

# *POLTER-HEIST*

An Audience-Participation Murder Mystery-Comedy

*By Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose*



Copyright 1999, by Tony Schwartz & Marylou Ambrose

## **PERFORMANCE LICENSE**

This play is the property of The Lakeside Players, Box 389, Tafton, PA. All professional and amateur theater companies must pay a royalty to The Lakeside Players before performing this play. This includes public readings, performances given for charity, and performances where no admission is charged. The following notice must appear on all programs and advertising: "Produced by special arrangement with The Lakeside Players, Tafton, PA." In addition, the authors' names must appear on all programs and advertising.

All other rights, including television and radio broadcasting and motion picture rights, are controlled by The Lakeside Players. Photocopying or reproducing all or part of this book in any way is forbidden **with the exception of copying scripts for your cast.**

Royalties for *Polter-Heist* for up to ten performances are included in the \$75.00 purchase price of this script package, payable by credit card, check or money order to Tonylou Productions. More than ten performances must be negotiated with Tonylou Productions.

Please address all inquiries to: The Lakeside Players, c/o Marylou Ambrose, Box 389, Tafton, PA 18464. Phone: 570-226-6207. Email: [tonylou@ptd.net](mailto:tonylou@ptd.net)

**[www.lakesideplayers.net](http://www.lakesideplayers.net)**

Dear Murder Mystery Fan:

Thanks for buying a Lakeside Players original murder mystery package. In this package you'll find:

- FAQs about our audience-participation murder mysteries
- 1 complete murder mystery script that may be photocopied for your cast members.
- Suggested script for master of ceremonies
- Production Notes (properties, costumes, music, lighting effects, helpful hints)
- Instructions for game and floating table
- Basic floor plan
- Sample news release

Whether you're a seasoned actor/director or a rookie, this envelope contains everything you need to stage the perfect crime! Happy sleuthing!

*Tony & Marylou*

## FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

### ***Does performing in an audience-participation murder mystery require lots of acting experience?***

No! Our actors range from friends with no experience to people who direct their own theater companies. We usually give inexperienced people smaller roles and then try them in larger roles as they gain confidence. More than experience, we look for the ability to ham it up, to mingle with the audience, to memorize lines, and to perform without stage fright. Once a person meets these qualifications, we work with them on developing their characters.

### ***How many weeks of rehearsals are needed?***

Days of rehearsals are all that are needed. All our shows are scripted, one-act plays (not just flow charts), around 30 pages long, and with an average of 8 actors/show. No one has an overwhelming amount of lines. The key is to give actors their scripts a couple weeks before the first rehearsal so they can familiarize themselves with the play and start developing their characters and memorizing their lines early. Four, 2-3 hour rehearsals usually work for us, but you might want to add more, especially if this is your first murder mystery.

### ***Suppose the audience doesn't want to participate?***

No problem. Our shows don't depend on heavy audience participation like some murder mysteries do. Early on, we discovered that most people are *afraid* you'll ask them to get up on stage and do something. This fear might even keep them from enjoying a murder mystery. That's why we've designed our shows as scripted, one-act plays. Audience members aren't asked to play parts or do anything but sit and watch if that's what they want. The audience-participation part of our shows consists of pre-show mingling with the cast; getting people involved in conga lines, mambo lessons, sing-alongs, or games; and in the end, having them vote on "whodunit" and why. It's all strictly voluntary, and we tell them that up front, before the show begins.

### ***How much ad-libbing is required?***

Not as much as you might think. Most ad-libbing is done during pre-show mingling, when actors drift from table to table introducing their characters to the audience. During the show, actors should stick as closely as possible to their scripts, just like in a conventional stage play. Of course, with the audience often only an arm's length away, it's tempting to toss off an ad lib or two. That's fine. Some of our best lines crop up this way--and we keep using them!

### ***What's the best place to perform these shows?***

Anywhere! The beauty of our murder mysteries is that they're so adaptable and portable, they can be performed in almost any venue. Admittedly, we do most of our shows in restaurants and country clubs, where dinner is part of the package, but we've also performed in church halls and on theater stages. It's wonderful when we have lots of space, but even our most extravagant shows can be performed in a small area. In fact, our very first murder mystery was performed in an old inn, with most of the action occurring in a doorway between two dining rooms!

### ***Does dinner have to be part of the package?***

No! Our shows can be performed just like traditional one-act plays, with the audience sitting in chairs, rather than at tables. No matter what your arrangement or venue, be sure to thoroughly discuss the evening's agenda with the people in charge. They'll be happy to accommodate you, as long as they understand how things are supposed to go and why. Handing them a written schedule of events is also helpful. You'll find a sample handout in this package.

### ***Do you need a Master of Ceremonies?***

Yes. Someone needs to welcome the guests, explain how the show works, explain the voting process, announce the prizewinners, introduce the actors, and then say thank you and goodnight. The director is the logical choice. If the director acts in the show as well, he or she SHOULD NOT be in character when performing MC duties.

### ***How do you choose the murderer?***

Our shows are written so that almost everyone in the cast has a good motive for murder. Changing murderers is especially important if you're performing several shows in the same venue or the same area. Then it won't matter if audience members tell their friends "whodunit."

## Agenda for Interactive Murder Mysteries

Dear Restaurant or Theater Owner:

This tried-and-true format keeps the evening running smoothly and everyone happy—the audience, the restaurant or theater owners, and the actors. It's just a suggestion—feel free to revise it to fit your establishment.

