



Sample Pages from
She Wrote, Died, Then Wrote Some More

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SHE WROTE, DIED, THEN WROTE SOME MORE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT BY
Steven Stack



She Wrote, Died, Then Wrote Some More
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Casting

7W+1M+2 Either

ALINA DEVERAUX

The Writer

MARIAN

The Maid

MINNIE MATTHEWS

The Agent

VIVIAN DEVERAUX

The Sister

BARNABAS BUCKLEY

The Boyfriend

ANNA MARIE SILVERSTREET

The Actress

DEANNA FARNSWORTH

The Neighbor

SUZANNE SPRINGFIELD

The Reporter. Nicholas Springfield if male.

ELIZABETH MONTGOMERY

The Other Writer

STEPHANIE SWANSON

The Detective. Stefan Stade if male.

Set

The set for the entire play takes place in a entertaining room, with at least three entrance and exits points. The exits can simply be an offstage exit. Exit 1 and 2 could be combined if needed.

Entrance/Exit 1: To/from the dining room

Entrance/Exit 2: To/from the bedrooms

Entrance/Exit 3: The closet

The set pieces can be what you wish to create the look you desire. The main set piece is the book, that should be put in a place of prominence, perhaps upstage center on a stand.

SCENE I

The living room. MARIAN THE MAID is lying on the chair, sprawled out with a duster sticking out of her mouth, looking very dead. MINNIE MATTHEWS, ALINA's agent, enters, talking on the phone.

MINNIE: No interest? We'll be in contact soon. *(hangs up)* After tonight, you will be dying to publish this book. *(laughs then notices MARIAN lying on couch)* AHHH!

She drops her phone and MARIAN jumps up and attacks her.

MARIAN: AHHH! *(this causes MINNIE to scream again)*

MINNIE: AHHHH! *(which in turns causes MARIAN to scream again)*

MARIAN: AHHHH!

MARIAN stops, moves away, and straightens her clothes. They take a moment to look at each other.

MINNIE: What were you doing?

MARIAN: Attacking my murderer.

MINNIE: Murderer? You're not murdered. *(takes a moment)* Though you did appear murdered.

MARIAN: *(angry)* How dare you tell me I appeared murdered?

MINNIE: You were sprawled out with a duster in your mouth. And your eyes were bugged-out.

MARIAN: *(considers)* Oh. That would have the appearance of "murdered." But I can explain. I have a rare "fainting when frightened" disorder that causes me to appear as if I were brutally murdered when I faint when frightened.

MINNIE: But why attack me?

MARIAN: Because a side effect of the disorder is that when woken, I attack the person who woke me because that is the person who murdered me without actually murdering me.

MINNIE: That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

ALINA DEVERAUX, famed writer, enters.

ALINA: Perhaps, but it's true. *(MINNIE and MARIAN turn)* She's the only case of this disorder in the world.

MARIAN: Maybe not.

ALINA: (to MINNIE) Dear Marian has hopes that there may be others.

MARIAN: Because I wish to date someone who comes and picks me up on their faithful steed. But in order for that to happen, that someone, the one I am meant to date, must also have this disorder.

MINNIE: That sounds... ideal.

ALINA: And highly unlikely. (to MARIAN) Marian, you may leave and prepare the parlor for our guests.

MARIAN: Yes, ma'am.

MARIAN exits. MINNIE sees ALINA pouring herself a drink. MINNIE pulls out a bag.

MINNIE: Perhaps you would like to drink... this instead.

ALINA looks up, sees the bottle and then walks over. She takes it and a big smile crosses her face.

ALINA: Is this...?

MINNIE: The nectar from your favorite rare mamey sapote fruit, found—

ALINA: —in the tropical lowlands of Central America. Thank you, Minnie. This is quite a delightful and expensive present.

MINNIE: An agent must take care of her writer and tonight... I shall take care of you. (ALINA takes the nectar and puts it on the coffee table) Speaking of that, I need you to sign this. (pulls out form and puts it down on the table)

ALINA: What is it?

MINNIE: It's a contract. Your first book is going to be turned into a movie.

ALINA: (looks up) Splendid. (she starts to sign it but notices that some parts are covered up) Why are these parts covered up? You're not hiding something, are you?

MINNIE: Why would I be hiding something? It's not like I'm asking you to sign your last will and testament that leaves everything to me in the event of your death.

ALINA: (*looks up*) That's very specific. Almost as if that's exactly what you're doing. (*uncomfortable moment passes*)

MINNIE: It's not.

ALINA: (*takes another moment*) No need to be so nervous. I know it's not. I trust you completely. Besides, I plan on living for many, many more years. 83 to be exact.

ALINA takes the form and signs it. MINNIE quickly takes form and folds it up.

MINNIE: Wonderful. (*putting form away*) So, how are you feeling on your big night?

ALINA: Quite spectacular, actually. And why not? Tonight I shall give this gift to the world. (*takes a sheet off a stand and we see a really large book*) My masterpiece.

MINNIE walks over and looks at the book.

MINNIE: Good lord. How many pages is this?

ALINA: 2701. And all written using only this quill.

ALINA pulls out a quill. MINNIE looks at her and then walks off.

MINNIE: I really wish that you would start using some more modern means of writing.

ALINA: Those ways are not for me, my dear Minnie. The quill is my muse. And besides, why would you want me to change? You have amassed a small fortune because of me.

MINNIE: On one book in 15 years. Imagine if you were more prolific.

ALINA: A worthy tale knows no timetable. (*silence*) In bleaker news, are you still having trouble finding a publisher for it?

MINNIE: (*looks at her*) I am. Very little interest, if any.

ALINA: (*sits down*) Blast it! I don't understand. Don't they know that this book contains every moment of my life since birth? Every moment!

MINNIE: Perhaps that's the problem.

ALINA: (*looks up at her*) Perhaps. If this holds true, then tonight shall be an utter disappointment.

MINNIE: Well, there is one more company, Bledsoe Publishing, that I was going to call tonight, so...

ALINA: I have reason for optimism.

MINNIE: Very little, though.

ALINA: (*looks at her*) You could have left that part out. But, no mind, when I read from my text tonight... those 200 in attendance will demand to read it and the publishing companies will have no choice but to publish it.

MINNIE: Let's hope so, because right now there's only one way that it's going to be published.

