

# MURDER AT THE ASYLUM

a whodunnit in three acts

by

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For Jacqueline,

Rebecca, Sabrina and Belinda

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## The persons of the play (in order of appearance)

- Caesar** He is a patient at Dr McLeod's mental hospital in Killin, Scotland. He thinks he is the famous Roman, Julius Caesar. He is dressed in a Roman toga.
- Hitler** He is a patient who thinks he is Adolf Hitler. He has short hair, parted on the right, and, of course, a small moustache. He wears uniform-like clothes.
- Marilyn** She is also one of the patients. She thinks she is Marilyn Monroe. So she wears clothes from the Fifties, and uses a rather vulgar red lipstick.
- Maggie** She is another patient. She thinks she is Margaret Thatcher, or rather, Lady Thatcher, the former British Prime Minister (1979 - 1990). She is usually very much in control of herself and of every situation. She always carries a handbag, and she often wears gloves.
- John** Nurse John is the head nurse. He is the director of the theatre play "The Assassination of President Lincoln", which he rehearses with some of the patients as part of their therapy.
- Happy** The third of the male patients. He thinks he is one of the Seven Dwarfs. He is protective of one of the nurses whom he calls "Snow White", a nickname that has been adopted by everyone. He wears a white beard and a red cap and always carries a small spade.
- Queen** She is another patient. She imagines herself to be Mary Queen of Scots (1542 -1587). She is dressed in royal attire.
- Rose** Nurse Rose is the youngest of the nurses. She is still on probation for another two months. She is responsible for occupational therapy. Like all the other nurses she wears a white coat, the typical nurse's uniform.
- Snow** Nurse White is the second female nurse. She is not too happy about her nickname "Snow White". Obviously she is good-looking, with black hair, a rather pale face and red lips.
- Director** Dr James McLeod is the director of the mental asylum. He used to teach history at the Royal College in Edinburgh, a very expensive public school. He gave up teaching after twelve years, frustrated and disgusted because his pupils simply were not interested in history. After earning his doctorate in psychology he opened his private asylum.
- Doctor** Dr Flora Campbell is a medical doctor. She is employed at the asylum and is obviously in love with the director.
- Holmes** The last of the male patients. He thinks he is Sherlock Holmes. He has been committed to the asylum by one of his daughters on this very day.
- Grant** Inspector Grant is a member of the Highland Police Force. He has been sent to investigate the murders at the asylum.
- Soames** Miss Soames is his assistant. She has just completed her training at the police academy.

# **ACT ONE**

## **Scene 1**

As the curtain opens, we see a large room with a window opening out into a well kept English garden. The room could be a lounge or a large sitting-room. It is nicely decorated and seems cosy enough.

In the foreground there is a sand-table with two men standing around it, deeply engrossed in a discussion about some military exercises. One of them is wearing a white toga and a laurel-wreath on his head, and he holds a marshal's baton under his arm. He is Julius Caesar. The other man is wearing a brown SA-uniform with a red swastika band around his left arm. He is Adolf Hitler.

The rest of the room is a mess. Three small tables with chairs have been pushed to one side and into the background. There is a drinks trolley with some bottles and glasses on it which is almost hidden by the rest of the furniture.

There is a second, smaller, room on the left-hand side of the stage. It is obviously used as an office or a study. It is furnished with a desk, a telephone, a bookshelf with some books and a large couch with a pillow on it.

**Caesar** Look, here's the river, there are the Helvetii and that's how I have deployed my legions. About three quarters of the enemy have already crossed the river during the last few days, trying to escape from my fine Roman soldiers. So here's today's problem. How do you force them into a battle?

**Hitler** First I bring in the heavy artillery, cut them off from the river, and wipe out that whole pocket using my Stukas like that...

He takes a model plane out of one of his pockets and demonstrates his ideas with it. When he attacks, he imitates the sound of the Stuka and of its machine guns.

**Caesar** Hey, there's no aircraft yet. And your "heavy artillery" is merely catapults. Remember, it's only 695 Ab Urbe Condita.

**Hitler** I see. So I get my engineers to build emergency bridges across the river here and here and send in my crack troops, two SS tank regiments, to attack ...

**Caesar** Me Hercule, Adolphus, you haven't got any tanks, not even war elephants.

**Hitler** Oh, I see what you mean. How did you do it then?

Marilyn enters and walks straight to the drinks trolley. During the following conversation she fixes herself a Bloody Mary.

