

THREE DEAD DEEP

(aka "... another Great American Murder")

a play
an event
a murder

by

Michael Perlmutter

(Also available in a TECH SAVVY version...)



©Michael Perlmutter
805-469-2897
lmjdj@msn.com
www.DirectingHamlet.com

CHARACTERS

| | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| RED | Female |
| YELLOW | Female |
| BLUE | Male |
| GREEN | Male |
| | |
| YVONNE | Female |
| MARILYN | Female |
| DETECTIVE | Male |
| FIRST RESPONDER | Male or female |

THE SETTING

The set:

The set is reminiscent of a live action murder mystery game (not unlike the board game we played as children; which shall not be named. I could give you a... *hint* at the name... but I won't—trust me you know it). There are four to eight “rooms” depicted. There are tables, chairs and other functional pieces of furniture, including a bookcase and a fireplace adorning two of the perimeter walls. There are also squared off walkways leading from room to room... you get the idea. The entire design is as elaborate or as minimal as each production desires, however the actual furniture pieces for each room should match the décor of the room displayed.

Above or behind the set is a screen on which various video projections can be displayed. If this element is not possible, a simpler version can be substituted and is available from the playwright upon request. For now let's pull out the stops, shall we?

The characters:

Each of our first four players are described by the color of their matching trench coats and fedoras: RED (female), BLUE (male), YELLOW (female) and GREEN (male). Dispersions to their ages and ethnicities will be made as the play unfolds. Whether casting matches these descriptions is entirely up to each production and makes a different statement accordingly. It is only asked that these choices be actually made for the production and not just left to chance.) But enough about that.

THE TIME

The present

A NOTE ON THE DIALOGUE:

1. A slash “ / “ indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is unspoken, although the character is thinking it.
(please note these passages will also be highlighted in grey in this script)
3. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is spoken aloud but is an aside.
(also note that these passages are NOT highlighted and SHOULD BE read aloud)
4. Grammatical errors; sentences beginning in lower case; or UPPER CASE; used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), were, indeed, intended.

PROLOUQUE

(Yvonne, THE STAGE MANAGER, enters with a script on clipboard in hand to address us [the audience]:)

STAGE MANAGER

Hello. Good evening¹. Thank you for spending your night² with us. I'm... Yvonne, not that that matters that's just .. my name. Uh. "There are a lot of great things always things happening at the .. uh (name of theatre)" and they should all be in your programs or on signs in the lobby so please... see the next show, buy a season subscription or whatever .. You are—you are here for a good old fashioned game of Who-Done-It, right? So—New tech style, of course. So to do that, before we get started, let's test this out shall we?³

MALE VOICE (offstage—in his 20s)

'Cuz it doesn't always work.

STAGE MANAGER

(Chooses not to respond to the voice.)

If everyone, please, just take out your cell phones if you will and put them on vibrate. This is important. No one wants to hear your phones ringing through the sh—through the game. So be sure your phone is on silent. So, how this works here is uh everybody here has been assigned a color and your... detective is that same color. It gets pretty obvious after that as we go on so... You will each get and receive texts.

MALE VOICE (offstage)

(Get and receive are the same thing)

STAGE MANAGER

And be able to send texts to and from YOUR detective. How this works is if you are uh yellow, for example, you will only will get and receive

MALE VOICE (offstage:)

(again)

¹ afternoon—morning—whatever fits

² day

³ (In this version, the technical element utilizing SOCIAL MEDIA does NOT work according to plan. Also available is a TECH SAVVY version of the play, in which this component [conversing between the audience and characters on stage through text messages] does operate according to Hoyle. But Hoyle basically focused on playing cards so... this ain't Rummy.

Meanwhile for character development and just plain curiosity, the texts being sent back and forth have been included here as footnotes. Read them if you wish but since the texts won't be received by the audience sitting in the theatre... you get the idea.)

