

The Mystery Thing

Drena Heizer



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THE MYSTERY THING

By Drena Heizer

NARRATOR: Well, here we have a volunteer theatre group at their weekly meeting to rehearse a play. Sometimes they're like a committee of bewildered turtles trying to put together a bird's nest, but don't worry about it. They usually come up with SOMETHING, so let's just be patient. Let's look in on them now and see how they're doing. Here's the director—

DIRECTOR: Okay, let's get started. We're reading through a new play.

ALBERT: What is it?

DIRECTOR: It's a mystery story.

ALBERT: Don't tell me you wrote it.

DIRECTOR: Okay, I won't tell you.

ALBERT: But you did write it, didn't you?

DIRECTOR: All right. Yes.

ALBERT: Oh, no. Not again.

DIRECTOR: What's that supposed to mean?

ALBERT: That last one you wrote was a real dud.

DIRECTOR: It was not. You people messed it up, that's all.

ALBERT: Well, what did you expect when you brought in a handwritten script that we couldn't read?

DIRECTOR: Oh, come on. It wasn't that bad.

ALBERT: Oh no? Your handwriting looks like it was done by a drunk chicken with a muddy stick!

DIRECTOR: That isn't a nice thing to say. You should apologize.

ALBERT: Okay. I apologize to the chicken.

DIRECTOR: You're being very rude.

ALBERT: I'm sorry.

DIRECTOR: No, you're not. And besides, we have a readable script this time. Lucy was kind enough to type it up for me.

LUCY: Yes. I learned typing in high school.

ALBERT: They had typewriters when you were in school?

LUCY: Of course.

ALBERT: Gosh, that was so long ago that I thought you were still writing on stone tablets.

LUCY: *(to DIRECTOR)* Do I have to put up with this?

DIRECTOR: Sorry. I had three parts for men, but only two showed up, so you'll have to work with him.

LUCY: Oh, fine.

DIRECTOR: You're playing the part of his sister in this production.

LUCY: I'd rather not play ANY part in this thing. It's a really stupid play.

DIRECTOR: Maybe you just typed it stupid. Now we're here to rehearse, so let's get started. Hubert, you have the opening line.

HUBERT: Okay. *(clears throat)* We were all asked by Uncle Silas to meet here at his mansion on this dark and stormy night because he has finally decided to reveal the Mac Flubbinerspooginickerplandervick family secret.

LUCY: I always thought the family secret was nobody could remember that name long enough to pronounce it, and that's why the family has just been called Mac.

HUBERT: No, that can't be the secret, because we know that already.

ALBERT: I always thought the family secret was that the mansion is haunted.

LUCY: Yeah. People have heard strange sounds and screams at night.

HUBERT: No, that's not the secret because everybody has already heard about it.

ALBERT: Then what IS the family secret?

HUBERT: Only Uncle Silas knows, and--where is he anyway?

SHEILA: I'm afraid something terrible has happened.

ALBERT: Who the heck are you?

SHEILA: My name is Stanley Manley. I'm a defective...Wait a minute. Shouldn't that word be DETECTIVE?

LUCY: Sorry. I guess my typing is a little rusty.

SHEILA: And another thing. This character's name is Stanley? Maybe you haven't noticed—but I'm a woman.

DIRECTOR: Well, I'm sorry, Sheila. This part calls for a man, but we don't have enough men actors, so go on—just put on the glasses and the hat. (*SHEILA sighs and reluctantly puts on the hat and the "Groucho Marx" glasses with nose and mustache. Everybody snickers.*)

DIRECTOR: All right. Settle down. Millie, pick up your line there—and try to look startled.

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