**Marilyn** Hello, you two warriors. Where's John?

**Hitler** He said he'd be here any moment.  
I say, Caesar, didn't he ask us to prepare everything for the next rehearsal?

**Caesar** Oh, did he? I can't remember.

**Marilyn** That horrible bore! Hasn't he given up on that stupid idea yet? Doing a play – and not giving me the leading role! It's ridiculous!

She swallows a large part of her drink.

Ah, that's better. Three o'clock already, and I'm only on my third drink.

She turns to the two men.

Care to join me for a drink?

**Caesar** Oh no, thank you. We're in the middle of a fascinating general staff exercise. Well, what did I do? I ordered my catapults to start throwing heavy rocks into that troop concentration down at the river, while my fastest legions started crossing the river here.

Maggie Thatcher enters and goes up to Marilyn.

**Maggie** What battle are our two generals re-enacting today?

**Marilyn** It must be the fiftieth run of the Battle of Bibracte.

**Maggie** I ask you Marilyn, what do men know about strategy? Haven't we always dominated history - and manipulated men like them?

**Marilyn** Yes, I've always wondered who invented the expression "the weaker sex". It must have been a woman, who wanted to cater to some man's ego. A drink, Lady Thatcher?

**Maggie** Oh, do call me Maggie, like all my friends. And yes, perhaps I'll have a sherry.

Marilyn pours her a glass.

**Maggie** Where's John? He asked me, ordered me, to come down for the next rehearsal. I'll never finish writing my memoirs at this rate. And the Director still hasn't found a ghost writer for me. I have to write every word myself. Of course it's fascinating, and even more so since I became a member of the Order of the Garter. By the way, have I shown you my garter?

She quickly lifts up her dress to show Marilyn the garter on her left leg.

**Marilyn** Oh yes, you have.

**Maggie** All the same, have you ever heard of any politician writing his own memoirs? Nobody would read them. All those male politicians are so full of themselves. But when it comes to expressing their thoughts and ideas coherently, they're completely at a loss. Just look at our nice choirboy, Mr John Major. A major error he was, and that about sums him up. Just think of how he led the Conservative Party to its Waterloo in 1996.

She raises her glass.

**Maggie** Cheers! (she seems irritated again) So, where is John?

**Marilyn** I don't mind if he doesn't come at all, that sneaky bastard. He's always slinking around after me. He hardly gives me a moment's peace.

**Maggie** He does seem aroused whenever he sees a beautiful girl like you.

**Marilyn** Aroused! You're joking! He gets a hard-on whenever he finds an excuse to touch me. He's not a nurse – he's a handyman. He's all hands around me. Now I usually don't mind attracting a man's attention – if he's a real man and if I like him. But in John's case I had to go to the Director and ask him to find someone else for my massage. John never gave me a massage - he harassed me!

**Maggie** I've also refused to have my therapy sessions with him. He's one of those men who're still convinced that patriarchy is a god-given institution. Same as those two fighters over there!

**Marilyn** I say, Maggie, let's tease them a little and see if they can still concentrate on their war games with the two of us around.  
They walk over to the sand-table.

**Hitler** Why don't you tell me about your invasion of Britain, Caesar? I still don't understand why my invasion didn't work. Operation SEA-LION was so well planned. All those planes I threw at the British! The Henkels came in like this, protected by my Stukas ...  
He takes out his model again and demonstrates the attack.  
... which fell out of the skies shrieking like furies  
He imitates their sound again.

**Caesar** Adolphus, stop flying!

**Maggie** Your Stukas were never a match for our Spitfires, Adolf. And as for your pilots, well, you should never have attacked the British Lion with them in the first place.

**Hitler** What would a woman like you know about military strategy?

**Maggie** Don't underrate the Iron Lady, you chauvinistic Kraut. Just ask General Galtieri about this woman's strategy. His precious "Islas Malvinas" are still the Falkland Islands - and still British.  
My South Atlantic Campaign was a superb demonstration of a woman's superior strategy. I showed the entire world that the oceans still belong to Britain.  
(She starts singing) Rule Britannia, Britannia rules the waves, pa pa pa taratarata, pa pa pa papa!  
Marilyn sits down on the sand-table and drops her shoes. She teasingly walks up Caesar's leg with one of her bare feet.

**Caesar** I say, Marilyn. You're sitting on my battle-field!

**Marilyn** Don't you think your staff officers would have preferred playing around with me than with your toy soldiers?

**Caesar** Is all your strategic thinking limited to sex, Marilyn?

**Marilyn** (*very seductively*) Isn't your thinking limited to sex right now, too, my sweet Julius?  
Just then John enters, so Caesar is saved from answering. John is dressed in a white coat and he carries a clipboard under his arm.