**Cocktails/Mingling:** The cast mingles (in costume and in character) with the audience, setting up the plot for the main show later on. *Suggested time: 15-30 minutes.*

**Dinner:** The actors leave the guests alone to eat in peace. This way, they can enjoy their dinner more and then give their full attention to the show. When a show is performed during dinner, the audience misses half of it because they're busy eating, waitresses are trying to serve, and there's a lot of plate and glass noise. *Suggested time: 1-1½ hours*

**The Show:** As soon as the tables are cleared and you give us the go-ahead, we take over the rest of the evening. We act as MC's, perform the murder mystery, award the prizes,\* and then say thank you and good night. Our shows are essentially one-act plays. The audience sits and watches, absorbing clues, until the murder occurs. Participation is in the form of conga lines, mambo lessons, games, and sing-alongs. *Approximate time: 1¼ hours, including ballot casting and closing remarks.*

**Ballot Casting/Dessert:** We instruct guests to fill in their ballot sheets (saying “whodunit” and why) and turn them in as quickly as possible. The judges go through them and determine the winner. **This usually occurs when the restaurant serves dessert.** This keeps people from sitting around idly while the judges determine the winners. It also helps restaurants sell more desserts if they're served a la cart, because guests have worked up an appetite since dinner.

**Closing Remarks:** We announce winners, award prizes, introduce the cast, thank everyone, and say goodnight. Then it's back in your hands.

\* **Prizes:** Prizes are the restaurant's responsibility. Suggestions are a bottle of wine, lunch or dinner for two, or a small gift. We usually have three prizes.

**If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us!**

# *POLTER-HEIST*

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

**PHYLLIS LODGE:** Domineering owner of Mouldering Pines Inn.

**JIM LODGE:** Owner of Mouldering Pines Inn; Phyllis's henpecked husband.

**MADAM ZELDA VON SCHPOOKUM:** Eccentric chairperson of Bogeyman Outreach Organization (BOO)

**PROFESSOR LIONEL SPECTER:** Famous expert on the paranormal

**DANA SCULLERY:** Member of BOO's Washington, D.C., chapter

**FOX SMOLDER:** Member of BOO's Washington, D.C., chapter

**JANET FROM ANOTHER PLANET:** Wacky DJ

## SETTING

**Time:** The present

The entire play takes place in the dining room (or conference room) of the Mouldering Pines Inn. Furniture is minimal: A high table at STAGE RIGHT with a boom box and a stool for the DJ and another high table at STAGE LEFT with two stools. STAGE LEFT table is for the séance and should be covered with a tablecloth and have a candle in the center. You may use additional ghostly decor. Because there are several ghostly sound effects in this play, you'll also need a sound technician backstage. (*See **Production Notes** for details on properties, set decor, and sound effects.*)

## *Polter-Heist*

**Master of Ceremonies:** Welcome to the *(Insert your company's name)* production of *Polter-Heist!* Tonight, you're part of the action. So keep your eyes and ears open for clues, because before the night's over, someone will be ruthlessly murdered. And it's up to you to guess "whodunit" and why.

How many of you have been to a murder mystery before? Well, this show is a little different. We won't ask you to take a part, or get up on stage, or do anything but watch if you don't want to. So you shy people can come out from under your tables now and just relax and enjoy the show. Your main job is to pay attention and play detective—and then to vote at the end. The first *(Insert how many prizes you have)* people to correctly guess the murderer and the motive will win a prize. I'll explain the voting process to you in more detail after the show.

And now—on with the show!

### Scene One

*About 8 p.m. in the dining room of the Mouldering Pines Inn. Lively but ghostly music is playing. At STAGE RIGHT, JANET is struggling with the sound equipment, trying to make it work. PHYLLIS enters from BACKSTAGE LEFT and wanders about for a few seconds, looking excited. JIM enters from BACKSTAGE LEFT.*

**Jim:** Phyllis! Phyllis! Come here! I want to talk to you!

**Phyllis:** Not now! Can't you see I'm busy with the guests? Oh, this is wonderful! A full house for the weekend!

**Jim:** Yeah, but we're tricking these people. They're here under false pretenses. If they find out the truth, we could be out of business.

**Phyllis:** *(In his face)* I have news for you--another week or two with no guests and we'd be out of business anyway. We're broke, Jim! This inn has been empty since the day we took it over. Until now. My plan is working beautifully!

**Jim:** It's not right, Phyllis. We could get in a lot of trouble.

**Phyllis:** We're already in a lot of trouble. So keep your mouth shut and don't screw this weekend up. Just do what I tell you. *(Turns away and paces dramatically.)* Oh, why did I ever listen to you in the first place? Why did I let you spend all of my late husband's life insurance money on this white elephant? What was I thinking? I hate it here! I . . . I broke a nail this morning!

**Jim:** Oh come on, Phyllis, it's beautiful here. You'll learn to like it.

**Phyllis:** It was beautiful in the Hamptons, where I used to live. When poor Reggie died unexpectedly, he left me with a beautiful home and a big life insurance check! Then right after you and I were married, the Hampton house mysteriously burned down, and in my vulnerable state, I let you convince me to use Reggie's life insurance money to buy this dump! And now we're broke. I must have been crazy!

**Jim:** This inn was built by my great grandfather, but the family lost it during the depression. It's always been my dream to buy it back, to have it owned by our family again. It's what my great grandfather would have wanted. Oh Phyllis, you just have to give it some time!

**Phyllis:** I've given it a whole month! Isn't that enough? (*Walk to window.*) There isn't even a decent shopping mall around here. Where are they? Hidden in the woods somewhere? I mean, who knew there were so many trees?

**Jim:** But trees are beautiful, why . . .

**Phyllis:** (*Whirl to face him.*) Who are you, Al Gore? Now stop daydreaming and get down to business! We finally got some guests to stay here, and my brilliant plan should keep them coming. Before long, we'll be raking in the dough!

**Jim:** Yeah, but I still don't like this plan of yours.

**Phyllis:** Have you got a better one?

**Jim:** No, but . . .

**Phyllis:** Then shut up and do what you're told!

**Jim:** But Phyllis, a *fake ghost*? I don't like it. It's dishonest. And where did you get that whacked-out DJ? (*Gestures at JANET*) She's not playing with a full deck. (*Looks at audience*) Of course, neither is anyone else here.