STAGE MANAGER

Or be able to send texts to and from your detective who is also yellow. Same for Blue and Red, Green and... Yellow, Blue, Red, Green. OK. It becomes clearer as the game goes on. Some people like to read the rules to death and some people want to dive right in so we want to do that: Dive right in. But first—First we we want to test this so... Does everyone have their phone on ON silent? OK.

(Waits for everyone to comply)

OK.

(Into the headset:)

OK go.

(A beat.)

STAGE MANAGER

Everybody get that?

OK, let's do it again. Do I need to repea... Fine.

(Into headset:)

Go again.

(To the audience:)

Anybody?

(Into the headset:)

Whaddo you want to do?

MALE VOICE (offstage)

(I want to go home.)

ANOTHER VOICE (offstage)

(Shut up, Alex.)

MALE VOICE (offstage)

(I thought there / was a choice—)

MORE VOICES (offstage)

(Shut up, Alex.)

STAGE MANAGER

Alright we're gonna go—we're gonna work on this. Meanwhile were gonna—
We're...

(Listens on the head set a moment:)

All steam ahead. We're gonna have a game. And hopefully... Right...

(As she exits:)

Let's do this.

Places people.

(And again the stage is empty...

Light fade to open...)

SCENE 1

(At rise:

The four Coated detectives [RED, BLUE, YELLOW and GREEN] stand at the edge of the set, prepared to embark on their journey of discovery.)

RED

Is someone gonna start or what?

(Lights—everything—suddenly goes black. There is a scream. A flash of lightning & thunder [so close you can almost feel it]. There is a thunk, a gunshot, a body slam, the sound of a cinching rope, a crash of glass, a car driving away, a flight of birds, an annoying television commercial jingle, water boiling over, whispers, a splashing of water, a ticking of a clock, and all these sounds seem to blend until they become a symphony orchestra just warming up and fade into the background in sync with the lights fading back up. Although no one's moved, nothing's changed. A beat.)

RED

OK. Go.

(But no: instead: a video begins to play on the screen. A woman's voice is heard in the voiceover as visually the following is explained:)

VOICE OVER

Lord Covington Black is dead. No one is mourning the loss. In fact, his descendants and other interested parties, have gathered together to plan their futures without the good Lord looking over their shoulders or breathing down their backs.

However, Scotland Yard *is* watching. Very closely. For among those gathered here is also... the killer. Your job, as one of the descendants (or interested parties), is to find the killer before the police do. Because, because it's more fun that way, and because that will mean one less heir to the family fortune but BEWARE: the murderer may even be you. You know the rules. You know the game. You have each been assigned a living avatar: a detective who you will guide by means of using your own cell phone's text feature to discuss private matters... privately. You will roll the dice [or the dice will be rolled for you] then you and your detective will move across the board from room to room gathering clues until, by a process of elimination: the killer will be revealed. And if that killer IS you: you'll want to know before the police, while there's still time to get away. The police will be here in exactly 45 minutes. You will take turns alphabetically: BLUE goes first. Start the clock.

(The video ends as BLUE steps up to the starting position while--

YELLOW

Crap.

--an analog clock displaying the time 11:15 is displayed. Also on screen: a large pair of BLUE DICE are projected rolling: landing on the number 7.

BLUE texts something into his phone⁴. He waits for a response... Nothing. He looks to others both onstage and off for feedback or instruction before finally deciding to say the following:

BLUE

I think I shall go into the parlor.

(BLUE moves toward [but not yet into: the PARLOR]. A large pair of GREEN DICE are projected rolling: landing on number 10. GREEN texts into his phone⁵—much to the same result as Blue.)

GREEN

Well, I shall head to the library then.

(GREEN moves toward the Library [again he does not enter]. RED DICE roll: 11)

RED

(As she texts⁶.)

Yes.

Who do you wanna follow? Man or boy?

(RED moves to the doorway of the Parlor.)

BLUE

Really?

RED

Snooze you lose.

(As YELLOW DICE roll: 3.)