ALINA: What's that?

MINNIE: Never mind.

ALINA: No, tell me. It could be our backup plan.

MINNIE: Well, every agency said that if you were to die tonight, on the night of the book's unveiling, they would snap it up in a heartbeat.

ALINA: (*turns to her*) I'm not sure I want that as our backup plan.

MINNIE: Neither do I. Nor do I want it as our main plan. Now why don't you go finish getting ready while I welcome the guests?

ALINA: You're a very good agent. One I would trust with my life.

MINNIE smiles as ALINA smiles back and exits. MINNIE watches her go and then takes out her phone and dials.

MINNIE: It's done. And you're sure this is going to work? Because it's sounding farfetched. Okay. See you in a few.

MINNIE hangs up the phone and exits. We see a masked person enter and get close to the book. She reaches down to pick it up. Struggles, hears noises and then exits.

SCENE 2

The guests arrive in the living room and mingle while they wait for MS. DEVERAUX's entrance. Unbeknownst to the guests, MS. DEVERAUX and MARIAN are looking in on them.

ALINA: Is this all that showed up?

MARIAN: Yes, ma'am.

ALINA: But I invited over two hundred people.

MARIAN: This isn't two hundred people, Ms. Deveraux.

ALINA: (*looks at her*) I'm aware. Why did so few people show up?

MARIAN: Perhaps the invitations got lost in the mail.

ALINA: Yes, I bet that's it.

MARIAN: Though, that's highly unlikely considering I hand delivered all of them.

ALINA: (*takes a moment and then decides to change the subject*) What do you suppose they're talking about?

MARIAN: I don't know. It's tough to say what people are talking about when you can't hear them.

ALINA: I suppose. If only they would arrange themselves so we could have a light on one group and while that group talked, the others would be frozen and in the dark, so that we could listen in on each conversation.

The guests quickly go to their spots on stage. Lights fade on them and up on VIVIAN DEVERAUX, ALINA's sister and BARNABAS BUCKLEY, VIVIAN's boyfriend.

VIVIAN: I don't know why we came here tonight, Barnabas.

BARNABAS: Vivian, you're her sister.

VIVIAN: Only by birth.

BARNABAS: Aren't you at least a little excited for her? I mean, this could be the biggest book of her career.

VIVIAN: It's only her second book. And no, I am not. I was supposed to be the star of the family. Not her. This should be my night.

BARNABAS: But you didn't write the book.

VIVIAN: (*stares at him*) I didn't, Barnabas? Really? I'm fully aware of that fact and yet you continue to bring it up.

BARNABAS: I only mentioned it one t—

VIVIAN: Are you in love with her?

BARNABAS: What?

VIVIAN: I've seen the way you look at her. Always pulling her aside for your "questions."

BARNABAS: I'm a writer too, dear.

VIVIAN: And here we go. Throwing that in my face again. Are you even aware that you are dating me?

BARNABAS: Believe me, I am fully aware of that fact. I'm just happy for your sister, that's all.

VIVIAN: Well, I'll be happy for her, too, when this book is an utter failure. By the way, that disorder of yours? It better not happen tonight or I promise you, I will leave you. And this time... for good.

*Lights fade down on this scene and up on
ANNA MARIE, an aging actress and DEANNA
FARNSWORTH, ALINA's neighbor.*

DEANNA: Anna Marie Silverstreet! You are my favorite actress ever!

ANNA: Thank you. And you are?

DEANNA: Deanna Farnsworth. I live next door to Ms. Wintersprings. With my 32 cats.

ANNA: (*expression changes to one of disgust*) Oh my. (*DEANNA continues staring at her, smiling*) So... what movie of mine is your favorite?

DEANNA: Oh my goodness! It has to be when you played Stella Ackerbacker in *To Live and Die in LA is Highly Similar to Living and Dying in Dixie Except No Horses: A Love Story*. When that horse fell on you while you were walking down the aisle about to be married to your prince charming... let's just say I left the theatre and haven't been out of the house since.

ANNA: That movie came out 15 years ago.

DEANNA: I know! (*a change of expression comes over her*) I decided on that day that I wouldn't leave the house until you made another movie. Or Ms. Deveraux wrote another book and invited you to the unveiling. By the way, why haven't you made another movie?

ANNA: I needed some time off.

DEANNA: 15 years?

ANNA: 15 years for an actress is like two weeks for a commoner such as yourself. (*DEANNA nods*) And I assure you, it has nothing to do

with the fact that I'm an talent-deprived actress who people have very little interest in.

DEANNA: Of course not, because I have plenty of interest in you. I bet you're just waiting for the right script to come along.

ANNA: I was, in fact, until one came along.

DEANNA: (*looks at her and gets really excited*) You're going to tell me what it is, aren't you?

ANNA: Of course. As long as you promise not to tell anyone.

DEANNA: Oh, no worries there. You're the first person I've talked to in (*counts on fingers*) ... 15 years.

ANNA: Great then. Okay. (*pulls her aside*) I'm writing my own starring vehicle about a writer who's having an unveiling party for her next book, a book about her life, but then she is murdered on the same night by someone hoping to make a movie about her and her being murdered on her special night. The twist is, the murderer will play the writer in the movie. And the movie, like my movie, will be called *The Murder of Alina Deveraux*. What do you think?

DEANNA: I think that if I weren't your biggest fan, I would be highly suspicious of your motives for being here tonight. But since I am your biggest fan... it sounds like one more reason to leave the house.

DEANNA hugs her and they freeze. Lights down on them and up on MINNIE and SUZANNE SPRINGFIELD, a reporter from the Mount Hillworth Times.

SUZANNE: Hi, Suzanne Springfield from the Mount Hillworth Times.

MINNIE: Is that a newspaper?

SUZANNE: A small one.

MINNIE: Does anyone read it?

SUZANNE: You should hope so, since I'm the only reporter here.

MINNIE: Of course.

SUZANNE: Now I presume you're Ms. Deveraux's agent?

MINNIE: Yes, for her entire career.

SUZANNE: Are you concerned with the lack of interest for this second book? It's been rumored that you're having a hard time finding someone to publish it. Is that true?

MINNIE: I suppose it's true if you're talking about something that's true and if the truth is all you're after then... fine.

SUZANNE: What?