**Phyllis:** That's "Janet from Another Planet." She offered to do the job for free. Her flyer was hanging at the grocery store. She said she's been in a mental hospital for the past 15 years. She was released a couple of months ago, got her hands on some sound equipment, and is trying to get started in the DJ business. "Free" was about all we could afford, and I'm pretty sure she's harmless. (*Glances at JANET*) Unfortunately, she seems to be having a bit of trouble figuring out how to work the equipment. (*To JANET*) How are we doing over there, Janet?

**Janet:** I've been away too long. When did they start making records so small? (*Holds up a CD*) And every time I put them on the record player nothing happens. Maybe it's a bad needle.

**Jim:** Those aren't records, they're CDs!



**Janet:** CDs! I'm talking music and he's talking banking—and they say *I'm* crazy! Don't worry Mrs. Lodge, I'll figure it out. *(Continues struggling with equipment)*

**Jim:** That wilted flower child over there *(Looks at JANET, who gives him the peace sign)* and the rest of these kooks scare me, Phyllis. So does your idea of inventing a fake ghost. *(Looks at audience)* Where did these people come from anyway?

**Phyllis:** *(Proudly)* I advertised in magazines and websites related to the paranormal that we have genuine ghosts here at Mouldering Pines Inn. I figured at best we'd get a couple kooks who believe in that stuff to come and stay for a weekend and “ghost hunt.” I never dreamed we'd get an entire paranormal organization to hold a convention here. This is wonderful! And they're big drinkers, too. We'll make a killing this weekend!

**Jim:** Maybe, but have you taken a good look at them? These BOO people seem like a bunch of weirdoes to me. I don't like it. I don't like anything about this whole weekend!

**Phyllis:** Stop your whining! Their money's green, isn't it?

**Jim:** Yeah, but I'm nervous, Phyllis. Can't we just forget the fake ghost stuff? Let me try to think of something else.

**Phyllis:** You've done enough thinking. That's why we're in this mess. From now on, *I'll* do the thinking around here. You just stick to the stuff you're good at, like carrying heavy things and opening jars.

**Jim:** But Phyllis, I . . .

*(MADAM ZELDA VON SCHPOOKUM enters from BACKSTAGE LEFT and interrupts PHYLLIS and JIM.)*

**Madame Zelda:** Excuse me, Mr. Lodge. I am Madame Zelda Von Schpookum, the host for tonight's festivities. Would you be so kind as to introduce me to the other guests?

**Jim:** *(Stage whisper to PHYLLIS)* Madame Von Fruitcake wants me to introduce her.

**Phyllis:** *(Smacks JIM on arm, then talks to MADAM ZELDA)* He'd be delighted. Won't you, Jim? *(Smacks him on arm again)*

**Jim:** Why of course. I'd be delighted, Madame Von Fruit . . .uh . . . Schpookum.

*(JIM takes CENTER STAGE and introduces MADAME ZELDA.)*

**Jim:** Ladies and gentlemen, ladies and gentlemen, may have your attention, please. Mrs. Lodge and I are delighted to have the BOO organization here this weekend. We hope you're enjoying your stay. And now I'd like to introduce to you the host for this

weekend's BOO festivities, Madame Zelda Von Schpookum! (*Encourages audience to applaud; then moves back to UPSTAGE LEFT along with PHYLLIS.*)

**Madame Zelda:** Good evening, good evening everyone. I'm Madame Zelda Von Schpookum, national chairperson of the Bogeyman Outreach Organization, better known as BOO. It's wonderful to see so many BOO members here for this special event! As you all know, our motto is "Ghosts have feelings, too." (*Encourages audience to chime in*) So all together now, let's all say our motto: "Ghosts have feelings, too!" Wonderful! Now, before we go any further, I'd like to introduce some special guests. First, allow me to introduce to you, all the way from London, England, Professor Lionel Specter, noted expert on paranormal activity and metaphysical matters. Professor, would you say a few words, please?

*(During the pre-show mingling, LIONEL wanders around peering under paintings, potted plants, and whatever else is available in the room. If he can look under someone's chair or under a table without insulting the guests, do so, but use discretion. During the show itself, LIONEL should keep his wandering/searching to a minimum so as not to upstage the other actors. Search just enough to get the point across. At this point in the script, he should be so engrossed in his search that he doesn't hear MADAM ZELDA calling him. He should also be close enough to the stage that MADAM ZELDA doesn't have to travel too far to get him. She finally walks over to him, takes his arm, and almost drags him toward CENTER STAGE.)*

**Madame Zelda:** (*Grabbing his arm*) Professor, please come and say a few words to our members!

**Lionel:** (*Taken by surprise*) Me? Say a few words? Oh no, I don't . . . (*Realizes he has no other choice*) Well . . . uh . . . good evening everyone. I'm . . . uh . . . Professor Lionel Specter, noted British . . . uh . . . paranormalist. I've begun my . . .

**Madame Zelda:** Excuse me, Professor--paranormalist?

**Lionel:** Are you questioning my credentials?

**Madame Zelda:** No! It's just that I've never heard that term before. I . . .

**Lionel:** Please! Allow me to continue.

**Madame Zelda:** Yes, yes, by all means, continue.

**Lionel:** As I was saying, as a paranormalist . . . I've begun my investigation of any . . . paranormalizations . . . that may be, uh, paranormalizing . . . at this, uh, suspected paranormal location. And as soon as I discover anything of a, uh, paranormal nature, I'll notify you all immediately. Thank you. (*He scurries off, walking past JANET, and then continues wandering around room, searching unobtrusively.*)

**Janet:** (*Calls to LIONEL, flirting*) Hi, Professor. What's your sign? Liberal or preservative?

**Madame Zelda:** Oh, thank you, Professor! (*Encourages audience to applaud*) I'm sure we're all hoping the Professor is successful in discovering a poltergeist. After all, that's what we're all here for, isn't it? And now, I'd like to introduce two members from our Washington, D.C., chapter of BOO--Mr. Fox Smolder and Ms. Dana Skullery!