**John** Get off him, Marilyn. Have you been drinking?  
He looks at Caesar and Hitler.  
And what have you two been up to until now? Didn't I tell you to arrange everything for our next rehearsal? How shall we ever be ready for the first night if I don't get any cooperation from you?

So let's get a move on.

Caesar and Hitler push the sand-table into the background and pull two chairs into the foreground so that they face the audience at an angle of about 45 degrees.

Happy enters.

**John** And where have you been, Happy?

**Happy** Oh, just checking on Snow White. But don't worry, she's safe.

**John** (cynically) I'm so happy for you.

Happy gets himself a chair and sits to one side of the stage. Marilyn sits next to him.

Queen Mary enters, very erect and stately.

**John** And Your Majesty's late as well - or should I say as usual? Have matters of state prevented you from accepting my humble invitation? Or have you had to attend another execution on Tower Hill?

**Queen** Well, John, if you don't apologize at once, yours will certainly be the next one.

**John** (sarcastically) I do beg your pardon, Your Majesty.

**Queen** That won't save you for long, John.

Grave matters of state are awaiting Our attention, and you have nothing better to do than to order Us around for that silly play of yours. And to what purpose? We don't even appear in this scene.

She takes a chair and sits next to Happy and Marilyn.

**John** I want you all here so you get a feel for the mood of this central scene of the play. Lincoln will be murdered directly after his biggest political success. He has no premonition at all. He's just out for a nice evening at the theatre. And of course, there are no bodyguards; the FBI hasn't been invented yet.

So let's start. Maggie, take Lincoln's arm - and for Christ's sake try not to be Maggie Thatcher for once, but Mrs Lincoln, the First Lady.

He takes his clipboard and starts reading from the script.

"The President and his wife enter the theatre. They walk to their seats on the balcony. Lincoln greets the audience before he sits down, the lights fade and the play begins. At this moment, the assassin, John Wilkes Booth", (he looks up) that's you, Caesar, "sneaks in, aims, fires his gun and shouts "Long live slavery!"

Marilyn walks over to John and interrupts him.

**Marilyn** Oh, Nurse John, why can't I take Maggie's part? I'd love to act the First Lady. I know the part. Didn't I flirt with Kennedy?

You must see how stiff and uncomfortable Lady Thatcher is in her role. She's not an actress, you know, she's just a politician.

I'm sure you'd love to let me act your part, wouldn't you, Maggie?

**Maggie** But of course, Marilyn. You can be the Lincoln woman whenever you like.

**John** Oh no, most definitely not. You're not a First Lady, Marilyn, you're a mammal.

**Marilyn** I beg your pardon!

**John** You've never been an actress. (he walks to her)  
You're just tits and ass.  
Your talents lie here (he pinches her bosom)  
and here (he slaps her bottom)  
but not here, dear. (he caresses her hair)

**Marilyn** (outraged) And your talents lie here (she slaps his hands)  
and not here. (she slaps his face and steps back)  
Now you stop touching me or I'm going to report your continuous sexual harassment to the Director. That would make quite a story for the tabloids, I'm sure.

**John** Oh, you, you ....

**Marilyn** Don't use the word, John, it won't be p.c.

**John** What would you know about political correctness? The concept didn't even exist in your time.

**Marilyn** Some people never stop learning.  
You see, John, it's completely up to you. Do I get Maggie's part - or do you start looking for another job?

**John** But don't you see that's absolutely impossible? You know the Director wants Maggie to act that part. He insists. It's all part of Maggie's therapy.

**Maggie** (very angrily) Nurse John, that's the third time in five minutes that you've called me "Maggie". I won't accept such rude behaviour any longer! You know Her Majesty has made me "Lady Thatcher", and a member of the Order of the Garter, so kindly address me correctly, if you will.  
Anyway, Marilyn's quite right, of course. I hate acting, and I especially loathe playing an American president's wife. Aren't I a former British PM? And a member of the House of Lords now? So count me out - and give Marilyn a chance.

**John** You can't just walk out on me like that!

**Maggie** Oh yes, I can. - If the Director wants to see me, I'm up in my room.  
If anybody else should want to see me, I'm not available.  
Good-bye. Enjoy yourself, Marilyn.

