

MR WINKY: MURDER AT A PARTY

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Steven Stack

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MR WINKY: MURDER AT A PARTY

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SYNOPSIS: A group of actors gathers together for their annual theatre games party. It's a smashing success until they play Mr. Winky - and then victims turn into real victims when the game gets serious. Dead serious. But they're actors, and the show must go on. *Mr. Winky: Murder at a Party* is an over-the-top comedic short play. The actors play real improv games while trying to discover Mr. Winky's true identity. The cast of exaggerated theatre stereotypes will be fun yet challenging for a cast of teen actors.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 WOMEN, 1 MAN, 1 EITHER)

MARDI (m/f).....A theatre director. (36 lines)

STEPHANIE (f).....Always the female lead with one exception, has never gotten over it. (29 lines)

SPENCER (m).....Typically the male lead, has movement problems (22 lines)

BETHANY (f).....Supporting roles only, does not get along with Caroline. (17 lines)

AUDREY (f).....A techie and actor, doesn't always fit in. (14 lines)

CAROLINE (f).....Was a one-time lead, likes Spencer. (29 lines)

TARA (f).....Believes she is amazing on stage. She is not. (non-speaking)

DETECTIVE OCTOBER (m).....Has been chasing the elusive "Mr. Winky" for many months. (30 lines)

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET

The set is a basic living room with chairs and an area set up for “snacks” including a punch bowl.

PROPS

- ☐ Punch bowl
- ☐ Mirror
- ☐ Snacks
- ☐ Timer

AUTHOR’S NOTE

Stephanie, as the killer, must wink at each person she kills. At the beginning of the play, she can just be seen walking away from Tara. Spencer should also be close by. Stephanie’s winks should not be obvious, but it is important that she does really wink at each person she kills.

RULES FOR GAMES THAT ARE USED:

MR. WINKY (MURDER AT A PARTY OR MR. MURDER)

Actors are told to go into a space and take a freeze as if they are at a party. They decide what type of personality they are during the freeze. Note: Caroline chooses the personality of a doctor. They then are asked to close their eyes, and the director picks “Mr. Winky,” or the Killer. The party begins and the characters interact with each other. Mr. Winky interacts but “winks” at different people. The people that are winked at die dramatically a little while after they are winked at. The rest of the characters react to the murder and the game continues until there is no one left.

KNOTS

Actors get in a tight standing circle and then reach into the center to grab a hand. They cannot grab the hand of the people beside them, or the same person’s hand, and they cannot grab their own hand. Once everyone has a hand, they must go about untying the knot without ever letting go of the hands that they are holding.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Everyone stands at one end with one person in the middle of the room. That person starts miming an activity. As soon as the activity is clear, another player approaches and asks “What are you doing?” The first player answers something that has nothing to do with what he’s actually doing. Example: If Player 1 is cutting someone’s hair, when asked what he’s doing, he might say, “I’m reading the newspaper.” First player moves away, and the second player starts miming the activity stated by the previous player. A third player comes up to Player 2, asks what he is doing, and so on.

DUDE!!!

Players sit in a circle and look down. The leader counts to three and everyone looks up at someone. If two people are looking at each other, they yell “Dude” and lie down. They are now out. The game continues until there is only one person or no one left.

SETTING: *A living room.*

AT RISE: *We see many people walking around and talking. They are shaking hands and such. Then, TARA screams and dies. People react as SPENCER, the killer, complains to MARDI that he didn't wink at her. The game continues and SPENCER kills one or two but not enough for MARDI.*

MARDI: Mr. Winky, the pace of murders needs to increase. We do have many more games to play tonight. *(The game continues and more people die. Then a buzzer goes off and everyone freezes.)* Time. Survivors, who do you think the killer was? *(All at once, the survivors say the same name.)*

EVERYONE EXCEPT SPENCER: Spencer.

SPENCER: Someone else. *(They all laugh.)* That's such a wonderful game, Ms. Mardi. Thanks for letting us play it first.

MARDI: There could be no other game to begin our 3rd Annual Theatre Game Party. *(The students cheer and applaud.)*

BETHANY: I remember the first time we played it and Caroline wouldn't die no matter how many times I winked at her.