(*MADAM ZELDA points to SMOLDER and SCULLERY who are lurking in the audience and encourages audience to applaud. SMOLDER and SKULLERY start to panic, turning their backs to the audience for a minute as if they're either shy or don't want to be recognized. THEY finally turn to the audience and sheepishly give a small wave, but say nothing.*)

**Madame Zelda:** I see we're a bit shy. That's okay. We'll all get to know one another in time.

**Janet:** Trench coats, huh? The last time I wore a trench coat, I almost got 3 to 7 years!

**Madame Zelda:** Well, let's move on. Now, as you all know, the Lodges are convinced they have paranormal activity going on here at the Mouldering Pines Inn. They think they might have a poltergeist--a ghost--living here. Our job is to determine if this is true, and if it is, then we must make contact and do our best to help this spirit pass over to the other side. Now, before we begin, we need to ask for a blessing to protect us from geopathic stress. After all, we wouldn't want to encourage any naughty paranormal activities.

**Jim:** What a crackpot!

Phyllis: Shhh . . . be quiet! I think our opportunity is coming. Be ready to move when I tell you!

**Madame Zelda:** (*To audience*) Okay, I'm going to need everyone's help. Rev up those 6<sup>th</sup> senses of yours and repeat after me. (*She raises her hands and closes her eyes.*)

**Phyllis:** (*Stage whisper to JIM*) Okay, Jim--go!

**Jim:** Oh Phyllis, I don't want to!

**Phyllis:** (*Menacingly*) Go!

(*JIM runs BACKSTAGE LEFT.*)

**Madame Zelda:** Okay, now, repeat after me. (*Starts chanting*) Bibbity, bobbity, boo, bibbity, bobbity, boo . . . (*If audience doesn't start chanting with her, MADAM ZELDA should stop and start again, encouraging them once again to join her.*)

*(While MADAM ZELDA is in her trance, JIM LODGE “floats” in with a flowered sheet over his head, making ghostly sounds. He stands behind MADAME ZELDA going “booooooooo . . . .”)*

**Madame Zelda:** Yes, yes, I’m beginning to pick up psychic vibrations. I can feel them. They’re very close. *(MADAM ZELDA opens her eyes, and it’s a cat-and-mouse game for a few seconds, because every time she turns toward the sound of JIM’S voice, he maneuvers out of her sight. Finally, she turns and sees him with the flowered sheet and realizes what’s up.)*

**Madame Zelda:** I . . . *(Indignant, she pulls the sheet off of JIM.)* Mr. Lodge! Are you mocking me? Has this entire haunting of yours all been a hoax?

**Jim:** *(To Phyllis)* I told you this wouldn’t work!

**Phyllis:** *(Snatching sheet from JIM )* A flowered sheet? You idiot!

**Jim:** I couldn’t find any white ones!

**Phyllis:** Be patient, Madame Zelda. There will be a real ghost here in just a second. Because I’m going to kill my stupid husband!

*(Suddenly, ghostly sounds are heard. See Production Notes for details.)*

**Madame Zelda:** Wait, wait, wait! There *is* something or someone else here with us! Didn’t you hear that?

**Phyllis:** Hear what? I didn’t hear anything.

**Jim:** *(Terrified)* I don’t want to hear anything!

*(Another ghostly sound is heard.)*

**Jim:** Phyllis, do you have someone else in on our hoax?

**Phyllis:** No, do you?

**Jim:** No.

**Jim & Phyllis:** *(Embrace each other and scream.)* Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

**Madame Zelda:** Shhhhhh . . . you’ll frighten the specter away!

**Lionel:** *(Hearing his name and starting to walk over.)* Professor Specter? But I’m right here.

**Madame Zelda:** No, not you! Now, everyone be quiet while I try to make contact. I'm going to have to hold a séance! I'll need an assistant . . . let's see (*JANET waves her hand in the air*). Yes, you (*She motions to JANET, and JANET scurries over.*) Now sit down and put your hands on the table and concentrate. (*JANET sits. They both put their hands in position and make the table "float." See instructions, page 38.*) Bibbity, bobbity, boo, bibbity, bobbity, boo, bibbity . . . there! (*Points to behind audience.*) Over there. There's a faint image over there. I can't quite make it out yet. Does anyone see it? I'm probably the only one able to pick up the psychic vibrations. The only one who can actually see it. I'll try to make further contact. (*MADAM ZELDA'S eyes "follow" the ghost as she walks through the audience toward the STAGE LEFT TABLE. She should motion to the ghost, encouraging her to come forward. JANET gets scared and runs back to her table.*)

**Jim:** D . . . d . . . d . . . don't bother!

**Madam Zelda:** (*To ghost.*) Careful, dear! Don't trip over that man's foot.

**Phyllis:** (*Riveted*) Quiet, Jim! Let's see what happens.

**Jim:** I don't want to see! (*Covers eyes with his hands, but then peeks through fingers.*)

**Madame Zelda:** The image is coming toward me! It's becoming clearer. It's, it's a . . . woman! And she's wearing a wedding gown! She's right here before me! (*MADAM ZELDA'S eyes follow the "ghost" as she approaches the STAGE LEFT table.*) Hello, dear. Why don't you sit down? That's right, you sit right there, dear. (*Ghost sits on stool closest to wall. MADAM ZELDA pauses as if listening*) Excuse me? (*Pause*) Why, you look just fine, dear, all things considered. You don't mind if I take notes, do you? (*Pulls a small notebook and pen out of her pocket.*) Now, why don't we begin by you telling me your name. (*Pause*) Olivia. (*To audience*) Her name is Olivia. (*Talks to ghost*) And how did you die, dear? (*Pause; then talk to audience*) She was murdered! (*Talks to ghost*) And when was that, dear? (*Pause. Date should be the month and day of your performance, except 100 years before. To audience*) Why, that was 100 years ago . . . tonight! (*Organ music plays. See Production Notes, 36, for details.*) (*Talks to ghost*) Is there some connection between you and this place? (*Pause*) You say you're related to someone here? (*Pause*) You say that you're Mr. Lodge's great aunt!

