can be anything from red party streamers to fake blood or stickers.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

Premiered at Sunlake High School with the following cast and crew:

DETECTIVE PLANT Ryan Kovacs
MR. MISTER Cavi Cueva
NARRATOR..... Tyler Zacharias
RANDOM CITIZEN Sarah Dillehay
STABBER Jordan Gardner
SERGEANT MEH COP..... Celyse Ramirez
OFFICER BAD COP..... Camila Boada
OFFICER GOOD COP Bryce Ford
DR. LAMP POST Ethan Butterfield
HELI-COP-TER Abby Horta
RAD COP Zach Cullens

CREW LIST:

STAGE MANAGER: Collin Mallett

STAGE TECHNICIANS / COPS ENSEMBLE:

Bell Braughler, Joseph Pangelinan, Remley Velde, Fiona Wu.

DEDICATION

To Jeffery Roush and Brooke West,
consider yourselves winners of the ‘really cool’ award.

SCENE 1

AT START: *NARRATOR enters from stage right, and RANDOM CITIZEN enters from stage left. Shortly after, STABBER enters from stage left, and begins stabbing RANDOM CITIZEN in the back. Blood gushes and flies out fantastically and unrealistically as the narrator speaks, mimicking the classic “film noir” voice. Generic film noir music plays as well.*

NARRATOR: Murder. It is a thing that happens probably a little bit too much in Chicagalo, Illinois. It's not the city's fault, though. Chicagalo can't help that everyone there just really hates each other, for no particular reason other than for creating inciting conflicts in C-list film noirs and amateur plays. It's a miracle they're all not dead yet, truly. (*NARRATOR turns and notices RANDOM CITIZEN leaning against the lamp post.*) Oh my, there's one poor fellow right there.

RANDOM CITIZEN: (*Screaming.*) AHHHH! HELP ME, OH MY GOD I'M BLEEDING OUT ALL OVER THE FLOOR AND STUFF!

NARRATOR: Great Scott, he's a bleeder. Would you look at that, how impressive.

RANDOM CITIZEN: (*Screaming.*) WHY WON'T YOU HELP ME?

NARRATOR: Because I'm just the narrator, Random Citizen. Now, let us continue with the mystery.

A long pause as RANDOM CITIZEN groans and coughs, having an extremely exaggerated death. They stumble towards center stage.

NARRATOR: We're being paid by the show, not the hour, Random Citizen.

RANDOM CITIZEN immediately collapses.

NARRATOR: It is a game of cat and mouse between the law and those who break it... if the crooks were more like that little turd-hamster who bullied Tom. Speaking of which, what was that mouse's name again? Hmm...

RANDOM CITIZEN suddenly sits up and the noir music stops.

RANDOM CITIZEN: You mean Jerry?

NARRATOR yelps, pulls out a revolver, and shoots RANDOM CITIZEN four times. A beat. RANDOM CITIZEN groans, and NARRATOR shoots RANDOM CITIZEN again. Long pause. NARRATOR shoots RANDOM CITIZEN one final time.

NARRATOR: For the record, he was already dead, probably. Where was I? Oh yes, the mystery.

Noir music begins playing again.

NARRATOR: Two detectives now approach the scene. They're not your average Chicagalo cop: they're clever, observant, and the damn finest the Chicagalo Police Department has to offer. *(Beat.)* I'm getting butterflies in my stomach just thinking about seeing them again, like soft little flying babies...

A STAGEHAND grabs the NARRATOR from stage left and starts to drag NARRATOR offstage.

NARRATOR: *(As they are being pulled offstage.)* NO, WAIT!...

MR. MISTER enters from stage right, carrying DETECTIVE PLANT in his arms, struggling under the weight. MR. MISTER crosses to center stage and unceremoniously drops DETECTIVE PLANT. Both DETECTIVE PLANT and MR. MISTER take out small notepads and write a lot of something. MR. MISTER then crosses stage left, peering off backstage.

DETECTIVE PLANT: *(Looking down at the body.)* Third one this week... this cannot be a coincidence.

MR. MISTER: *(Crosses centerstage to DETECTIVE PLANT.)* No sign of the killer, nor the murder weapon either...

DETECTIVE PLANT: (*Motions at the comically large knife embedded in RANDOM CITIZEN.*) What about the knife?

Film noir music stops.

MR. MISTER: (*Unconcerned.*) What about the knife?

Spotlights flash onto RANDOM CITIZEN. A beat.

MR. MISTER: It just appears to be another case of the stabbin', detective.

DETECTIVE PLANT: That knife indicates there was foul pl—

MR. MISTER: Must've been a suicide.

MR. MISTER flips his notepad closed and stuffs it in his trench coat. Noir music begins playing again.

DETECTIVE PLANT: (*Stuttering.*) H-h-he got stabbed... in the back. How could this've been a suicide?

A long pause while MR. MISTER slowly crosses to stage left, deep in thought. He takes off his hat and scratches his balding head.