MINNIE: It doesn't matter because after tonight, everyone will want to publish this book.

SUZANNE: Why? Are you planning on Ms. Deveraux being murdered tonight? Because that's the only way it's going to happen.

MINNIE: *(looks at her)* Well, I'd better get ready for introductions. I hope you enjoy the evening, Ms. Springfield.

SUZANNE: And you as well.

MINNIE crosses away as SUZANNE watches her go. Lights down on them and up on MARIAN and ALINA.

ALINA: I suppose we can't, though.

MARIAN: You're probably right, ma'am.

MINNIE sees ALINA and MARIAN and moves over to them.

MINNIE: *(to ALINA)* Are you ready?

ALINA: I am.

MINNIE: Good, because tonight there can be no mistakes. This is the most important night of your life. *(she crosses away)*

MARIAN: Is it really that important?

ALINA: It may be, my friend. By the way, I need you to do something for me. Just in case. *(she whispers in her ear)* Understand?

MARIAN: I think so, but...

ALINA: No questions. Just hurry.

MARIAN: Yes ma'am.

MARIAN exits and ALINA prepares to enter. The guests are still talking. ANNA sees ALINA and crosses to her. DEANNA notices ALINA.

DEANNA: Everyone! Ms. Deveraux is here.

The conversation stops but ANNA is unaware of this.

ANNA: Now, Ms. Deveraux, due to the way I've written my screenplay, I'm going to need you to die tonight. I can clearly assist you with that. As a matter of fact... *(realizes there is no background noise)* Wait, where is the background noise? *(she turns and looks at everyone staring at her)* Oh.

ALINA: Oh, indeed.

VIVIAN: If you are going to kill my sister, I should share a list I prepared. You might—

ANNA: What? No, I won't be doing the killing, but my evil twin sister that lives inside of me will. *(takes ALINA by the face)* But don't you worry, Ms. Deveraux. . . I shall save you from... Anna. *(turns and looks at them)* And scene.

Everyone but DEANNA stares on. DEANNA claps loudly.

DEANNA: That was simply stunning, Ms. Silverstreet.

SUZANNE: Perhaps my article should be about a crazy talent-deprived actress.

ANNA: *(looks at her)* I'm not talent-deprived. *(takes a moment)* Nor crazy. *(she sits)* Continue.

There is silence. ALINA looks at MINNIE.

ALINA: Perhaps now is the time to introduce me.

MINNIE: Yes. Ladies and Gentlemen... Ms. Alina Deveraux.

Some applause as ALINA DEVERAUX stands in front of them.

ALINA: Thank you, everyone. And thank you for coming out on this very special night. For it is, on this night, that I shall unveil what I have been working on for the past 15 years... this. *(unveils a book)* *She Writes With Quill – A Moment by Moment Recollection of the Life of Alina Deveraux Up Until Now.* It's a non-fiction fictional retelling... over 2700 pages of my life up until 3 hours ago when I finished it.

People look at each other. SUZANNE turns to ALINA.

SUZANNE: Wait, this book is... your life story?

ALINA: Yes.

SUZANNE: And it's true?

ALINA: Except the parts that I made up.

SUZANNE: Now I understand why no one showed up.

ALINA: I don't like that comment.

VIVIAN: (*speaks up*) Am I in it?

ALINA: Of course.

VIVIAN: Couldn't sell a book about your life without me in it?

ALINA: You're my sister.

SUZANNE: So, who exactly is your target audience?

ALINA: Everyone who would enjoy reading about my life, I suppose.

SUZANNE: And who is that exactly?

ALINA: (*stares at her for a moment*) Many people, I assure you. As I said, this is my masterpiece. (*chatter*) Perhaps I should read a section from it?

BARNABAS: That sounds wonderful.

Everyone quiets down as ALINA opens her book.

ALINA: Now, this part is actually one of the most exciting moments in the book. It happened when I was four and I fell off my bike and skinned my knee. (*reading*) "When I was four, I fell off my bike and skinned my knee."

Closes book emphatically. Silence.

SUZANNE: And?

ALINA: And nothing. Thrilling, was it not?

VIVIAN: Yes. It was not.

ANNA: I'll liven that bit up for the screenplay. No worries.

BARNABAS: Perhaps you should read another section.

MINNIE: That's a good idea.

ALINA: No. I don't want to give away too much.

MINNIE: Alina, that's highly doubtful considering the length of the book.

ALINA: (*looks at her and then decides to read more*) Very well. I shall read one more item. About the time I had tea and toast and dripped the tea on the table.

VIVIAN: I think I would rather eat instead. When will dinner be served?

More chatter about dinner. SUZANNE crosses to ALINA.

SUZANNE: Suzanne Springfield from the Mount Hillworth Times.

ALINA: And you are?

SUZANNE: Suzanne Springfield from the Mount Hillworth Times.

ALINA: You already said that, didn't you? (*SUZANNE nods*) Sorry. I appear to be distracted.

SUZANNE: That's understandable, considering how poorly this night is going. (*ALINA looks at her*)

ALINA: I'm starting not to like you very much. (*SUZANNE nods*)

SUZANNE: Now, with no one interested in publishing this story, what will happen to it? Self-publishing, perhaps?

ALINA: (*remembers*) No, because there's one more publishing house. Minnie, perhaps you should call Bledsoe Publishing and find out what their decision is. I'm sure it will be positive.

MINNIE: I don't know if that's –

ALINA: (*to MINNIE*) No, it is. I have a good feeling about this. (*turns to everyone else*) Listen everyone. Ms. Matthews is going to call the company that I just know will publish my book.

MINNIE: (*smiles and then dials*) Hello, Dorothy. This is Minnie Matthews, Alina Deveraux's agent. Is Ms. Claire Thomas in her office? Good. May I speak to her? (*pulls phone down and talks to crowd*) She's putting me through now. (*ALINA smiles*) Hello, Ms. Thomas. How are... oh, you've made your decision? Right... I know it is very long... but I'm sure once you... what? No, she isn't dead. Nor murdered. Yes, I'm sure that would be a huge hit. No, that's all. (*she hangs up the phone and then silence*)

DEANNA: Congratulations, Ms. Deveraux!

Everyone looks at her.

BARNABAS: Ms. Farnsworth, they clearly said no. (*crosses to ALINA*) I'm sorry, Alina. I would be delighted to read it. I bet it's wonderful.