She walks out, and Marilyn takes her place next to Hitler. John is obviously very angry but he visibly fights to get himself under control again.

**John** Bitches! You'll both regret that.  
All right, all right. Can we start now?  
Lincoln, please!

He steps to one side. Hitler takes his top hat from under a chair and hands Caesar the gun which has been lying next to his hat. Then he politely offers Marilyn his arm. Together they walk to the two chairs, Hitler rather stiffly, Marilyn in quite a provocative way however. When they reach the chairs, Hitler offers her one, then turns to the audience and quickly raises his arm in a Nazi salute.

**Hitler** Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

**John** (angrily) Not again! Stop that bloody nonsense. You're Abraham Lincoln now.

**Hitler** I'm sorry, I forgot myself.  
He turns to Marilyn and clicks his heels, Prussian style.  
Come on, madam, let's try again.  
John reads from his script again.

**John** Ready?  
"The President and his wife enter the theatre. They walk to their seats on the balcony. Lincoln greets the audience before he sits down, the lights fade and the play begins."  
Hitler and Marilyn do exactly what John says, walking in the same manner as before.  
"At this moment, the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, sneaks in,.....  
No, no! It says "sneaks" here!

**Caesar** Well, I was sneaking, wasn't I!

**John** You weren't! You were marching! You're not leading your legions in a triumph, you're trying to assassinate the American President. So, you must sneak, like an Indian brave.

**Caesar** I've read all of Alexander the Great's reports on India. But, me Hercule, he never said one word about "sneaking".

**John** I'll show you what sneaking is. (He demonstrates it)  
Is that clear now?

**Caesar** You did that very nicely.

**John** All right, we'll try the sneaking again.  
"At this moment, the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, sneaks in, aims, fires his gun and shouts:..."

**Caesar** Peng, peng, peng. Veni, vidi, vici!  
John angrily interrupts.

**John** No, no, no! You shout "Long live slavery!"

**Caesar** Me Hercule! You're sure? Show me that text again.  
John shows him the text.

**Caesar** You're right. Funny, I thought it was something in Latin.  
Let's do it again.  
Both go back to their positions.

**John** "At this moment, the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, sneaks in, aims, fires his gun and shouts:"



**Caesar** Peng, peng, peng. Long live slavery!  
Hitler clutches his head and slowly falls off his chair.

**Hitler** I'm dying, long live the USA!  
Marilyn gets down on her knees and takes Hitler's head in her lap.

**Marilyn** Oh dear, they've killed him.  
At this moment Nurse Rose appears and interrupts the rehearsal again.

**Rose** John, haven't you finished yet? It's already ten to five and we've got to get tea ready.

**John** All right, let's take a break. But we must have another rehearsal after tea.  
The patients leave. Rose stops Marilyn.

**Rose** You wouldn't mind helping me with the tables, would you, love? You know what a stickler for punctuality the Director is - and we're a bit late.  
(quietly) I'll take another bottle up to your room, okay?

**Marilyn** That's a deal.  
Marilyn and Rose, John and Nurse White, who has also entered, start rearranging the room and laying the tables for tea.  
Some moments later the Director enters . He has a look at the chaos, then takes out his watch.

## Scene 2

**Director** Aren't we running a bit late, Nurse Rose?

**Rose** No, we're right on schedule, sir.  
He walks over to John.

**Director** Well, John, tell me about your progress with the play.

**John** Progress? How about regress? They don't memorize their lines. As soon as we start work on a new scene, they forget their old text.  
Caesar simply isn't interested at all. Then take Hitler. He's awful – he's always Just Hitler. No matter what I tell or show him his performance remains the same. And now, to top it all, Maggie's just walked out on me. She no longer wants to play the President's wife. I'm sure if I gave her the President's part, she'd love doing it. It's a complete disaster, the worst therapy you've ever invented, Director.

**Director** Admit it, John, you've never believed in it, have you?

**John** Anyway, what kind of therapy is it? Lunatics acting out the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. What's the point? I haven't found anything even remotely related to that sort of therapy in any of our medical literature. If I were the director here, I would...

**Director** But you aren't, John. This is my asylum and therefore we use my therapies, even if you don't want to understand them.  
Can't you see the simple beauty of my idea? All our patients suffer from delusions.

They think they're famous historical personalities. Now if we make them play another historical character, they might just realize that they also only act their self-adapted roles. And at that point you can really start helping them. Of course this requires a little sympathy and understanding – not shouting. But if you can't agree with my methods any longer, you're free to resign and start your own asylum somewhere else.