**Jim:** (*Terrified*) No! I'm not related to any dead people!

**Phyllis:** Shut up and listen!

**Madame Zelda:** How can we help you? Would you like us to help you pass over to the other side? (*Pause*) No? But you don't want to stay here? (*Pause*) You say it's too "disturbing?" But where do you want to go? (*Pause*) You want to relocate to . . . (*Insert name of a local restaurant other than the one where you're performing. Organ music plays.*)

**Phyllis:** (*Screams*) Noooooooo!

**Jim:** Yeeeeeeees! Go, go! I'll get the door!

**Phyllis:** Knock it off, Jim!

**Madame Zelda:** (*Ghostly sounds are heard. Madame Zelda's eyes follow the ghost as she leaves.*) Olivia wait! Don't leave yet! We have so much more to talk about!

(*LIONEL, who has been observing from sidelines, walks over to stool where ghost was sitting and begins talking to it.*)

**Lionel:** Well . . . Olivia. It's nice to meet you. (*LIONEL waves his hand over the stool as if feeling for something. He then checks readings on some sort of electronic device he's been carrying around [see Production Notes for details]. He should act as if he doesn't know what he's doing.*)

**Madame Zelda:** Professor, she's not there anymore. She's gone.

**Lionel:** What? Oh . . . uh (*Taps electronic device to cover up*) . . . batteries must be dead. (*He scurries off.*)

(*Action shifts to JIM and PHYLLIS, who walk to CENTER STAGE.*)

**Jim:** (*Hanging onto PHYLLIS*) I'm scared, Phyllis. I think this ghost is the real thing. I remember my dad telling me stories about great aunt Olivia. There's no way Madame Zelda could've known about her.

**Phyllis:** (*Shakes him off*) I believe it's the real thing, too. This is wonderful!

**Jim:** This is terrible!

**Phyllis:** No, wonderful! Now I don't have to worry about you screwing things up with flowered sheets anymore. I have the real thing!

**Jim:** (*Finally realizing*) You mean you *want* the ghost here?

**Phyllis:** Of course I do! When the word gets out to more wacko organizations like this one, we'll be booked solid every day of the year!

**Jim:** (*Trying a different approach*) You know, Phyllis, you were right. There *are* way too many trees here. We should go back to the Hamptons *now*! I'll start packing!

**Phyllis:** Oh no, we're staying right here. I've put too damn much work and too damn much money into this place to leave now. Are you forgetting all those setbacks we had that cost us a fortune? First there was the fire in the kitchen, then the fire in the linen

closet. Thank God we caught them in time! Now we have a chance not only to recover our losses but to make big bucks. We're sitting on a potential gold mine!

**Jim:** But Madame Zelda says she's going to help relocate the ghost.

**Phyllis:** I know what she said. But if she tries to relocate *our* ghost, I'll kill her!

**Jim:** But . . .

**Phyllis:** No buts! Now, go fluff a pillow or something.

*(JANET approaches PHYLLIS and JIM.)*

**Janet:** Hey, will you two stop fighting? So Jim grabbed a flowered sheet. It could happen to anybody! Don't fight in front of the guests. I'm getting ready to play some nice, calm music, and then you'll feel friendlier. You'll see. Some nice, calm music. *(JANET returns to her table and puts on loud rock and roll music [which is actually played by the sound person]. Then she walks to CENTER STAGE and dances. After a few seconds, JIM starts dancing with her. They should look ridiculous. PHYLLIS is furious. After a few seconds, she faces JANET and makes a cutting motion across her throat that means, "Turn it off!!" JANET returns to sound equipment.)*

**Jim:** You know, maybe she's not so nuts after all.

**Phyllis:** Shut up!

*(PHYLLIS and JIM walk to BACKSTAGE RIGHT. Action shifts to SMOLDER and SCULLERY, who walk from audience to CENTER STAGE. )*

**Smolder:** *(Very excited)* Skullery, have you been hearing all this? It looks like there's a real ghost here! This could be our big break!

**Skullery:** Down, boy. Don't go off on some wild ghost chase. Remember why we're here: To keep an eye on the professor over there.

**Smolder:** Yeah, but this could be our opportunity to get the Bureau to open up the Hex Files again. We were close to proving "the truth is out there," and then they shut us down. But if we could bring back a real ghost . . .

**Skullery:** Smolder! Get a grip! You're the laughing stock of the Bureau with all this alien, ghost hunting, vampire nonsense! Granted, the Bureau began the Hex Files division to see if there was any truth to this paranormal business. But you became obsessed! Out of control! I did everything I could to keep them from firing your butt! So don't blow this assignment. Because if you do, I won't be able to protect you this time. Now focus!

**Smolder:** But Skullery, I've always known the truth was out there. And here it is. Right under our noses!

**Skullery:** Get a hold of yourself, Smolder. It's just some cheap parlor trick performed by the Lodges and Madame Zelda. Remember: Trust no one.

**Smolder:** I know I said that. But this time, I think it's for real. I really believe it's . . .

**Skullery:** Look, we were sent here to keep an eye on the Professor over there. Nothing more.

**Smolder:** Do you really think that he's *not* Professor Lionel Specter?

**Skullery:** That's what we're here to find out. We need to have a chat with Professor Specter. And it looks like he's heading our way. Remember, focus!

*(LIONEL wanders toward SKULLERY and SMOLDER. He has taken out a magnifying glass and is examining everything in sight.)*

**Skullery:** Excuse me, Professor, may I ask what you're looking for?

**Lionel:** Ghost droppings.

*(Without thinking, SMOLDER and SKULLERY check the bottoms of their shoes.)*

**Skullery:** *(Rolls her eyes and speaks sarcastically.)* Ah, yes, of course. Ghost droppings.

**Smolder:** *(Sincere)* Sounds logical to me.

**Skullery:** It would. *(To LIONEL)* Professor, I'm curious. What school did you attend?

**Lionel:** I beg your pardon?

**Skullery:** Where do you obtain your, um, paranormalcy degree?

Lionel: Well, I attended the, uh, England University of . . . Paranormalcy, making me a Doctor of Paranormalcy and related paranormal matters. Or simply put, a paranormalologist.