ALINA: Thank you for saying that. Now, if you don't mind, I would like you all to go get ready for dinner. Marian has prepared something delicious which I'm sure you will all enjoy. Much more than my book, it appears. I shall join you in time. (*They start to exit and VIVIAN stops in front of her. She motions to BARNABAS to leave. ALINA looks at her.*) I'm really not in the mood for...

VIVIAN: Whenever I dreamed of this moment happening, your complete and utter rejection, it made me quite happy. Almost giddy. But now that it's happened... oddly enough... I don't feel very happy.

ALINA: (*stares at her*) What are you saying?

VIVIAN: I'm... not sure. This emotion is quite foreign to me. I don't like it, I assure you. Though, for some reason, I did want you to know.

VIVIAN exits. MINNIE crosses to ALINA.

MINNIE: Are you all right?

ALINA: No. Quick question. Did they all really say that my book would be huge if I were dead?

MINNIE: Murdered, to be exact. Wait, what are you thinking? You're not...

ALINA: Thinking of murdering myself? Heavens no, but I am thinking of having some of that nectar you brought me.

MINNIE: That is a fantastic idea. Shall I pour for it for you?

ALINA: No, you go wash up for dinner. I'll pour myself a glass. (*MINNIE nods and leaves. ALINA, deep in thought, pours herself a drink and is about to drink it when she stops.*) So, if I was murdered... my book would be huge. Which is only fitting considering the size of it. (*laughter*) I need to remember that line. Very clever. But I digress. What would be a good way to murder a writer such as myself? (*Looks around. Starts to take another sip and then looks at the glass.*) Poison? (*shakes her head no*) Cliché. (*Looks around and dismisses some other things, then sees the book. Walks over to it.*) Now this would be interesting. Offed by my own words. I wonder if it is substantial enough to do damage? If someone picked up the book...

She picks up the book and pulls it back quickly as DEANNA enters.

DEANNA: Ms. Deveraux, I forgot... OW!

*DEANNA is hit by the book and falls to the ground.
ALINA turns and sees that she has been hit by the book.*

ALINA: Oh, dear. Are you all right? Speak to me.

MARIAN enters carrying a box and sees DEANNA on the ground.

MARIAN: Why is she lying on the floor?

ALINA: I believe she's dead.

MARIAN: That's not good.

ALINA: No, it's not.

MARIAN: What happened?

ALINA: I hit her with my book.

MARIAN: On purpose?

ALINA: Why would I hit her on purpose?

MARIAN: You had your reasons, I'm sure.

ALINA: I was practicing hitting someone with my book and while doing that I actually hit someone and that someone was... who is she by the way?

MARIAN: I've never seen her before. Did you invite her?

ALINA: I may have. If she were alive, I would ask her. But alas, she is not.

MARIAN: What should we do?

ALINA: Place her in the closet for now.

MARIAN: Why?

ALINA: Because her death shall not share the stage with mine.

MARIAN: Excuse me?

ALINA: You heard me correctly. Now help me. (*MARIAN starts to question but doesn't. They pull the body to the closet.*) Did you acquire what I needed?

MARIAN: Yes. It was odd though. While looking for incriminating evidence on everyone here, I came upon this box in Ms. Matthew's room. A box marked "Incriminating evidence on everyone here."

ALINA: Let me see that. *(takes box)* That is rather curious. *(Starts rummaging through the box. Pulls out a duster.)* Wait, why is this... did you put this in there to incriminate... yourself?

MARIAN: Yes, ma'am.

ALINA: Why on earth would you want to be a suspect?

MARIAN: Because I didn't want to be left out.

ALINA: Indeed. Anyway, let's get on with it.

MARIAN: I don't understand what's happening.

ALINA: It's very simple, Marian. You and I are going to murder me.

MARIAN: I don't want to murder you.

ALINA: You won't be doing it alone. As I previously stated... you and I will be murdering me.

MARIAN: Why are we murdering you?

ALINA: To create interest in my book. *(crosses over to her book)* No one wants to buy my life story unless I've been murdered, apparently, so tonight... I shall be murdered by one of my guests who came to the unveiling. Exciting, isn't it? And with all of this *(points to box)* ... everyone will be a suspect. Including you. Murder + intrigue = best seller.

MARIAN: But you'll be dead.

ALINA: No, we're only fake-murdering me. I'll lie here and you'll cover me with those items. Then you'll scream, bringing everyone out. They'll find me dead and everything will proceed from there. Delightful plan, isn't it?

MARIAN: But when they check you, they'll find a heartbeat.

ALINA: Only if they check.

MARIAN: Won't they?

ALINA: No, because you will. Because you're a doctor.

MARIAN: I'm a maid.

ALINA: And a doctor. (*Looks at her knowingly. MARIAN nods.*)

MARIAN: What we will do after that? I mean... (*ALINA puts finger to her mouth*)

ALINA: Shhh! I have no idea. We'll just let the story unfold as it will. Okay?

MARIAN: Okay.

ALINA: Good. (*moves in front of coffee table and lies down*) Now cover me with those things.

MARIAN: Put them anywhere?

ALINA: No, in incriminating places. (*MARIAN scatters them around*) Excellent. Now leave the room, enter again, and call my name. Once you see me, run over and shake me, then scream. Understand?

MARIAN looks one more time and then exits.

MARIAN: (*off*) Ms. Deveraux? Ms. Deveraux? (*enters, sees her, and rushes over*) Ms. Deveraux? (*shakes her*)

ALINA: Not that hard. I'm not a maraca!

MARIAN: Sorry. (*shakes her more gently*) Oh, no! Someone help me! Help!

SCENE 3

MARIAN is kneeling in front of ALINA's body, screaming. The other guests enter from the dining area.

MINNIE: What's wrong? What happened?

MARIAN: Ms. Deveraux. . . is dead!

All gasp.

SUZANNE: Now we've got a story!

The guests surround the fallen MS. DEVERAUX. MINNIE steps up and looks at the bottle and glass. A smile crosses her face ever so briefly. VIVIAN steps up and looks at ALINA.

VIVIAN: Is she really dead?

MARIAN: Sadly, she is.

MINNIE: How can you be sure?