**John** You mustn't misunderstand me, sir, I never said anything about quitting. I don't have the means to open my own asylum. And it really is interesting to work here, even if I would prefer more orthodox therapies.

**Director** Well, John, you must be patient. Your "actors" are all difficult cases. But I'm sure, acting is good therapy for them. You'll see, suddenly there will be a break-through, and you'll be rewarded for your efforts.

In the meantime the room has been made ready for tea.  
Nurse Rose appears and strikes a gong.

**Rose** Tea time!

**Director** Take Marilyn for example. She was one of the worst drinkers I had ever met when she arrived here. And look at her now! She's dry. Or have you seen her drinking lately?

**John** Not actually seen, but I suspect...

**Director** Can you prove your suspicions? No.  
Look, I intentionally put that drinks-trolley over there two weeks ago to see if she would jump to the bait. Well, she didn't bat an eyelash. She obviously doesn't notice it.  
So, chin up, John. You still have more than a week before the first night.

John leaves him and helps the other two nurses with the tea.  
Hitler enters. He gives a Nazi salute towards the Director and shouts.

**Hitler** Sieg Heil!

**Director** Well, well, Adolf, you really mustn't overdo it. This isn't a military parade in Berlin, it's a civil afternoon tea in Scotland.  
Tell me about your military studies with Caesar.

**Hitler** They're very interesting - but we're constantly being interrupted by John and his silly rehearsals.  
All the same I've just finished the first chapter of a new book; the sequel to **Mein Kampf**.

**Director** Indeed? And has it got a title yet?

**Hitler** Oh yes. It deals with the Second World War, so its title will be **Mein Kampf: Der Endsieg**

**Director** And what's that in English?

**Hitler** **Mein Kampf: Final Victory**

**Director** Isn't the title a bit misleading considering the actual historical facts? I'm sorry to correct you here, but didn't you Germans lose the war?

**Hitler** An unimportant detail. Just look at Germany and England today, and you'll agree with me about who the real winner is.

**Director** Now that's an interesting thought.  
Hitler walks to the table on the left and sits down.  
Caesar enters.

**Caesar** Ave, Director, imperator te salutat!

**Director** Salve, imperator! Are you ready for a nice cup of tea?

**Caesar** Yes, the break comes just in time.

**Director** And how are your studies coming along?

**Caesar** Well, to be blunt, they're not what they used to be. I miss Napoleon, he was a fine tactician, whereas that other one (he nods his head almost imperceptibly into Hitler's direction) is just a lucky amateur.  
That's why I've been spending a lot more time in the workshop.

**Director** Yes, I've noticed. What are you working on?

**Caesar** A new catapult. I want to double its reach.

**Director** You must give me a demonstration when it's ready.  
Caesar joins Hitler at his table.  
Maggie enters.

**Maggie** How are you, Director?

**Director** Thank you, I'm fine. And how are you, my dear?

He leads her to the central table and offers her a chair. She sits down and invites him to sit at her table.

**Maggie** Sit down, Director, I'd like to have a word with you. You've promised to find me a ghost writer, remember?

**Director** Well, madam, I've spoken to quite a few writers already, but they just weren't good enough for you. You deserve to get the best.

**Maggie** You're so kind, Director.  
Marilyn sits down at the table on the right. She bursts a bubble of her chewing gum.

**Marilyn** Can I have a drink, Director?

**Director** Naughty girl, always joking. Ha, ha!

Queen Mary enters. The Director jumps up and offers her a seat at the central table. She just looks at it disgustedly.

**Queen** Fetch Us another chair - and a cushion! But be quick, or We'll have your head chopped off.

**Director** Yes, of course, Your Majesty.

He takes a chair from Marilyn's table and Rose brings in a pillow. As Queen Mary sits down, Happy enters.

**Director** There you are, Ma'am!

**Happy** Where is she? I can't see her.

Happy sits down on the director's chair at the central table.

**Director** Hello Happy, everything all right?

**Happy** Yes, I've checked the whole house. Everything looks fine, but one can never be careful enough.

What's that?

Who's been sitting in my chair?

Who's been eating from my plate?

Who's been drinking from my cup?

The Director joins Marilyn because this is the only free seat at the moment. She looks at her tea disgustedly.

**Marilyn** I said I wanted a drink, not a lousy cup of muddy hot water!

Rose rushes to her and tries to calm her.