**Smolder:** I see . . .

**Skullery:** *(To SMOLDER)* You do? Oh, be quiet. *(To LIONEL)* And just how did you become involved with the BOO organization, Professor?



**Lionel:** Oh well, while I was going through his . . . I mean . . . *my* desk, I came across a letter from Madame Zelda inviting him . . . I mean, *me* here. The letter described ghostly activities at the inn, and Madame Zelda invited me here to see if I could be of assistance.

**Skullery:** I see. No other reason?

**Lionel:** No. What other reason could there be? Now, if you'll excuse me I . . . *(tries to walk away)*

**Smolder:** *(Grabs LIONEL'S arm)* Wait, Professor. So far, has your investigation revealed any evidence of a real ghost?

**Skullery:** Knock it off, Smolder.

**Smolder:** It's an innocent question. I'm just curious.

**Skullery:** I promised the Director I'd keep you in line and keep your mind off of this Hex Files stuff.

**Smolder:** Just this one question. *(To LIONEL)* Well, Professor, do you think there are any ghosts here?

**Lionel:** *(Thinking about something else)* How the hell do I know? *(Wakes up)* I mean, I don't have enough evidence yet to make an assumption. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm very busy. *(He hurries off BACKSTAGE LEFT.)*

**Skullery:** *(Watches LIONEL leave)* I'm suspicious of him, Smolder. I think we should follow him.

**Smolder:** *(Looking at MADAME ZELDA while answering SKULLERY)* Right! Uh . . . you lead. I'm right behind you.

*(SKULLERY heads in direction of LIONEL, thinking SMOLDER is following. SMOLDER takes two or three steps in SKULLERY'S direction, then spins and heads over to MADAME ZELDA, who's still sitting on stool at STAGE LEFT table, in a trance-like state, with her eyes closed. At first, SMOLDER is reluctant to disturb her. But then he begins to have fun, waving his hands in front of her face, jumping around her, seeing if she snaps out of it. Finally, he gently taps her on the shoulder and she jumps.)*

**Madame Zelda:** Great Caesar's ghost! Have you any idea what you're doing? Do you want the sky to fall on us? It's extremely dangerous to interrupt a trance. Why, anything could happen!

**Smolder:** That's what I'm hoping for.

**Madame Zelda:** What do you mean?

**Smolder:** Do you really believe there's a ghost of some woman named Olivia here?

**Madame Zelda:** I know what I saw with my own eyes and what I heard with my own ears. Of course she's here! Somewhere. I'm the most sensitive to her vibrations, so that's why I'm the only one who can see her. I'm surprised the Professor hasn't seen her, though.

**Smolder:** Do you think we could capture this ghost? I've heard there are ways to.

**Madame Zelda:** Certainly not! We're here to help her. She wants to relocate, and we're going to help her.

**Smolder:** Okay, how about if we help her relocate to . . . Washington, D. C.! Maybe she could haunt the White House. Luckily, Clinton's not there anymore. But some say Lincoln still is. They'd get along great!

**Madame Zelda:** Oh no, not Washington! I've heard of a secret division of the FBI known as the Hex Files. Why, before you know it, they'd figure out a way to capture Olivia. Then they'd take her to the Hexagon Building, and who knows what they'd do to her! No, we're going to help her relocate down the road to *(Name local restaurant)*. Although I can't imagine why she'd want to go there. The food and service are wonderful right here, but . . .

**Smolder:** Madame Zelda, I strongly suggest you reconsider.

**Madame Zelda:** Mr. Smolder, I'm beginning to question your membership in the BOO organization. Do you have your official membership card with you?

**Smolder:** Madame Zelda, I repeat, I strongly suggest . . . *(He grabs his ear as if listening to earphone. SKULLERY should be whispering and doing the same from wherever she's standing. SMOLDER should pause to give SKULLERY time to "talk.")* Yes, Skullery, I know, but . . . I'm really busy here right now, can't you watch him yourself? But . . . but . . . okay! I'm on my way! *(To MADAME ZELDA)* We'll talk more later, Madame Zelda.

*(SMOLDER heads toward SKULLERY. Ghostly sounds are heard again. MADAME ZELDA'S eyes "follow" the ghost as she heads for her stool and sits down.)*

**Madame Zelda:** Olivia, I'm so glad you've come back. There's so much I want to ask you. Sit down dear.

*(LIONEL has come from BACKSTAGE and has been wandering about and hasn't noticed the ghost's return. He picks this moment to have a chat with MADAME ZELDA.)*

**Lionel:** Ah, Madame Zelda, I see you're taking a rest from all this ghost hunting. It is exhausting, isn't it? Perhaps I'll take a load off my feet, too. *(He starts to sit in Olivia's chair.)*

**Madame Zelda:** *(Notices what LIONEL is about to do)* No Professor, don't!

*(Too late! LIONEL sits in the chair where Olivia is sitting. In essence, he sits on her, and immediately becomes possessed by her. The moment his backside hits the seat, he crosses his legs, tosses back his hair, and talks and acts like a woman.)*

**Lionel/Olivia:** *(In a womanly voice)* Why hello, dear.

**Madame Zelda:** *(Gasps)* Olivia?

**Lionel/Olivia:** It's me!

**Madame Zelda:** Uh oh.

**Lionel/Olivia:** You have no idea how wonderful it is just to breathe again, although I must say these male bodies aren't all they're cracked up to be. I feel like a tripod.

**Madame Zelda:** How long can you stay in the Professor's body?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Not long, sweetie. So you'd better tell me quick--what's on your mind?