MARIAN: (*slightly uncomfortable*) Because I'm a... a doctor.

ANNA: I thought you were a maid.

MARIAN: I come from a family of maids who are also... doctors. Non-practicing ones.

All but MINNIE understand.

MINNIE: I don't think that's true. What's going on here?

MARIAN: What's going on here? What's going on here, Ms. Matthews, is Ms. Deveraux didn't die of natural causes... she was murdered!

EVERYONE BUT MARIAN: Murdered?

SUZANNE: How do you know?

MARIAN: Look at her body. She's covered in items, any of which could have been used to murder her. Which makes them all very incriminating. But what's worse... they belong to all of us.

*Gasps from the guests. Nervous chatter begins.
MINNIE eyes MARIAN and then steps up.*

MINNIE: Calm down, everyone. (*still noise*) I said calm down! Listen, we must remain in control of our emotions. If Ms. Deveraux was murdered, that means the rest of us... the non-murdered... are now in jeopardy. And someone in this room, based on the incriminating evidence found scattered suspiciously on her body, is the murderer.

They all gasp again.

ANNA: But how will we find out which one of us it is?

MINNIE: There's only one way. We need...

Private Detective STEPHANIE SWANSON enters.

STEPHANIE: A private detective who specializes in solving crimes that have been committed?

Everyone turns and looks at her.

EVERYONE BUT STEPHANIE: Who are you!?

STEPHANIE: Private Detective Stephanie Swanson, a detective who specializes in solving crimes that have been committed.

BARNABAS: How are you with incriminating evidence?

STEPHANIE: One of the best. Because of this. (*pulls out a magnifying glass*)

SUZANNE: Your trusty magnifying glass that makes you capable of solving any crime but if taken away makes you completely incapable of logical thought?

STEPHANIE: (*walks over to her*) You must be a reporter.

SUZANNE: How did you know? Was it my saying what I said earlier about your trusty magnifying glass?

STEPHANIE: No, it wasn't. I'm a detective who doesn't need evidence. I just know.

SUZANNE: Oh.

STEPHANIE: That's right... oh. But it is true. With my magnifying glass... I'm a top notch detective. Without it... let's just say... I would rather not talk about it.

VIVIAN: Good. Because I would rather not hear about it.

BARNABAS: Dear.

VIVIAN: Don't "dear" me, Barnabas. You know how I feel about that.

STEPHANIE: (*looks at VIVIAN*) You must be the sister.

VIVIAN: How did you know that?

STEPHANIE: You are, aren't you?

VIVIAN: I am.

STEPHANIE: Then it doesn't matter how I knew... all that matters is, I did. But we have more pressing matters. (*crosses to ALINA's body*) Like this. (*Kneels down and stares at the body. Then stands up.*) She's clearly been murdered. But is she dead?

MARIAN: Yes, she is.

STEPHANIE: How can you be so confident with your diagnosis?

MARIAN: I checked her.

STEPHANIE: (*takes a moment*) Oh, you must be one of those maids slash non-practicing doctors I've heard about.

MARIAN: Yes... yes... I am.

STEPHANIE: (*puts hand on her shoulder*) Good. But remember these words of advice: once you start practicing as a maid slash non practicing doctor, you're not non-practicing anymore. You're practicing. And, believe me, you don't want to do that. (*wanders off*) Now that we know she's dead... we must find out who murdered her. And with all these incriminating pieces of evidence scattered suspiciously around the body... we have a lot of suspects. But fear not, I'm a lot of detective. (*gets an idea*) You know what would be fantastic? If we could do the questioning in a very stylized fashion where all of you would have your own light as you explained why something that belonged to you, something you could've murdered Ms. Deveraux with, was found on her body. Wouldn't that be exciting? (*everyone agrees*) If only...

The lights change and everyone picks up their "item" and moves to their spot on stage. STEPHANIE stays in the center looking out. We focus first on SUZANNE, who is holding a pen.

SUZANNE: Yes, this is my pen and it was found under the arm of Ms. Deveraux. And yes, it does say "I kill with this pen!" However, that simply implies that I kill with my writing. Because I'm good. Though, clearly I could kill someone with my pen. If I wanted to.

Lights fade on her and up on MARIAN, holding her duster.

MARIAN: This is my duster and it was found on Ms. Deveraux's body, thus making me a suspect. Did I kill her? Maybe. Should I be considered a suspect? Of course, because in the absence of a butler... the maid most likely did it. Though I didn't. But anyone with a duster should be considered a suspect. Anyone.

Lights down on MARIAN and up on BARNABAS.

BARNABAS: This is clearly my hat and it was found on the body of Ms. Deveraux. That being said, I had no reason to kill her. I was fond of her, after all, and to be honest, I'm really not sure that I would have been able to murder her with this hat. I guess I could have hit her with it but it's made of a very soft and pliable material. And suffocating her would certainly be out of the question because it's also very breathable. So, in the end, I'm not really sure why I would be a suspect or how my hat even got here in the first place.

Lights down on BARNABAS and up on ANNA, who is holding a script.

ANNA: Yes, my script is entitled *The Murder of Alina Deveraux: A Love Story*. And yes, it is about the murder of Ms. Deveraux, who is lying dead over there. If you had read the script that I wrote, however, you would plainly see that I murder Ms. Deveraux at a later time. (silence) Not, “I murder her.” “My evil twin sister who lives inside of me” murders her. But I suppose you may keep me as a suspect. Until page 42.

Lights down on her and up on VIVIAN, who is holding a picture.

VIVIAN: This is a drawing I created with crayons and limited use of markers. It is of my sister lying dead on her living room rug exactly the way she is right now. Except for one thing. As you can clearly see... I drew a refrigerator on top of her. And yes, that is me standing behind it because it was I who pushed it. But... there is clearly no refrigerator on top of her now. Besides that, I drew this picture earlier tonight. Before I knew.

Lights down on her as they all return the items. Lights come back up and we see STEPHANIE finishing her lines.

STEPHANIE: That could happen. But alas, it cannot. (standing up) However, my magnifying glass and I now know who the murderer is. (silence)

EVERYONE BUT STEPHANIE: And?

STEPHANIE: And... I'm tired. I need to rest. I shall retire with my magnifying glass to the bedroom. (starts to exit)

SUZANNE: But who's the murderer?