**Rose** But you know, you mustn't drink, love. A nice cup of tea will calm you down.

**Marilyn** Bring me a Bloody Mary, or my manager's going to fire you!

**Queen** How dare you call Us "Bloody Mary"! We're Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. Guards, arrest her and chop off her head at once.

**Rose** Have mercy, Your Majesty. She didn't realise what she was saying.

**Queen** All right, she can finish her tea before her execution.

Nurse White enters with a new pot of tea. As soon as Happy sees her he jumps up enthusiastically.

**Happy** Snow White!

He runs to her, jumps up and tries to kiss her. She is just able to put down the tea in time.

**Snow** I'm not Snow White, Happy. I'm Nurse White. Look, why don't you go back to your seat like a good boy and I'll pour you another nice cup of tea.

**Happy** Oh, anything you say, Snow White.

He returns to his seat and she pours him a cup of tea, then she puts the pot down and leaves again.

**Hitler** I say, Caesar, don't you think that woman is a Jewess?

**Caesar** You could be right. She does look like one of my slave girls from Palestine.

**Hitler** What's she doing here?

**Caesar** She's obviously a household slave.

**Hitler** Oh no, Caesar. She must be a secret agent. I'm sure the Jewish underground has sent her. Everyone's trying to kill me. But I live a charmed life. Caesar, call the Gestapo. They must arrest her and send her to a camp. That'll teach her a lesson, ha, ha, ha!

**Maggie** And how was your day, Happy?

**Happy** Very difficult. You know, I have to look after Snow White constantly. She's so naive and trusting, and her enemy is so cunning. She hates Snow White, because Snow White is so much more beautiful than she is. And her magic mirror keeps repeating that Snow White is the fairest of all. Yes, the Wicked Queen really wants to see her dead, she's so jealous.

**Queen** How dare you call Us a wicked queen! Guards, arrest this wretched dwarf and send him to the Tower at once.

Happy stands up and walks over to Queen Mary.

**Happy** Do you want to kill Snow White?

**Queen** Why should We? She's such a good servant.

**Happy** I see, that changes everything. Then you can't be the Wicked Queen. Snow White and I needn't be afraid of you. But look, the man over there, with the moustache, he is evil. I'm sure the Wicked Queen has sent him. (He shouts towards Hitler) You mustn't touch Snow White, or I'll kill you!

**Hitler** (to Caesar) Have you heard that, Caesar, "Snow White" must be her code name. I'm sure she's not working alone. She must be part of a larger conspiracy. And the dwarf's in on it, too. Those cripples, Jews and gypsies are all the same. But there's a final solution waiting for all of them. Send Himmler to me at once. And also call in Admiral Canaris. I want all those traitors hanged.

Nurse White enters again. Now she is carrying a large cake. When Happy sees her he jumps up.

**Happy** Snow White!

He runs to her, jumps up and tries to kiss her. The cake is squashed on her bosom and falls down.

**Snow** (She is really angry now) Oh Happy, you crazy loony! You bloody fool! Look what you've done. Can't you leave me alone for one second?

**Happy** But I must protect you. And I'm always so happy to see you.

**Hitler** You see! She's bungling everything. She can't be a waitress, she must be a spy.

**Queen** Servants these days aren't worth a penny. It's disgusting.

**Maggie** (to the director) I ask you, who's crazy here? We or that silly girl who drops her cake instead of serving it? Just look at the mess!

**Director** You're quite right, my dear Maggie.

**Maggie** Now don't you start calling me "Maggie", too. I'm Lady Thatcher. (She stands up)  
Clean up that mess, girls, I'm going to my room.  
John enters, as she starts walking out.

**Maggie** John, I'm taking tea in my own room. It's a madhouse in here.

**John** Just look at that. And I thought everything was ready for another rehearsal.

**Hitler** I say, Caesar, that gives us a chance to discuss another little tactical problem.  
Caesar and Hitler go to the sand-table and push it into the foreground, while all the members of the staff, including the Director, remove the tea things.

**Hitler** Now, what shall we do?

**Caesar** Don't show me the Battle of Tobruk again, just because we're at the sand-table!

**Hitler** Then let's do "Case Yellow", my brilliant tactical idea that led to the conquest of France.

**Caesar** Now let's be honest for once, Adolphus. You aren't the military genius your PR Minister made you out to be. It was simply beginner's luck - and a very good general staff. You bluffed your way through Austria and Czechoslovakia. Then nobody believed that you'd be crazy enough to attack Poland, France and Russia. But when the real tests came, you bungled. Think of Dunkirk, Stalingrad, Normandy!