CAROLINE: I still say you weren't winking at me.

STEPHANIE: She clearly was, Caroline. We all saw it.

CAROLINE: Well, I didn't see it.

AUDREY: That's because you were looking down so you wouldn't die.

CAROLINE: No, I wasn't.

MARDI: You were, and that's why I killed you myself. Anyway, if everyone could take a moment to re-center themselves before we play our next game. *(Everyone starts talking excitedly. Then STEPHANIE notices that TARA isn't getting up.)*

STEPHANIE: Enough with the method acting, Tara. The game is over. *(SPENCER turns around and looks at TARA.)*

SPENCER: Yeah, I didn't kill you anyway. When she fell I was like, "Oh, god, diva. Have to be first at everything."

MARDI: Now Spencer, don't be rude. Tara, it's re-centering time. You can get out of character now.

TARA doesn't move. AUDREY walks over to TARA and checks her pulse.

AUDREY: She's not acting. She's dead and I think she was . . . murdered. *(Everyone starts looking around at each other then burst out into laughter.)*

MARDI: I'm sure that's not true.

AUDREY: She's not breathing.

STEPHANIE: That's why it's called method acting, Audrey.

AUDREY: She's not acting!

SPENCER: And how would you know that?

AUDREY: I can tell if someone is breathing or not.

CAROLINE: Guys, let me check. I was the one who played the doctor. *(Checks. Then stands up.)* She's not acting. *(Everyone gasps.)* Nor is she dead. *(Everyone gasps.)* She's asleep.

AUDREY: Yeah, dead asleep.

BETHANY: Clever, Audrey. But Caroline's the doctor—

AUDREY: She's not a doctor.

BETHANY: In the show she was. Besides, what would a cricket player without any lines know?

CAROLINE: How to play cricket. Like I know how to play doctor. *(They all look at her.)* Play a doctor.

STEPHANIE: Can we continue our games without Tara, Ms. Mardi?

MARDI: Indeed, because as I always say . . . the show must go on. When Tara awakens, she can jump right in and play. After re-centering, of course. *(AUDREY goes and sits down.)* For our next game we shall play a sporting game of Knots. *(A loud cheer erupts.)* Now remember the rules. We form a tight, tight circle and join hands with someone who is . . .

BETHANY: Not beside us.

MARDI: While not grabbing . . .

SPENCER: The same hands.

MARDI: And finally, we don't take . . .

STEPHANIE: our own hands. *(Everyone laughs.)*

MARDI: Wonderful. Now let's play. *(Everyone moves in except AUDREY.)* Audrey, come on over.

AUDREY: I'm not in the mood. *(MARDI walks over to her.)*

MARDI: Was Hamlet in the mood for an existential crisis?

AUDREY: Maybe...or maybe not?

MARDI: Was Willy Loman ready to take that late night drive when he found out he was worth more dead than alive?

SPENCER: Someone forgot to say spoiler alert. *(They all laugh.)*

MARDI: Was he, Audrey?

AUDREY: I'm guessing no.

MARDI: He wasn't, and neither was Hamlet.

BETHANY: But they did it anyway. Because they followed Ms. Mardi's number one rule: always play through. So stop being annoying and do the same thing.

AUDREY: It's hard to play through when Tara's lying - -

CAROLINE: Asleep on the floor? I don't think that's hard to play through at all.

AUDREY: For the last time, she is not asleep, she's - -

SPENCER: Dead? Okay, Audrey, since using Ms. Mardi's superb analogies didn't do it for you, perhaps something closer to your heart will. Let's say she is dead. Is your having to play through her "death" any harder than the time I had to play through when my pants fell off in the middle of my monologue during *Twelfth Night*? *(AUDREY starts to say something but then STEPHANIE speaks up.)*

STEPHANIE: Or when the call buzzer wouldn't work in *Harvey* and I had to change my line from "Nurse, hurry up!" to "Nurse, hurry up and fix this buzzer." Is it? *(AUDREY doesn't say anything.)* The answer is . . .

SPENCER/STEPHANIE: No.

AUDREY: What are you guys not getting? She is dead.

BETHANY: So what? She'll still be dead after the game. *(Everyone looks at AUDREY, who finally relents.)*

AUDREY: Fine. It is one of my favorite games after all.