STEPHANIE: I shall tell you after I rest.

BARNABAS: But aren't we all in jeopardy?

STEPHANIE: Of course. There is a murderer afoot, after all.

She exits and nervous talking begins. MINNIE takes control of the situation.

MINNIE: Everyone, please calm down. Now, for your own safety, I urge all of you to retire to your rooms and lock the doors. I shall check around the house to make sure everything else is secure. When Ms. Swanson is done, we can all return here to find out who the murderer is. So please, to your rooms quickly. (They exit talking. MINNIE watches them go and then moves to ALINA.) Now, dear Alina, we both know the truth, don't we? Your demise came

from a bottle. A bottle of your beloved nectar and after tonight... I shall inherit all your riches. *(takes out her phone and dials)* Hey. What are we going to do about the detective? You want to me put it in my coat? Okay. Yeah, that's there too. And cleaned up. By the way, I wasn't the one who put the evidence out. Someone else did, but I think I know who. That's right. The one we're blaming for the murder. *(exits)*

SCENE 4

ALINA opens her eyes slowly and looks around. She gets up slowly.

ALINA: Dear Minnie. Poisoning me with my favorite nectar. Diabolical. *(Paces. An idea finally comes to her.)* And I suppose that form wasn't going to get a movie made. So... what to do now with everyone locked away in their rooms? Perhaps write? But where is my trusty quill? *(starts to go to it but hears footsteps)* Footsteps? Humph. I suppose I shouldn't be caught standing up.

ALINA crosses back to her spot and "dies." A masked figure enters slowly. Looks around and then notices ALINA lying dead. She crosses over to her.

ELIZABETH: Oh, it seems Ms. Deveraux has taken dead. And on this, her most special night. What a pity. But I came not to praise Ms. Deveraux, but to... steal her book and make it my own.

ELIZABETH crosses away and moves to the book. ALINA's eyes open as she decides what to do. Finally she jumps up as the masked person is lifting the glass case.

ALINA: Unhand my book, you fiend. *(they stare in silence)*

ELIZABETH: You're not as dead as you appeared to be.

ALINA: No. Clearly, I am not.

ELIZABETH: *(understands)* You were faking your death to drum up interest for your book. I've faked my death many times for the same reason.

ALINA: Who are you?

ELIZABETH: Ask me who I was.

ALINA: Were you a different person in the past?

ELIZABETH: No.

ALINA: Then I suppose it doesn't matter who you were.

ELIZABETH: That would appear to be true. Very well. *(she rips off mask and ALINA stares at her)* Now do you know who I am?

ALINA: No.

ELIZABETH: I am Elizabeth Poe. *(ALINA continues staring at her)*
Nothing? *(ALINA shakes her head no)* I have been gone a long time.
No matter. I, Ms. Deveraux, was the first modern writer to use
only a quill. That's right. And I, too, had one best seller! *The Great
Adventures of a Girl Named Carmen Who Was Raised On a Barn by a
Family of Goats: A Love Story.*

ALINA: *(remembers it)* I remember that one. It had its moments.

ELIZABETH: You bet it had its moments. Unfortunately, my quill
broke when I suffered a bit of... "writer's rage." *(ALINA looks on
bewildered)* I haven't written anything since, but my thirst for the
spotlight has not been vanquished.

ALINA: So you're going to steal my book?

ELIZABETH: And sell it as my own.

ALINA: But it's my life story.

ELIZABETH: And it will still be your life story, only now... it will be
written by me, your long lost non-related sibling.

ALINA: That... is an awful plan.

ELIZABETH: Only if it doesn't work. If it does, however...

ALINA: I'll tell them you're lying.

ELIZABETH: But you faked your death.

ALINA: I'll unfake my fake death.

ELIZABETH: Then I'll unfake the unfaking of your fake death, thus
making it... a real death. Right?

ALINA: I have no idea. As matter of fact, I think if I unfaked my fake
death, as I previous stated... I might actually be making my fake
death real.

ELIZABETH: It is all rather confusing. Very well. Let's use plain speak.
I'm going to murder you, which will make it highly unlikely that
you can do anything to wreck my plans.

ALINA: Is that a threat?

ELIZABETH: No. It's a promise. *(she smiles)* And by the way, your first novel was a joke.

ALINA: What?

ELIZABETH: That's right. A joke. And... your quill...

ALINA: Don't you speak ill of my quill.

ELIZABETH: Your quill's work... was very substandard. *(ALINA is furious. She reaches for anything and finds the glass with the nectar and throws it in ELIZABETH's face. The nectar goes into ELIZABETH's mouth because it was open. ALINA looks stunned. ELIZABETH tastes the liquid. Smiles.)* Ah. The nectar from the rare mamey sapote fruit. Delicious. Do you know they make a variety of this that is poison? I mean, they also make an "I can't believe it's not poison!" type but... *(starts to cough)* ... oh my goodness... oh my goodness... this is the poison one. You poisoned me!

ALINA: Technically, no. I just threw it in your face.

ELIZABETH: With my mouth open!

ALINA: Well, who stands with their mouth opened in a fight? I mean, seriously... *(ELIZABETH collapses)* I suppose it doesn't matter now. Humph.

ALINA sighs. Then MARIAN enters and notices another body.

MARIAN: Who's that?

ALINA: A writer who was trying to steal my book.

MARIAN: She appears to be dead.

ALINA: She is. Poisoned.

MARIAN: Did you kill her, too?

ALINA: You're making it seem like I'm some kind of murderer. Both of them were unfortunate accidents. Now help me carry her to the closet.

MARIAN: Shouldn't we leave her out here? Blame the other murderer?

ALINA: I am not a murderer! And no. She was also a writer. I don't want her death to steal focus from mine. Now hurry. *(they haul her off and then return)* By the way, don't trust Minnie. She poisoned the nectar and she may be after you next.

MARIAN: What? *(more footsteps are heard)*

ALINA: No time. Take care of that and then come back.

MARIAN starts to exit as ALINA goes back to her spot. VIVIAN enters runs into MARIAN.

VIVIAN: What are you doing here? Spying on me?

MARIAN: You weren't here.