**Hitler** How can you be so unfair, Caesar? In Dunkirk I wanted to give the British a chance to save their face. I hoped they'd help me in my crusade against communism. And Stalingrad was the result of General Paulus's treason. And that other traitor, Rommel, was responsible for the defeat in Normandy because he hadn't built the Atlantic Wall to my specifications.

**Caesar** Oh, leave me alone, you're making me sick.  
Caesar pushes the sand-table away and helps the others to arrange the room for the next rehearsal. Hitler is speechless.

### Scene 3

When the room is ready, the Director and the nurses leave and John starts another rehearsal.

**John** Well then, is everybody ready? We'll pick up where we left off before the teabreak. Happy and Queen Mary, get off the stage, please.  
Now Adolf, remember you're Abraham Lincoln going to the theatre. Don't move as stiffly as before. You're just planning to enjoy yourself after a hard day's work, together with your charming wife.  
And Marilyn, you're the First Lady of the United States - and not a hooker. So

don't wiggle your arse in such a provocative manner as last time. Walk a bit more royally, like Queen Mary would.

**Marilyn** Okay, John, I'll do my best to play as dull and dreary a wife as you'll ever be able to find for yourself.

Your arm, Abraham!

John turns to Caesar

**John** Now Caesar, you remember what "sneaking" is, don't you? And not a word of Latin, okay? You shout "Long live slavery"!

**Caesar** Why do you repeat everything? I'm not stupid.

**John** I'm glad to hear it.

And where's that gun of yours now, Caesar? How do you think you're going to shoot Lincoln without your gun?

**Caesar** Someone must have misplaced it.

He looks around, sees the gun under one of the chairs and picks it up.

**Caesar** Ah, here it is. I'm ready, John.

**John** Fine. (He steps to one side of the stage, picks up his clipboard, looks at it and begins to read.)

"The President and his wife enter the theatre. They walk to their seats on the balcony. Lincoln greets the audience before he sits down, the lights fade and the play begins."

While John is reading the text Hitler and Marilyn walk to the two chairs. Their manner of walking is quite different than before. They really try to act their parts as John has told them to. When they reach the chairs, Hitler offers her one, turns to the audience and raises his arm to give a Nazi salute. But he remembers just in time and quickly changes his gesture into a stiff wave.

**Hitler** Heil -(hel)-lo!

**John** "At this moment, the assassin, John Wilkes Booth, sneaks in, aims, fires his gun and shouts:"

**Caesar** Peng, peng, peng!

At the last "peng" he presses the trigger as usual - but this time there is a real shot.

**Caesar** Veni, vidi, vici!

Hitler screams and clutches his head. Blood is running down his face and his hands.

**Marilyn** (*screaming*) He's shot him! Oh, look at all that blood. My God, it's all over my dress!

**Caesar** Ha, this time I've got him !

John, like all the actors, runs to Hitler who is lying on the floor, motionless.

**John** What have you done, Caesar? You've killed Hitler!

**Caesar** (indignantly) No, I haven't! I've killed Lincoln!

**John** But why did you do that?

**Caesar** Because you told me to, remember?

At this moment the Director runs in, quite out of breath.

**Director** What was that? It sounded like a gunshot!

**Queen** You're quite right, Caesar has shot Lincoln.

**Director** Now why on earth would you do something as crazy as that, Caesar?

**Caesar** Why does everybody ask me the same stupid questions? I shot him because Nurse John told me so. He said it was part of my therapy. So if you have any more questions, why don't you ask him?

**John** I never said anything of the kind!

**Caesar** Oh yes, you did. Don't lie to the Director. Everybody here heard you. So stop trying to shift the blame to me.

**Happy** Oh yes, Caesar's absolutely right, Director. I myself heard John say that Caesar had to shoot him. But anyway, don't worry, Director. You know he wasn't the American president. They were only acting!

**John** But Hitler isn't acting. Look, he's dead!

**Caesar** So what? Hitler has killed six million Jews; he told me so himself. That man was evil. And anyway, it wasn't fun playing war games with him.

**Happy** Yes, and he wanted to kill Snow White, too. I overheard him at tea.

**Queen** So it was about time someone did him in. Good riddance! (she kicks the body) Just throw him out onto the rubbish dump.

Nurses Rose and White enter.

**Rose** What's all the noise?

**Snow** What's happened?

They see Hitler on the ground.

