

ALLISON. It doesn't matter. George knows.

ARTHUR. But he can't tell the truth, can he? Not as long as I have this tape. Think of the fun I'll have with good old George over the coming years. *(He sits down on right arm of sofa, aiming gun at ALLISON, taking a barrel sight. She stares at him, afraid.)* Three alternatives - which one should it be?

ALLISON. W-what are you going to do? *(No answer.)* Arthur, tell me!

ARTHUR *(Smiling)*. I have a suggestion for you, darling. *(A pause.)* Why don't you read my mind?

CURTAIN

PRODUCTION NOTES

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES: All of the action of the play takes place in the very elegant study/den of Arthur Sinclair's home in Beverly Hills, California. The time is the present, in the summer season. Act One, Scene One: a summer evening. Scene Two: afternoon, a few days later. Scene Three: the following night. Act Two, Scene One: Monday evening. Scene Two: one hour later. Scene Three: still later.

SETTING: DR is a door that leads into an adjacent room, which is actually an "inner-den." R, against the wall, is a handsome console cabinet with some drawers. The console has stereo equipment; TV, tape cassette, radio, etc. There's a mirror on the wall above the console.

Moving upstage, beyond the console cabinet, angled to audience view, is a bar. Behind the bar, out of sight, is a small refrigerator. On the wall are some shelves with assorted glasses and bottles.

UR is the entrance to an unseen hallway or alcove that leads to other areas of the house. There's a light switch near the entrance.

The UC wall is lined with book shelves. The volumes on the shelves are expensively bound and rich-looking. The book shelves are punctuated by some large theatrical posters that advertise famous "mentalists" and stage "illusionists" of the past, e.g., "Dunninger," "Houdini," "Dante."

UL is a small antique table with a drawer. L are French doors that open onto the grounds. There are drapes that can be pulled across. DL there's a desk with a chair behind it. Another chair is in front. There's a telephone on the desk, pen, lamp, ashtray, matches.

C, downstage somewhat, is a sofa. Behind the sofa is a table.

In front of the DR door there's a comfortable chair with a low table set on the downstage side.

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A stylish and witty suspense-thriller. Arthur Sinclair is a successful world famous mentalist in the tradition of Dunninger. His beautiful wife Allison plots his murder for the commonest of all motives - greed. She enlists the aid of a struggling young actor. Her foolproof murder plan cannot possibly misfire as it's too skillfully inventive - or is it? After all, Arthur (as everyone knows) has psychic gifts. But does he? Once the killing scheme is set in motion, the plot begins to twist and turn. Nothing is as it seems. Is mind reading possible? Can the future be foretold? Just when the audience figures out what will happen next, there is an unexpected shock to complicate matters in an amusing and scary fashion. The mystery builds to an exciting climax where Arthur's gifts not only save his life but create a devilish new puzzle that will keep the audience on the edge of its collective seat.

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MURDER BY NATURAL CAUSES

A Play In Two Acts
For Four Women and Four Men

CHARACTERS

GIL WESTON young actor
ALLISON SINCLAIR Arthur's wife
ARTHUR SINCLAIR mentalist
GEORGE BRUBAKER Arthur's attorney
JESSICA PRESCOTT book editor
MARTA the Sinclairs' maid
EDDIE OAKMAN private investigator
MRS. CARRINGTON concert promoter

TIME: The present

PLACE: The study of Arthur Sinclair's home in Beverly Hills, California

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(MURDER BY NATURAL CAUSES)

Murder by Water - Cases

Girl Weston - young actor
Allison Sinclair - Arthur's wife
Arthur Sinclair - mental list
George Brubaker - Arthur's Attorney
Jessica Prescott - Book editor
Marta - Sinclair's maid

March 4-5-6
11-12-13

Eddie Oakman - private investigator
Mrs. Camington - concert promoter

To these basics should be added rug(s), lamps, additional stage dressing, maybe stools at the bar, more book shelves. On the wall behind the desk is another good spot for poster illustrating some magician or occultist, e.g. "Chung Lin Soo," "Thurston," "Mandrake," "Levante," etc.

Overall, the room is comfy, masculine and warm. Judging from the furnishings, there is no doubt that the man who lives in this house is wealthy. The posters tell us he's interested in the "strange."

PROPERTIES: Act One, Scene One: Robe, empty cigarette pack (GIL), wristwatch (ALLISON).

Act One, Scene Two: Large floral arrangement (pre-set), pipe (GEORGE), legal contract (ARTHUR), empty tray and same tray with hors d'oeuvres (MARTA), crushed cigarette pack (same as Scene One - ARTHUR), note pad (EDDIE), newspaper (MARTA).

Act One, Scene Three: 8 x 10 glossy photograph (MARTA), newspaper reviews, pack of cigarettes (GIL).

Act Two, Scene One: Large manila envelope with papers (JESSICA), attache case with four legal documents.

Act Two, Scene Two: Gun (pre-set in antique table drawer), glove, pen (GEORGE).

Act Two, Scene Three: House keys (ALLISON), thin glove, bullet in handkerchief, gun (ARTHUR).

COSTUMES and CHARACTERS:

GIL WESTON is a good looking young man, possessed of rough charm and arrogant self-interest. He can be captivating and irresistible. In Act One, Scene One, he wears a stylish robe; Act One, Scene Three; a rumpled sweat shirt and jeans, and in Act Two, Scene Two; a nice looking sport shirt and pants.

ALLISON SINCLAIR is a beautiful, sophisticated woman. She is cool, poised, intelligent and lively. She is always beautifully dressed, but appropriate to the occasion and time of day. Her hostess gown for the garden party should be especially lavish and becoming.

ARTHUR SINCLAIR is a handsome, worldly man. He is also shrewd with a somewhat theatrical manner. He wears expensive but casual clothes.

GEORGE BRUBAKER is a pleasant looking but rather nondescript man. He wears very good quality, conservative suits.

JESSICA PRESCOTT is an attractive young woman. She dresses in chic businesswoman fashion, rather tailored.

MARTA is a plain woman. In Act One, Scene Two, she should be attired in a conservative maid's uniform. In Act One, Scene Three, she wears a tacky, thin, topcoat and a silly looking hat. The general impression is frumpy.

EDDIE OAKMAN is a street-wise but rather uneducated man. He wears the same very out-of-date suit in each scene. He is a bit on the plump side.

MRS. CARRINGTON, is a middle aged woman but tries unsuccessfully to act younger than she is. In Act One, Scene Two, she wears a large hat, gloves, and a dressy, full, summer frock. In Act Two, Scene Two, she also wears matching hat and gloves and a dressy suit or dress.

All costumes are contemporary and appropriate to time and scene in the script unless otherwise noted.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES: When Allison burns the incriminating note, be sure that the ashtray is deep. A decorative bowl is also a wise prop. For extra safety, it's a good idea to have a flower vase on the desk with water in it.

In regard to Arthur's recorded voice; the recordings should be played over the backstage audio system and fed into the auditorium. This way the voice is always loud and commanding.

If the director prefers, Arthur can actually speak his lines from the inner den in the opening moments of Act Two, Scene Three. The actor should recite the lines loudly. If the lines are spoken rather than played as a recording... Allison's line "It's a recording" will be cut.