**Madame Zelda:** Let's begin at the end, dear. Exactly how did you die?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Well, it was exactly 100 years ago today that I married my boyfriend Rocco. He never wanted to get married, so I guess I should've been suspicious when he suddenly popped the question. Especially when he suggested honeymooning at my uncle's inn in the Poconos. At that time, it was just dirt roads with nothing around for miles. Not your most romantic spot. But if that's what it took to get Rocco to marry me, I was willing to make the sacrifice.

**Madame Zelda:** What happened next, dear?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Well, when we got here, Rocco immediately began drinking. Pretty soon he was drunk, and then he pulled out this trunk. I thought it contained his clothes, but inside were all these gold artifacts.

**Madame Zelda:** What kind of artifacts?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Egyptian artifacts. The morning of our wedding I read in the paper that someone had broken into the Museum of Ancient Things and had stolen gold artifacts from the tomb of the Egyptian pharaoh, King Rootin-Tootin.

**Madame Zelda:** And it was Rocco?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yeah, who knew? I thought he was a window washer.

**Madame Zelda:** Oh, you poor thing.

**Lionel/Olivia:** You're telling me. And you haven't heard the worst of it. Apparently, the only reason Rocco married me was to have an excuse to come out here and hide in the woods for a while, till the heat died down. He never really loved me! I felt so used!

**Madame Zelda:** What happened next?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Well, we had a huge argument. I told Rocco that I was going to turn him in because I refused to be an accessory to a crime. He told me that he going to take a nap, and then we'd take a walk and talk about it some more. But instead of going to our room, he headed for the woods and took the trunk with him. I know because I followed him. I saw him bury the artifacts in the woods! Terrified he'd see me, I ran back to our room, and when Rocco returned, we finally went for that walk together.

**Madame Zelda:** Something tells me this was your "last" walk together.

**Lionel/Olivia:** I'm afraid so. We went outside. It was nearly dark. We stood by the well and talked. I told Rocco that I couldn't go along with this, and that he had to turn himself in to the police and return the priceless artifacts of King Rootin-Tootin. But then he grabbed my legs, flipped me up in the air, and sent me flying down the well!

**Madame Zelda:** Oh my!

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yes, what a trip that was!

**Madame Zelda:** How awful! But why have you stayed here all these years?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Some kind of Egyptian curse. My soul is bound to this property until the artifacts of King Rootin-Tootin are found and returned.

**Madame Zelda:** So, if we find the artifacts, you can leave?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yes! But back to my story: When I returned to my room that night I made a map of where Rocco buried the treasure. Only I don't know what became of that map. After all, it's been 100 years! If you find it, you'll find the treasure, and I'll be released from my curse!

**Madame Zelda:** You mean the treasure is still buried out in the woods somewhere?

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yes.

**Madame Zelda:** Okay, let me see if I have this straight. You were married 100 years ago today and your husband, Rocco, brought you here to your uncle's inn for your honeymoon.

**Lionel/Olivia:** *(He stands. Each "yes" is more passionate.)* Yes.

**Madame Zelda:** But the real reason Rocco came here was because he stole artifacts from the Museum of Ancient Things--artifacts from the exhibit of King Rootin-Tootin--and he needed someplace to bury them.

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yes!

**Madame Zelda:** Then, when you wouldn't go along with it, Rocco killed you by throwing you down the well.

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yes, yes!!

**Madame Zelda:** But not before you made a map showing where the treasure is buried out in the woods.

**Lionel/Olivia:** Yes, yes, yes!!!

**Madame Zelda:** And if we find the map and the treasure, you'll be free to leave here!

**Lionel/Olivia:** *(Orgasmic)* Yes, yes, oh yes!!!! *(Recovers and says to MADAM ZELDA)* Was it good for you, too?

**Janet:** I'm good for the night!

**Madame Zelda:** *(Looking flustered but not orgasmic)* I don't understand. Why is the treasure still here? Why didn't Rocco take it?

**Lionel/Olivia:** He never got the chance. You see, a few days after my "disappearance," poor Rocco mysteriously tripped at the top of the stairs and fell all the way to the bottom and broke his neck. Gee, I wonder how that happened? Ha, ha, ha!

*(LIONEL walks away laughing maniacally and runs smack into a wall. This knocks Olivia out of him and he returns to his usual self, albeit slightly dazed.)*

**Lionel:** What happened?

**Madame Zelda:** You don't know?

**Lionel:** The last thing I remember is sitting in that chair. The next thing I knew I was walking into the wall. What happened?

**Madame Zelda:** Well, when you sat in that chair, you accidentally sat *on* Olivia's lap. I'm surprised that a man of your background and gifts didn't see her.

**Lionel:** (*Quickly*) I have a cold. It must be throwing me off.

**Madame Zelda:** Yes, well you were possessed by the ghost of Olivia!

**Lionel:** (*Grabbing his breasts*) Oh my God!

**Madame Zelda:** And you told us how you were murdered 100 years ago by your husband, who had stolen the gold artifacts of King Rootin-Tootin from the Museum of Ancient Things. He buried them here on the property, and then he mysteriously died and they were never found.

**Lionel:** (*Crestfallen*) So they're more or less lost forever.

**Madame Zelda:** Well no, there's the map.

**Lionel:** (*Very quickly*) What map?

**Madame Zelda:** Olivia drew a map showing where the treasure is buried. She doesn't know what became of the map, but she's sure it's still around here somewhere. If we find that map, we'll find the treasure, and Olivia's spirit will be released!