**Rose** Oh, my God, has he had an accident?

**Queen** No, no, don't worry! Caesar's just shot him.

**Snow** Good Lord, have mercy on his poor soul!

**Queen** You don't really mean that, do you? He was a frightful nuisance – and I'm quite happy that we finally got rid of the pompous ass.

**Marilyn** That's right! Save your pity for me, Snow White! Look at my new dress. It's full of blood, an absolute mess. That horrible man has ruined it completely.



**Director** Don't worry, we'll get you a new one.  
Nurse Rose, would you fetch Doctor Campbell at once, please.

**Rose** Yes, of course, sir.  
She hurries out.

**Director** And Snow White, err, Nurse White, would you take the patients to their rooms, please. Perhaps you could give them some medicine to calm them down a bit.

**Snow** Of course, sir. Come on, dears, let's go to your rooms.

**Caesar** Fine, now I'll add another chapter to my memoirs. I'll call it "My part in Hitler's downfall".

**Director** Now, hasn't that been written before?

**Caesar** I don't know. Anyway, it sounds better than "How I killed Hitler", doesn't it?  
He leaves.

**Happy** Oh, Snow White, what a wonderful day! Your terrible enemy is dead, slain by the victorious Caesar - and now you are finally safe. Come, dearest, we must celebrate.

**Snow** Yes, yes, love.  
Happy, Queen Mary and Nurse White leave.  
Doctor Campbell enters, followed by Nurse Rose.

**Doctor** You sent for me, Director. What's the problem?

**Director** Hasn't Nurse Rose told you, Doctor Campbell? There's been a most unfortunate little accident during rehearsals, I'm afraid. Hitler was shot, by mistake of course, with an unloaded gun - or rather, with a gun that was supposed to be unloaded.

**Doctor** But not another accident! Listen, this is already the fifth "unfortunate little accident" in just a few weeks! You don't mind if I refresh your memory, do you?  
Number one: Napoleon fell down the stairs and broke his neck.  
Number two: Mme Curie blew herself up in her laboratory.  
Number three: Lord Nelson drowned in his bath-tub.  
Number four: Marie-Antoinette's skull was smashed in by a Robespierre bust, which fell off her cupboard.  
And now, number five: Hitler shoots himself with an unloaded gun.

**Director** No, no, Doctor, you've got it all wrong. He didn't shoot himself, he was shot. By Caesar.

**Doctor** What the hell's the difference? Something sinister is going on in this house, I tell you, and we must find out what it is.  
Have you called the police yet?

**Director** The police? Now what on earth would we want the police for, Doctor? Accidents do happen. Just fill in his death certificate and then we'll give him a Christian

burial.

We don't want the police. We don't want to disturb our patients' peace of mind. –  
And we certainly don't want any bad publicity for our asylum, now do we?  
No, no, forget about the police.

**Doctor** I'm sorry, Director, I can't, and I won't. I went along with you the other four times, but now is different. You say it was an accident. Fine, that's possible. But it's manslaughter all the same - and it could even be – murder!

**Rose** Murder, Doctor Campbell? Who on earth would want to kill those poor people? They're harmless. Okay, they're crazy, but is that reason enough to murder anyone?

**Doctor** I didn't ask you for your opinion, Nurse.

**Director** Don't be so hard on her, Doctor Campbell. She's still idealistic and enthusiastic.  
(He turns to Nurse Rose) I think, you're absolutely right, Nurse Rose. My sentiments exactly. And it would really be in the best interest of everybody if ....

**Doctor** I'm just doing my professional duty. And I'd be glad if everybody else here would do the same.

**Director** Ah, well, if you really insist...

**Doctor** I do.

**Director** Nurse Rose, would you inform the police then, please?

**Rose** Of course sir, if you say so.

She walks over to the office next door, takes the phone and dials.

**John** Director, I've just had an idea. If Happy really thought Hitler wanted to kill Snow White, don't you think he could have loaded that gun and ...

**Director** You don't really believe that, John, do you? Where would Happy get the ammunition from? And how would he know how to load a gun? No, no, that's absolutely impossible.

**Rose** Is this the police station? This is Nurse Rose from Doctor McLeod's hospital for the mentally handicapped in Killin.  
I'm sorry to bother you, but one of our patients has accidentally killed a fellow patient. Doctor Campbell, our medical doctor, insists that you examine the case. Could you send one of your detectives over here whenever it's convenient.  
No, no, there's no hurry.  
Thank you, sir, and good-bye.

**CURTAIN**