VIVIAN: Let's keep it that way. Now leave. *(MARIAN quickly leaves. VIVIAN looks around and then paces, taking time to look at ALINA at different times. She seems unsure of what to say. Finally, she sits near ALINA.)* Dear sister, this is going to be a very difficult conversation so in some ways it's better that you're dead. If others were present... I wouldn't be having it. I might even kick you in the teeth. But since we're alone... I want to say I'm sorry. Sorry that I wasn't the sister you deserved. There were times, though few, that I was glad you were my sister. Which I suppose, in some ways, is why I treated you poorly. You always hurt the ones you love. *(shocked)* Oh my god, I've never used that word before. But I suppose it's true. I did love you. In my own twisted way. I'm sorry I never showed it in a more caring, love-like manner. Though I suppose if you were alive, I still wouldn't show you. So, as mentioned earlier, perhaps it's better that you are dead. *(coughs)* I need something to drink. *(she moves around and finds the bottle of nectar)* Oh. Your favorite. The nectar from the rare mamey sapote fruit. What a tasteless drink to be your favorite, but in your honor and my thirst's honor... I shall have a drink of it. *(ALINA's eyes shoot open as she considers what to do. VIVIAN pours drink and puts it to her lips.)* To you, dear sister. *(She drinks it and sits down. She makes a face.)* Oh... this is worse than I remembered it. Alina, I think that... *(coughs)* Oh dear.

VIVIAN dies. ALINA jumps up and rushes to her. It is too late. MARIAN enters and looks on. ALINA turns.

MARIAN: What happened?

ALINA: She's dead.

MARIAN: How?

ALINA: She drank the poisoned nectar.

MARIAN: Did you know that she was going to drink it?

ALINA: Well, I wasn't sure, but I had an inkling.

MARIAN: Why didn't you stop her, ma'am?

ALINA: She told me she loved me. She had never said that before. I was taken aback for a moment. *(looks at MARIAN)* A long moment and when that long moment passed... it was too late.

MARIAN: Well, at least you know now.

ALINA: Yes. *(looks at VIVIAN)* Yes, I do.

MARIAN: Shall we haul her to the closet as well?

ALINA: No, leave her here. She deserves to lie dead comfortably.

ALINA wipes VIVIAN's mouth with a napkin. We hear BARNABAS calling VIVIAN's name from offstage. ALINA motions MARIAN out and she returns to her dead spot. BARNABAS enters.

BARNABAS: Vivian? Vivian? Vivian, where are... *(notices her on the couch)* Are you asleep? No. You're not. Oh no. Speak to me, my love! Speak to me! You can't, because you're dead. My dear dead Vivian. *(hugs her)* What happened to you? *(gasps)* The murderer murdered you! I'm so sorry I wasn't here to protect you. *(stands up)* Oh, vile murderer. Mark my words... her death shall be avenged! *(sits beside her and takes her face)* Listen, dearest Vivian, I know you're dead and can't hear me, but maybe it's better because if you were alive... you would ridicule me for what I'm about to say. But Vivian, though you never trusted me nor supported my work, and you often had harsh words for me... I never doubted your love... well... like for me. Because you were that rare person, maybe the only one, who showed their feelings in a way that could be misconstrued as pure hatred. But I knew... I always knew. I think. *(hugs her)* I need something to drink. *(sees the nectar)* Oh, Alina's favorite nectar. The nectar from a rare mamey sapote fruit. *(Pours himself a drink. ALINA opens her eyes.)* To you my dear dead Vivian. *(he is about to drink when ALINA jumps up)*

ALINA: Wait! Don't drink that! *(BARNABAS sees her)*

BARNABAS: Ahhh!!! A ghost!

He falls out of the chair as he faints. ALINA looks at him.

ALINA: Oh dear.

Noise is heard coming from various spots. ALINA looks around and then goes back to her spot.

SCENE 5

MINNIE, ANNA, and SUZANNE enter from various places. MARIAN enters from the hall.

MINNIE: What are earth is... (notices the bodies of VIVIAN and BARNABAS) oh no.

SUZANNE: Are they...

MINNIE: (to MARIAN) Check them.

MARIAN: Why me?

MINNIE: (very pointed) Because you're a maid slash non-practicing doctor remember?

MARIAN: Oh. Right. (Moves in to check both VIVIAN and BARNABAS's bodies. Aside) For a non-practicing doctor, I seem to be practicing a lot tonight.

MINNIE crosses away. There is silence as MARIAN checks the bodies. She stands up.

SUZANNE: Well?

MARIAN: They're both... dead.

ANNA: Which means the murderer has struck again. (pause) And again.

They all look at each other.

MINNIE: Which means the murderer is in this room and is... one of you.

SUZANNE: Don't you mean "us?"

MINNIE: No, because I am not a suspect.

ANNA: Why?

MINNIE: Did you find any incriminating evidence belonging to me on Ms. Deveraux's body? No, you did not. The rest of you, however...

SUZANNE: Which could mean... you're the number one suspect and setting the rest of us up.

MINNIE: (silence) I hadn't thought of that. But before making any more accusations, Ms. Springfield, perhaps we should find the detective.

MARIAN: I believe she's still resting.

STEPHANIE enters looking disheveled.

STEPHANIE: No, she is not. Resting. She is no more. Believe me.

MINNIE: But you're the detective.

STEPHANIE: Not anymore. *(she sits down)*

ANNA: Why?

STEPHANIE: Because it's gone.

SUZANNE: What's gone?

STEPHANIE: My magnifying glass.

MARIAN: Oh no. What happened?

STEPHANIE: I don't know. One minute it was lying beside me and then... it wasn't. *(pause and looks off)*

SUZANNE: But who's the murderer?

STEPHANIE: Murderer? Someone's been murdered?

ANNA: Three someones.

STEPHANIE: *(to SUZANNE)* Did I do it?

SUZANNE: I'm betting no.

MINNIE: This is wasting too much time. *(to STEPHANIE)* Do you know who the murderer is?

STEPHANIE: Without my magnifying glass, I'm not even sure I know who I am.

MINNIE: That's fantastic. *(wanders off)* Thank god I know who the murderer is.

They all turn to her.

EVERYONE EXCEPT MINNIE: Who?

MINNIE: *(smiles)* Isn't it obvious? It's the one person who discovered all the bodies. The one person who checked them because she's a "maid/non-practicing doctor." And, on top of that, she's also the one person who tried to murder me tonight.