**Lionel:** A map! We must find that map! I WANT THAT MAP!!

**Madame Zelda:** Relax, Professor, we'll find the map. Why don't we get all the BOO members to help us search for it? Attention everyone! Look around your tables and under your chairs. Look for anything that resembles a map! (*Encourage everyone to look for map, including actors.*)

**Lionel:** Yes! And if you find the map, give it to me!

(*Play playful music while audience looks for map.*)

**Janet:** Here it is! I found it! (*Waves map. You can hide it anywhere near her sound equipment.*)

(*LIONEL and MADAME ZELDA rush for it. MADAME ZELDA gets there first.*)

**Madame Zelda:** Give me that map! (*Snatches it from JANET*)

**Janet:** Okay, okay, take it! Don't get your panties in a bunch!

**Madame Zelda:** (*Shoves map down her blouse and glares at LIONEL*) I'll hang on to this for now, if you don't mind.

**Lionel:** *(Suppressing anger)* Not at all. You're in charge. *(Exits to BACKSTAGE LEFT.)*

**Madame Zelda:** *(To audience)* These séances take so much out of me. So if you'll excuse me, I'll just go and freshen up a bit. *(She walks backstage.)*

*Insert game here. See page 39 for instructions.*

*(As soon as game is over, SMOLDER and SCULLERY walk from BACKSTAGE RIGHT to CENTER STAGE.)*

**Skullery:** Smolder, did you see how interested the Professor is in the map? He's obsessed over it! I'm convinced he's *you-know-who*. But since no one actually knows what *you-know-who* looks like, there's nothing we can do until we actually catch the Professor with the goods. I know he'll try to get his hands on that buried treasure.

**Smolder:** Do you think he'll find the ghost, too?

**Skullery:** Will you let go of that ghost stuff? Besides, he's not here for ghosts. I'm sure he's here to find the treasure of King Rootin-Tootin!

**Smolder:** Do you think he'll give me his ghost detector?

**Skullery:** I give up. Come on, we have to keep an eye on him. *(SMOLDER AND SCULLERY exit to BACKSTAGE RIGHT where they watch LIONEL.)*

*(Action shifts to JIM and PHYLLIS, who walk to CENTER STAGE.)*

**Phyllis:** I want that ghost!

**Jim:** I want that map!

**Phyllis:** I want that ghost and that map!

**Jim:** Why do you still want the ghost, Phyllis? If we can get our hands on that map and find that buried treasure, we can pay off all our bills and our mortgage, fix the fire damage, and still have enough left over to live comfortably. We don't need the ghost!

**Phyllis:** Our little ghost is a gold mine, Jim. Think about it. First the book rights, and then TV and movie deals! Next, we get on the cover of *The National Enquirer*--misquoted, of course--so we sue them for millions, just like all the celebrities do! This little ghost is worth a fortune to us.

**Jim:** Yeah, but you're forgetting one little thing. Madame Zelda is determined to help the ghost relocate down the road. And I say we let her. This ghost stuff scares me,

Phyllis. There's more money than we'll ever need right in that buried treasure. If we can just find it.

**Phyllis:** And what if we don't find it? What if someone else found the treasure a long time ago? Someone smart enough to sell it on the black market so no one would know. That leaves us with nothing but a good story to tell. No, Jim--we need the ghost to stay right here!

**Jim:** Yea? Well not if Madame Bibbity Bobbity Boo has her way. And I hope she does. I don't want to live with ghosts--living with you is scary enough!

**Phyllis:** I'm getting my hands on that map! I'm talking to the ghost of Olivia myself, and Madame Zelda is going to contact her for me! Now!

*(PHYLLIS goes to MADAME ZELDA who's been sitting at the table in a trance. PHYLLIS looks her over, trying to figure out how to wake her up. JIM lurks in the background watching and listening.)*

**Phyllis:** *(Snaps her fingers a few times)* Hey, hey! *(Pokes MADAM ZELDA on arm)* Hey! Wake up!

**Madame Zelda:** *(Wakes up, startled)* Mrs. Lodge, please. It's dangerous to . . .

**Phyllis:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Look, I want to talk to Olivia myself. Get her back here.

**Madame Zelda:** That's what I'm trying to do. It's not as easy as you think.

**Phyllis:** Oh come on, how hard can it be? Never mind. I'll handle this myself.

**Madame Zelda:** *(Smugly)* Sorry, but you don't have the gift. I'm the only one who can make Olivia appear and disappear.

**Phyllis:** Oh yeah? Watch. Jim!

**Jim:** *(Running to her side)* Yes, dear?

**Phyllis:** Get lost.

**Jim:** Yes, dear. *(Runs off)*

**Phyllis:** *(To MADAM ZELDA)* Don't tell me I don't have the gift.

**Madame Zelda:** It doesn't work that way. You can't just order a ghost to appear. It takes concentration. It takes . . .



**Phyllis:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Now watch. (*PHYLLIS calls out.*) Hey! Olivia! Get your butt in here. I want to talk to you NOW!

(*Ghostly sounds are heard.*)

**Madame Zelda:** I don't believe it. There she is! She's coming toward us! She's sitting on the stool!

**Phyllis:** Am I good, or what? (*To MADAM ZELDA*) Okay, I'll handle it from here. Watch--maybe you'll learn something. (*Pushes MADAM ZELDA away.*)

(*PHYLLIS talks to empty stool. She asks the questions, and MADAM ZELDA repeats Olivia's answers.*)

**Phyllis:** Now Olivia, quite frankly, I don't know why you want to leave here. First of all, you've been here so long, it must seem like your very own place. And it's so beautiful here. No ugly shopping malls, all these pretty trees and things.

**Madame Zelda:** Olivia says it wasn't so bad until you and your husband arrived. Then all the construction work started, plus all the yelling and fighting. She didn't have a moment's peace.

**Phyllis:** (*To empty stool*) No problem. Jim and I will get couples' counseling.

**Madame Zelda:** Olivia said no. She still wants to leave.

**Phyllis:** (*To empty stool*) Well, how about if we make you part of the staff? We can get you health benefits!

**Madame Zelda:** Mrs. Lodge, she's dead. Why would she want health benefits?

Phyllis: (*To stool*) Death benefits?

**Madame Zelda:** No!

**Phyllis:** (*To stool*) Fame? How about a special ghost appearance on the Oprah show? Or would you prefer Dr. Phil?

**Madame Zelda:** No!

**Phyllis:** (*To stool*) I've got it--breast implants!

*There is approximately ten more pages of script to this show.*