⁴ TEXT: *RIGHT OR LEFT?* / *Toward the parlor or the kitchen?*

⁵ TEXT: *Shall we head to the library?*

⁶ TEXT: *Right or Left?* / *Parlor or kitchen – beat BLUE to the punch?*

YELLOW

Shit.

(There is an awkward silence as YELLOW moves.)

YELLOW

What?: it's a three. What's the—...

(No reply. As she texts⁷.)

It's a “blanking” three—so who cares, right?

(To the powers that be:)

Happy?

(Direct to the audience:)

Anybody get that?

Anybody?

(No reply. She looks to GREEN for instruction:)

Do we really have to... ?

(GREEN, BLUE and RED all try texting again: Nothing.)

GREEN

Send something to me.

YELLOW

What's the / point?

GREEN

Go on. Just go on.

(As they all do so:)

RED

Fine⁸.

BLUE

(Texts⁹—says nothing.)

YELLOW

This is such a joke¹⁰.

(There is a pause.)

STAGE MANAGER (offstage)

Keep going.

YELLOW

Jawohl.

⁷ TEXT: *It's a #@%!' three: who cares, right?*

⁸ TEXT: *bla-de-bla de bla bla*

⁹ TEXT: *test test test. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their country.*

¹⁰ TEXT: *Bite me*

BLUE
Don't do that.

STAGE MANAGER (offstage)
We apologize for the technical difficulty. Please do bear with us. "While the game is... a foot."

MALE VOICE (offstage)
"The game must go on."

YELLOW
Shut up, Alex.

(BLUE DICE: 5.)

BLUE
Right. So... It's my turn next.

STAGE MANAGER (offstage)
Keep trying.

BLUE
Keeping.
(As he continues to text¹¹.)

Trying.
So, it's our turn now. Do we Continue into the parlor or change course? Show of hands?

RED
Don't "show of hands".

BLUE
Well how else are we gonna decide?

BLUE
Just /go.

YELLOW
Because it will take forever.

BLUE
Fine.
(To the Audience:)
Sorry.

¹¹ TEXT: *So, it's our turn now. Do we Continue into the parlor or change course? Show of hands?*

BLUE (Continued:)

(To Red:)

If you'll excuse me. Into the parlor we go

(BLUE enters the room. Lights come up brighter on the
PARLOR. As he texts¹²:)

Do I lock the door? You know, locking her out. "Yes" or "no".

RED

No. (And stop looking / for a show of hands.)

VOICE OVER

Stop the clock.

(The clock stops. A new video plays:)

VOICE OVER

You are in a room. Congratulations. Everyone pay careful attention because these instructions will only be given once. In a room you will find "clues". Some clues will be obvious, some not so obvious. Some are hidden and some... are... worthless. If you are alone, the first one to enter the room, you may lock the door behind you. So that no one else may enter... or exit. Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha...

BLUE

Perhaps we should lock the door.

RED

Perhaps we should stick to the script.

(The video ends as the voice's evil laugh fades away. The clock resumes counting down toward midnight.

BLUE looks out at the audience awaiting their reply.)

BLUE

Well?
Open it is.

(BLUE looks around the PARLOR—

¹² TEXT: *Do I lock the door?*

GREEN

(Texting¹³.)

Do we go or wait for Blueballs to have his turn?
Fine.

(He checks his phone.)

Did it go through--I wrote "balls"; damn you,
Autocorrect.
Alright, but remember: time is of the essence.

BLUE

Old. Very old.

GREEN

C'mon, ol' chap. We don't have all day.

BLUE

We are looking.

YELLOW

"We" haven't even gone yet.

BLUE

You didn't have your turn?

RED

She had her turn.

YELLOW

I moved three places.

RED

That was a turn.

GREEN

Oh for godsakes.

BLUE

Go ahead.

--Taking his time so as not to miss anything that might be hiding there; under cushions, inside books, etc. BLUE takes a drink from a wine glass. All but gags—doesn't spit it out: but forces it down.)

¹³ TEXT: *Do we go or do we wait for Blueboy?*

(BLUE continues to move about the room texting¹⁴ his progress as GREEN takes his turn.)