MR. MISTER: Well... he could've done something... (*Stops mid-sentence to mime how to stab oneself in the back.*) A little like... this. (*Another long pause as MR. MISTER continues to mime how he would stab himself.*)

DETECTIVE PLANT: Well... due to the orientation of the knife and the positioning of the wound, we can deduce that the killer was... (*Defeated.*) right-handed.

MR. MISTER: Excellent deduction, Detective Plant! I'll search the crime scene for more curious clues.

Fade out to black. Fade out noir music too.

DETECTIVE PLANT: (*Clears throat obnoxiously.*) Ahem...

The stage lights abruptly turn back on.

DETECTIVE PLANT: Mr. Mister...

MR. MISTER: Yes?

DETECTIVE PLANT: You gonna... you know. (*Motions at their lack of legs.*)

MR. MISTER grumbles incoherently while crossing over to DETECTIVE PLANT. MR. MISTER attempts to pick up DETECTIVE PLANT and quickly drops to the ground in exhaustion. NARRATOR enters from stage right and stops to watch them from upstage right.

DETECTIVE PLANT: Well, that's just insulting. I'm not that heavy. Lift with your legs.

During the NARRATOR'S monologue, MR. MISTER and DETECTIVE PLANT intensely, but silently, argue in an animated way, waving their arms, jabbing their fingers at each other, etc. By the end of the NARRATOR'S monologue, MR. MISTER and DETECTIVE PLANT are attempting to strangle each other. Film noir music resumes.

NARRATOR: I will admit, they're a little rough around the edges, but the duo always pulls through. There's something special about these two cops... other than one of them being a hyper-intelligent plant... that was one of the character decisions I never really—

Noir music stops when MR. MISTER starts speaking.

MR. MISTER: Are you going to help, or keep talking to the street?

NARRATOR: (*Flustered.*) I—excuse me?

DETECTIVE PLANT: You heard the brainiac, MOVE ME.

NARRATOR: I'm the narrator. I narrate things.

DETECTIVE PLANT: And now you move things too. Hell, narrate it, I do not care. MOVE ME DAMN IT.

NARRATOR grumbles incoherently while crossing over to DETECTIVE PLANT. NARRATOR and MR. MISTER, with great strain, pick up DETECTIVE PLANT and exit stage left. End of Scene 1.

DO NOT COPY

SCENE 2

It is now midnight. The set remains unchanged. As the lights fade back in, so does the noir music. MR. MISTER is standing stage right next to the lamp post, eyeing it suspiciously. NARRATOR is standing downstage left. RANDOM CITIZEN is still lying dead centerstage.

NARRATOR: It is now the dead of night in Chicagalo. The time for crime, or, as the criminals call it, "crime time." Mr. Mister now investigates, hoping to find a curious clue that'll lead him to the killer. *(Trips and stumbles.)* Shit. *(Exits upstage left.)*

MR. MISTER: And where were you between about last week at five, and today at noon? And you're sure you didn't see anything, Mr...? *(A beat.)* Sorry, Dr. Lamp post. *(A small pause.)* Well, I'll be sure to get in touch with you soon. If you remember anything, here's my card. *(MR. MISTER drops the card in front of the lamp post. He wanders around the stage, poking and prodding at random things on the set. After a few moments, he abruptly stops and takes a deep and loud sniff.)* I smell a curious clue hiding around here.

MR. MISTER drops to his hands and knees, sniffing the floor like a dog. Eventually, he begins crawling on his belly towards the body, sniffing and making inquisitive noises as he does so. Ominous and foreboding music replaces noir music. MR. MISTER looks troubled and carefully stands back up and approaches the body. The ominous music is abruptly cut off at the climax as a stagehand throws a license plate onto the body from the right wing.

MR. MISTER: Oh, look: a conveniently placed license plate. *(Crosses to wherever the license plate lands and picks it up.)* How delightful. *(Licks the license plate and smacks his lips. Seriously.)* Tastes like a vanity plate. I'll be sure to get this to our guys back at the precinct. Now where'd I put that radio?

MR. MISTER searches his pockets for something while Precinct is set up. A lemonade stand labeled "Presink" is rolled onto stage left while SERGEANT MEH COP, OFFICER GOOD COP, and OFFICER BAD

COP enter with the "Presink." On the counter of the "Presink," a small keypad sits. SERGEANT MEH COP is sitting in a chair in the "Presink." OFFICER GOOD COP leans against the side, and OFFICER BAD COP drops to all fours and growls like a dog. SERGEANT MEH COP holds a wired telephone in one hand and is playing paddle ball in the other. The telephone has a wire clearly unattached to anything dangling over the side so the audience can see it. MR. MISTER takes out a portable radio.

MR. MISTER: *(Into the portable radio.)* Sixty-nine Peter to Central. Over.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Startled.)* Oh sh— *(Fumbles and accidentally hits themselves in the face with the ball. Louder.)* AW SH—

MR. MISTER: *(Into portable radio.)* You all doing alright over there?