Gasps and they turn to MARIAN.

MARIAN: I have a disorder!

MINNIE: That's right... you do have a disorder. A murdering people disorder. (*turns to STEPHANIE*) Detective, do you have handcuffs on you?

MARIAN: (*worried*) Handcuffs?

STEPHANIE: No, the only thing I have in my pockets are these things. (*Pulls out handcuffs. MINNIE looks at her.*)

MINNIE: Those will have to do. (*takes handcuffs*) Now, I need some help handcuffing her so we can take her to the police. (*no one moves*) Do you want her to kill again? Because the next time it could be you.

ANNA and SUZANNE move to help. MINNIE looks at MARIAN.

MARIAN: Wait, I didn't...

ANNA: (*takes her by the shoulder*) Listen... Maid... I know why you killed them all. Because as a young child, perhaps 4, you were teased by a writer whom you worked for, her sister, and a boy who was mute and communicated with watercolor paintings. (*a moment of confusion until ANNA continues*) Now, that won't keep you from serving many years in jail, but it will help sell my script.

MARIAN: I don't want to go to jail.

ANNA: You should have thought of that before you murdered all of these people.

MARIAN: But I didn't murder anyone.

MINNIE: People only say they didn't murder anyone when they actually did murder someone.

A frightened look comes over MARIAN's face as everyone moves in on her.

MARIAN: No, no, no... (*she collapses*)

SUZANNE: Is she...

MINNIE: No. She fainted. Which will make it easier to get these handcuffs on her and take her to the clink. (*moves to handcuff her*)

ALINA: (*jumps up*) The only one going to the clink is you, Minnie Matthews!

Gasps from everyone.

MINNIE: You're alive.

ALINA: I am alive. No thanks to you.

ANNA & SUZANNE: What?

MINNIE: What are you trying to say, Alina?

ALINA: I'm not trying to say anything, Minnie. I'm clearly saying it. The nectar you gave me was poison. You wanted me dead.

Another gasp.

MINNIE: Then why are you still alive?

ALINA: Because I didn't drink it. Vivian did.

SUZANNE: Did you see her drink it?

ALINA: Yes... in a way.

SUZANNE: And you knew it was poisoned?

ALINA: Yes.

SUZANNE: Yet you didn't stop her.

ALINA: What? I... I... this is not about me! This is about Minnie Matthews trying to murder me. (to MINNIE) How dare you?

MINNIE: You have no proof that I gave it to you.

SUZANNE: (looks at nectar) Well, it says here (reading) "To Alina. Bottoms up. In the grave. Just kidding. From Minnie."

There is silence as all look at her.

MINNIE: Perhaps I shouldn't have written that. (realizes) Or I should have denied that I wrote it. Crap. But I don't have a motive to kill you.

ALINA: Really? (MINNIE shakes her head "no") What about that form I signed?

MINNIE: It was...

ALINA: I think we both know it wasn't.

MINNIE: I'm telling you...

ALINA: Show us the form, Minnie.

MINNIE: I... I can't. I mailed it...

ANNA: It's in her coat pocket. Along with, detective, your magnifying glass.

They all look to ANNA. MINNIE stares at ANNA.

MINNIE: What are you doing?

ANNA: *(smiles and then looks at detective)* See for yourself, detective.

STEPHANIE's eyes dart up and in a quick moment she snatches her magnifying glass, a handwritten power of attorney, and another sheet of paper.

MINNIE: I didn't take your magnifying glass!!!

STEPHANIE: *(also takes out a form and hands it to ALINA)* And you will be wanting this.

ALINA: *(Walks over and takes the form. Reading.)* "The Last Will and Testament of Alina Deveraux." This is the form I signed earlier with everything uncovered. I should've known. "Leaves everything to Minnie Matthews."

MINNIE: That doesn't prove anything.

STEPHANIE: Actually, it proves you were trying to commit murder and you were going to blame it on this poor maid slash non-practicing doctor. You're going down, lady.

MINNIE: Fine, but I'm won't go down alone. *(looks at ANNA and starts moving to her)* Will I, Anna Marie Silverstreet?

ANNA: Sorry, I have no interest in going to jail. *(smiles)* Been there, done that.

MINNIE: Well, you are, because you were working with me the whole time.

ANNA: Of course, blame the out of work talent-deprived actor who happened to write a script about murdering Alina Deveraux tonight.

ALINA: It is rather suspicious that you have a script about murdering me and you knew where the form and magnifying glass were.

ANNA: You're a writer, I thought you would understand.

ALINA: I'm... sorry?

STEPHANIE: *(to MINNIE)* Do you have any proof?

MINNIE: (*struggles to come up with proof then gets it*) I do. My cell phone where you can see all of the calls between myself and Ms. Silverstreet.

STEPHANIE: Let me see your phone. (*to ANNA*) I'll need to see yours, too.

ANNA: Of course. (*she pulls out her phone and hands it to STEPHANIE*)

MINNIE: Wait! That's not your phone!

STEPHANIE: (*turns to MINNIE*) I need yours, ma'am.

MINNIE: (*continues frantically searching for it*) It's not here. Where could it be... (*turns to ANNA*) You have it! Why are you doing this?

ANNA: I have no idea what you are talking about.

MINNIE finally loses it, screams and makes a mad dash for ANNA but runs into MARIAN, and wakes her up. She jumps up and attacks MINNIE.

MARIAN: AH HH!

MINNIE: (*looks at her*) Not again! AH HH! (*MARIAN falls on top of her. STEPHANIE rushes to MINNIE and ALINA pulls MARIAN off. MINNIE turns on STEPHANIE.*) Get off me! I have to...

STEPHANIE: You're not going anywhere without these. (*quickly handcuffs her*) No one steals my magnifying glass and gets away with it.

ALINA: Or attempts to murder people. I think that's the more essential part of your case.

STEPHANIE: I suppose. Come on, lady, it's time to go.

ALINA: Before you leave... I have something I would like to say to her. (*crosses over to MINNIE*)

MINNIE: What?

ALINA: Thank you.

MINNIE: For?

ALINA: For making it clear to me that my story wasn't complete until tonight. Now no publishing house will be able to resist, *She Still Writes With Quill: The Attempted Murder of Alina Deveraux and A Moment by Moment Recollection of the Life of Alina Deveraux Up*



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