(GREEN DICE: 9)

Nothing in the sofa.

Correction: Hair. Hair on pillow north end of the parlor sofa. Red in color.

Waaaaait: what is THIS?:

Ooooh. I found a dime.

YELLOW

(As they both text away:)

Really? / Really?

RED

You're supposed to actually give them a choice.

GREEN

You play your way: I'll play mine. Green to win.

YELLOW

Yellow would just like to get started.

GREEN

(Holding up his phone—showing it to the audience but no longer texting)

“Shall we lock the door?”

Of course, we shall.

“The door is locked.”

VOICE OVER

The study is locked. There is no way in and no way out.

GREEN

(Aside to the audience:)

“There's always a way out.”

YELLOW

Are you done: Can I go now?

RED

GREEN
In.
(GREEN starts to enter the STUDY. Stops.)
Sorry. My bad... ol' chap: you're right:
(Talking as he texts^{10B}.)
“Study or back the way we came?”
Obvious choice.

^{10B} TEXT: *Study or back the way we came?*

¹⁴ TEXT: *Nothing in the sofa / Correction: Hair. Hair on pillow north end of the parlor sofa / Red / Waaaaait: / dime*

When it's your turn.

GREEN

Go ahead. Who cares.

“Found: One candlestick: not murder weapon”

... Or *is* it?

(He text something¹⁵ just in case.)

(RED DICE:

--Doesn't matter; she enters the PARLOR-- screen projection ends as without “landing”.

YELLOW

What the—What the hell does that even mean—It doesn't mean anything.

RED enters the Parlor)

GREEN

Or does it?

RED

Bernard?

BLUE

(Pronouncing her name with a long “I”:))

Regina.

(There is a pause.)

BLUE

(As he continues to text¹⁶:)

Do I continue to engage?

RED

(Aside to “team Red”:))

Should I just ignore him?

YELLOW

Hello.

RED

(to Blue:)

Talk to me, what do you know?

(BLUE does not reply—he looks to his phone.)

RED

Oh, really? We're gonna play that way, are we? Hard to get? You're not going to find anything in there.

¹⁵ TEXT: *It 's not.*

¹⁶ TEXT: *Do I continue to engage?*

(To her team:)
 How badly do we want what he knows?
 How far all we willing to go?
 Trust me: he's easy.

(Phones ring: Everyone stops to read the incoming text¹⁷.
 There is an awkward moment.)

YELLOW
 'Xcuse me?

RED
 God.

YELLOW
 (As the texts¹⁸ continue to come in.)
 Uh... Yvonne? Vonnie?
 (The text stop.)

YELLOW
 Can I go now?

(YELLOW DICE: 2)

YELLOW
 Ohhhhh, come on.

(GREEN finds a loose packet of index cards and a marker.
 During the following exchange GREEN writes out what
 would be texts of information and his own thoughts out on
 cards and shows them and/or passes them out to the
 audience:

*One more clue
 Pay no attention to them
 Can you believe this?
 This is why I work alone
 Pipe: found: out
 Murder weapon: NOT the pipe)*

RED
 (Running her fingers thru Blue's hair: turning on her
 "charms":)
 Do you really think you can resist me the whole game?

¹⁷ TEXT: *Milk. Eggs. Bread. Condoms*

¹⁸ TEXT: *Um... I'm at work. / Sorry. / Don't forget the milk.*

BLUE

I believe in justice. I believe in freedom. I believe in jurisprudence.

RED

I believe... that you believe... that I believe...

BLUE

I believe I have all I need here, thank you. I will leave you now.

RED

What did you take?

BLUE

Nothing. I didn't take anything.

RED

You can't take anything from the room. You can only give...

YELLOW

Get a room.

BLUE

DICE!

(BLUE DICE: 6.)

BLUE

To the library?

(As he texts:)

Sorry, can't stay. Love to but you know... the game... so...
I have to keep moving.

RED

Where? Maybe I'll follow.