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Into the telephone.)* What? Oh, yes... all good over here. What do you need? Over.

MR. MISTER: *(Into portable radio.)* Listen, I've got a plate for you to trace. Over.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Into the telephone.)* Alright, Ten four. Give me the plate. Over.

In the next four lines, when MR. MISTER or SERGEANT MEH COP reads out a letter from the APCO radiotelephony spelling alphabet, the other character mouths the word too.

MR. MISTER: *(Into portable radio.)* David, Edward, X-Ray,

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Into the telephone.)* Mary, Charles,

MR. MISTER: *(Into portable radio.)* Nora.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Into the telephone.)* Adam. Ten four. We'll take it from here. Over.

MR. MISTER: *(Into portable radio.)* Splendid! I mean, Ten four.

MR. MISTER puts the portable radio back into his trench coat. A small pause as SERGEANT MEH COP lets out a deep exhale, and strains their face in anguish, trying to remember something. SERGEANT MEH COP heaves their shoulders, defeated.

SERGEANT MEH COP: What was the license plate number again?

OFFICER GOOD COP: *(Confidently.)* D-E-X... *(Defeated.)* aw gosh darn-y poodles. I forgot.

SERGEANT MEH COP: Bad cop, remember anything? *(OFFICER BAD COP growls and bites the telephone cord.)* NO, BAD OFFICER BAD COP. BAD.

OFFICER GOOD COP pulls OFFICER BAD COP off the wire, takes out a squirt bottle filled with water, and squirts it in OFFICER BAD COP's face.

OFFICER BAD COP: *(Whimpers and stands up. Hurt.)* Asshole.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(They push some buttons on the keypad and hold the telephone up to their face. A small pause. Into the telephone.)* Central to Sixty-nine Peter. Over.

MR. MISTER: *(Takes out his portable radio. Into the portable radio.)* Sixty-nine Peter to Central, Ten four. Over.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Into the telephone.)* Ten five, can you please repeat the license plate number? Over.

MR. MISTER: *(To stage left.)* Here, just take it.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Into the telephone.)* What?

MR. MISTER tosses the license plate over to the "Presink, which startles SERGEANT MEH COP, OFFICER GOOD COP, and OFFICER BAD COP.

SERGEANT MEH COP: Uh, thanks... Over. *(Slowly puts down the telephone, confused.)*

OFFICER GOOD COP: Hey Bad Cop, can you go fetch that for me?

OFFICER BAD COP: Screw you, Dick.

SERGEANT MEH COP silently threatens OFFICER BAD COP with the squirt bottle. OFFICER BAD COP acquiesces and crosses over to the license plate on all fours and picks it up, bringing it over to the "Presink," placing it on the counter, facedown, then stands up. SERGEANT MEH COP places the squirt bottle down and picks up the license plate.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(Holding the license plate, staring intently.)*

Oh, right: I'm illiterate, so... Good Cop, tell me what's written on it.

OFFICER GOOD COP: *(Takes the license plate and squints at it.)*

Aw... sad puppies and licorice, my glasses' prescription appears to be out of date.

SERGEANT MEH COP: *(To OFFICER BAD COP, Hopeless.)* Can you read it?

OFFICER BAD COP: *(Stands up.)* I can't read. DAMN IT. *(Pulls out a revolver and shoots the license plate.)*

SERGEANT MEH COP: Well... I suppose that's a dead end in the case. *(Pushes some buttons on the keypad and speaks into the telephone.)* Hey, uh, Central to Sixty-nine Peter, we can't track the license plate. Bye bye, over.

The "Presink" is quickly wheeled offstage, and SERGEANT MEH COP, OFFICER GOOD COP, and OFFICER BAD COP all exit stage left. Noir music plays.

MR. MISTER: *(Into the portable radio.)* Ten four. Over. *(To himself.)* An untraceable license plate. damn, this killer's good. Well, not good in that way—

NARRATOR: Not even a *deus ex machina* can lead the Chicagalo Police Department to this elusive killer. Luckily, Mr. Mister is the best of the best, and, with the culmination of numerous clues at the crime scene, formulated a plan to catch the killer.

MR. MISTER exits stage right.

NARRATOR: One day passed...

Lights transition to the midday lighting.

NARRATOR: And one night...

Lights transition into the midnight lighting.

NARRATOR: And on that night, Mr. Mister put his plan into action...
Actually, it may have been one day, one night, and then Mr. Mister and Detective Plant acted the day after that because it was dark outsi—

It is the playwright's original intention for the following line to be shouted from the control booth. However, if the stage does not have a control booth, the alternative is to have the techs offstage say the line.

TECHS: *(Primal gorilla noises, booing, "Make up your mind," "I hate you," "Get off the stage loser," etc.)*

NARRATOR: I seem to have angered the lighting crew. Let's just say they did it at night. It's cooler that way anyway.

Blackout.

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

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