MARDI: That's the spirit.

AUDREY reluctantly walks over and reaches in. They begin playing Knots. After playing for a while, AUDREY screams and goes limp. BETHANY, who is holding one of her hands, notices that she has gone limp.

BETHANY: Stop messing around, Audrey! You're ruining the game!

CAROLINE: I know! Your dead weight is kind of heavy.

STEPHANIE: It's the late night snacking. She's been doing a lot of that. *(AUDREY falls to the floor with a thud. Everyone backs up.)*

MARDI: We have lost. *(A groan is heard from everyone but Ms. MARDI.)* I'm sorry. We simply cannot let go of hands. *(CAROLINE, who had knelt down to check on AUDREY, looks up to MS. MARDI.)*

CAROLINE: Ms. Mardi. Something's wrong with Audrey. I think she fell asleep too.

MARDI: I find that highly doubtful. She is probably doing a little improv.

SPENCER: Wait, but say she wasn't doing improv, and say she really was asleep or even dead. Then we wouldn't lose the game because it's not our fault she fell asleep or died.

MARDI: No, in fact, you still lose.

EVERYONE: What?

MARDI: What's Mardi's number one rule? You . . .

EVERYONE: Always play through.

BETHANY: Even when someone falls asleep?

MARDI: Yes.

STEPHANIE: Even if someone dies?

MARDI: Especially when someone dies. *(MARDI checks AUDREY.)* As apparently Audrey has. *(Standing up, she walks over to TARA and checks her.)* And apparently she was right about Tara as well. *(Turns to CAROLINE.)* You should work harder on your character bio next time. *(CAROLINE starts to protest.)* Shhh! *(Stands up and appears delighted.)* This is an unexpected plot twist.

STEPHANIE: Wait, do you think they were murdered?

SPENCER: How could they have been murdered, Stephanie? We were together the entire time.

STEPHANIE: Which is a perfect way to murder people. And . . . Audrey was the only one that believed Tara was dead and possibly murdered. So maybe—

BETHANY: The killer got rid of Audrey because she was annoying. *(They all look at her.)*

STEPHANIE: I was going to say that maybe the murderer suspected that Audrey might know something and—

BETHANY: And killed her because she was annoying.

STEPHANIE: *(To BETHANY.)* Stop. *(BETHANY shrugs.)*

MARDI: Listen, everyone. Clearly, what happened here was that these two simply screamed, waited and then died dramatically. Happens all the time. *(DETECTIVE OCTOBER enters.)*

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: Does it?

MARDI: Who are you?

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: Detective October. And let me tell you, people don't just do that.

CAROLINE: Unless they're playing—

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: "Mr. Winky: Murder at a Party" aka "Killer."
(They all turn.) That's right. Only in this version - they don't get up.

MARDI: What are you talking about?

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: I'm talking about a real life Mr. Winky who takes "Murder at a Party" aka "Killer" a little too seriously. I've been hunting him or her for months now. People dying left and right around me. But the problem is, it's hard to find a suspect when their only weapon is a wink, which everyone in the world has. *(Looks off.)* Except for the ones that don't.

SPENCER: It's just a game.

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: Is it? Maybe normally, but these two dead bodies say that, tonight, it's more than just than a game.

BETHANY: But we had stopped playing "Murder at a Party" aka "Killer." We were playing "Knots."

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: For Mr. Winky, the party never stops.

STEPHANIE: How do you know it's Mr. Winky? Couldn't it just be the punch?

CAROLINE: Hey, I made that punch.

STEPHANIE: It's terrible. *(DETECTIVE OCTOBER takes a sip of the punch.)*

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: It is terrible, but I suspect not poisoned. *(Throws the rest of the drink on SPENCER, who says "Hey!"*
DETECTIVE OCTOBER looks at SPENCER's shirt.) It's not. Poison stains. But that's not the reason I know Mr. Winky is here.

MARDI: What is it, detective?

DETECTIVE OCTOBER: A note I found in my pocket. It says that Mr. Winky is here. *(Passes the note around and all of them react to it in an over-the-top style. Finally, MARDI sees it and reads it.)*

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