BLUE

(Looks to audience for... anything...)

I was .. uh .. I'll let you know.

RED

The bedroom?

BLUE

Or the library—Yes—I think that's—yes. Goodbye.

(And he exits elsewhere on the board [away from the parlor].)

GREEN

My turn: Don't bother rolling.

There is always a way out.

(He opens a bookcase and exits inside.)

(GREEN:DICE: seen and then gone—opting not to roll.)

GREEN (offstage)

Always a way.

(BLUE is texting¹⁹ again.)

RED

(To her team:)

He took something, didn't he?

BLUE

(Moving to a space of his own choosing:)

Not everybody's a klepto.

(RED DICE: 8)

RED

Do we follow him or head to another room? He's just about to crack. Yeah, I think so too. It might be worth it. Sorry: can't go to the study: it's locked. It's how the game works.

(YELLOW DICE—

YELLOW

Please, for godsakes...

--and lands a 12.)

YELLOW

Yes! Doubles.

BLUE

We aren't playing doubles.

YELLOW

Whatever; I'm going to the trophy room.

¹⁹ TEXT: *Across the hall? Left? or Right?*

RED

Nobody cares.

(Suddenly all the phones start ringing. Not just onstage but throughout the audience as well²⁰. The ringing off stage and in the audience continues as everyone stops to read their incoming text²¹. Slight pause as they take in what they've read. They each respond back in their own way:)

YELLOW BLUE RED GREEN
Shut up.²² Excuse me?²³ Troll.²⁴ Who the hell are you?²⁵

(Pause. The phones stop ringing. Silence.)
(BLUE DICE: 5)

BLUE

And we're in.

(Texts²⁶. No reply. Aloud to the audience:)

I wrote: "Do you want me to lock the door?" Anybody get that?

(RED, meanwhile, steals something from the parlor scene—unknown to all of us exactly what it is.)

YELLOW

And I wonder what's in here.

(She pulls on a Moose [or some other horned animal trophy head] antler. The fireplace opens up to reveal a passageway. And out of it...

Falls GREEN: dead as a fish [and by "fish" I mean one you'd find in a grocery store—not flopping around on a boat].

YELLOW screams.)

RED

What the fu---

(She turns and sees...)

What the fuck...

²⁰ (PHONES RING THROUGH AUDIENCE VIA SMALL SPEAKERS SET UNDER SEATS THROUGH THE HOUSE)

²¹ TEXT: *Did you forget something? /... or Someone?*

²² TEXT: *Shut up.*

²³ TEXT: *What exactly is that supposed to mean?*

²⁴ TEXT: *WTF: Get off the site.*

²⁵ TEXT: *Who the--*

²⁶ TEXT: *Do you want to lock the door?*

(BLUE looks up from texting. He looks to the screen.
GREEN DICE is rolling, rolling, rolling.)

BLUE

... oh shit.

(YELLOW tries to say something but can only scream
again.)

RED

Marilyn!!

VOICE (OFFSTAGE)

Keep / going.

RED

Fuck you, keep going.

YELLOW

This isn't funny.

BLUE

It's a stupid joke. Get up Ted.
Get up Ted.

RED

Ted, knock it off.

(STAGE MANAGER [Yvonne],--we know she's the Stage
Manager because, hell, she's dressed like a "stage
Manager" complete with a wireless headset—steps out onto
the set to check out what's happened.)

BLUE

And now you've ruined the magic.

YELLOW

Ted, this isn't fucking funny.

RED

It's a little bit funny.

YELLOW

(Kicks Ted/GREEN)

You stupid shit.

(She kicks him again as she repeats:)

Stupid.

(and again.)

Shit.

(and again and again as she continues:)

Stupid, stupid, stupid. Shit, shit, shit.

(STAGE MAGER pulls YELLOW off GREEN and hands her off to BLUE.)

YELLOW

(Gathering her composure:)

Is he... ?

RED

Is he dead?

STAGE MANAGER

He is now.

RED

Does he smell; What's he smell like?