

# DRAMATIC RE-ENACTMENT

By Jerry Rabushka

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## CHARACTERS

**ERIC** - a man who obviously can't say no to marriage

*His ex wives:*

**KATIE** - conservative, businesslike, wealthy

**SHERRI** - classy, but a lush at heart

**LEANN** - country attitude, big hair

**LOBELIA** - trendy, fashion-plate, lots of junk jewelry

**LATONYA** - scatterbrained and gossipy, animal print costume

**PATRICE** - sweet, loving, and.... a corpse

**OFFICER** (male or female) - investigating Patrice's sudden death

**DESK CLERK** (male or female) - keeping busy, but smart alecky

**SLIME WOMAN** - the head of hotel housekeeping

**GRUNGE BOY** - her assistant

**GARDEN LADY** - member of the garden club

**TECH BOY** - on the football team, but with a sensitive side

## PROP LIST

Notepad and pen for OFFICER

Cell phone for LATONYA

Stapler, desk phone, and other desk equipment for CLERK

Hanky for GRUNGE BOY

Paper with message on it for SLIME WOMAN

Laundry bin and bath towels

Green slime

Cards, chips and dip, including cheese dip later

Paper bag with TECH BOY's "item" in there for SLIME WOMAN

Long necklace for SLIME WOMAN

## DIRECTORS NOTES

Much of the success of this play will rest on the individuality of the characters. Each of Eric's ex-wives should do her best to differentiate herself according to the short character description, and play her part accordingly, and their lines will come alive much more thoroughly, and a lot of humor can be derived from some "over the top" antics. The other characters too, are built on quirks: the CLERK is flamboyant, TECH BOY is tough yet sensitive, SLIME WOMAN and GRUNGE BOY, for instance, are just... disgusting.

This is much more a comedy than a mystery. Almost everyone has something to hide, but it's not necessarily that they're a murderer. Take some opportunity for some physical comedy, as well as slapstick with all the towels and goop that gets tossed around from time to time. Perhaps during the actual reenactment, work with some special light or sound effects when PATRICE comes back to life. Since the "reenactment" is a parody of "The Practice" on TV, use the opportunity to have some fun with the TV conventions.

There's a lot of characters on stage at once, and at times, the entire cast. It's very much an ensemble piece, and the players should work together with reactions to each other, and of course, trying to figure out who the potential murderer might be. Since the play takes place in a hotel lobby, feel free to put out as much furniture, planters, or other places for people to sit on and lean on so large numbers of people aren't standing around with nowhere to go. The play can start off almost with the feel of a TV documentary, as the characters introduce themselves, they can address the OFFICER and the audience, and as it proceeds, take it out of that realm and more into the reality of the hotel room.

Costuming, too, can tell a lot about the characters, and serve particularly once again to differentiate the wives. The OFFICER and hotel staff can wear appropriate uniforms, and TECH BOY can of course come out in a football jersey.

## DRAMATIC RE-ENACTMENT

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*(In a hotel lobby, the OFFICER is questioning ERIC, KATIE, SHERRI, LEANN, LOBELIA, and LATONYA regarding the death of PATRICE. A CLERK is working at the front desk, which is near the back or a side of the stage, but occasionally listening in. They're all draped over the lobby furniture, as the OFFICER, walking around and taking notes, tries to keep some semblance of an investigation going.)*

KATIE: *(everyone can give away a lot about their character simply by how they introduce themselves)* Katie.

SHERRI: Sherrri.

LEANN: Leann.

LOBELIA: Lobelia.

LATONYA: Latonya.

ERIC: Eric. *(short pause)* I have six wives.

LATONYA: You have five.

ERIC: Five give or take.

OFFICER: You don't know?

ERIC: I lost track.

OFFICER: Was this six at once?

ERIC: Like I said, I lost track.

KATIE: *(counting around)* It's six. Us five, and Patrice.

ALL THE WIVES: God rest her soul.

LEANN: We were having a family reunion.

OFFICER: All at once?

SHERRI: All at once.

POLICE: *(trying to make sense of it)* You all get along?

SHERRI: No, we do it to drive him crazy.

KATIE: To remind him what he put us through.

OFFICER: *(to ERIC)* And you put up with this.

ERIC: I have low self-esteem.

OFFICER: Then how did you get five wives...

LEANN: Six.

ERIC: Whatever.

OFFICER: ...to marry you?

ERIC: I'm a wimp.

SHERRI: A wimp, but with money!

OFFICE: So now, Eric, you're single?

ERIC: Yep. I learned my lesson.

LEANN: He's single. We do this every year to keep him that way.

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OFFICER: It's just unusual to see five women who were married to the same man get along so well.

KATIE: We don't. I like Sherri and Lobelia, but I don't like Leann and Latonya.

SHERRI: I like Katie and Latonya, but Leann and Lobelia make me wretch.

LEANN: Sherri and Lobelia, yes, Katie and Latonya, uh... nah.

LOBELIA: I like-

OFFICER: Ok, I get it.

LOBELIA: But we all hate Patrice.

WIVES: God rest her soul.

SHERRI: Wherever she is.

LEANN: So you can see, it's difficult.

LATONYA: **(to KATIE)** I thought you liked me.

KATIE: Nope. Never.

LATONYA: Never?

KATIE: You're confusing me with Sherri.

SHERRI: **(to LATONYA)** I only like you because Katie doesn't.

OFFICER: What about Patrice?

WIVES: God rest her soul.

ERIC: Who's Patrice?

OFFICER: Your sixth wife.

LATONYA: The quiet one.

ERIC: Oh, yes. She was nice.

OFFICER: Well she's very quiet now. She's dead.

LOBELIA: God rest her soul. Dead.

OFFICER: Yes, dead.

SHERRI: Dead. A tragedy worse than *Hamlet*.

LEANN: Worse than *Antigone*.

LATONYA: Worse than Anthony Edwards leaving *ER*.

OFFICER: Dead and missing.

ERIC: In that order?

OFFICER: That order.

SHERRI: Eeeewwww.

OFFICER: We have reason to believe that our murderer is right here in this room!

LATONYA: **(scandalized)** You think one of us did it?

LOBELIA: You mean you're a real police officer? I thought this was some sort of surprise party and you were going to dance on the table for us. Like last year!

**(If the OFFICER is female, ERIC can say this line.)**

OFFICER: Used to. Now it gets in the way of the investigation.

SHERRI: It's because you're fat.

LEANN: Dumpy.

KATIE: Chunky.

ERIC: Now you know why I'm five times divorced.

LATONYA: Six.

***(SHE gets a cell phone from her purse and starts to make a call)***

KATIE: ***(to ERIC)*** You're no better, Eric.

SHERRI: Hefty.

LEANN: Lazy.

LOBELIA: Lost your vim, vigor, and verve.

ERIC: What's vim?

OFFICER: ***(interrupting, official)*** The body was discovered by the cleaning crew at 11:32 pm. Any alibis, anyone?

ERIC: I'm sure none of *them* could have done it. ***(goes from wife to wife, annoying them each, and when HE's finished, winds up right by the OFFICER)*** Katie is too lazy, Sherri never gets up from the TV, Leann spends all day cleaning and criticizing, Lobelia is usually in the arms of some other man, and Latonya would have to ***(leans over and speaks into her receiver)*** hang up her phone.

***(SHE does so, a bit embarrassed)***

OFFICER: Clue number one. He resents all his wives – deservedly so. Every woman in his life has hurt him, and the one who didn't had to take the blame. If none of them were interested in killing Patrice... ***(right in ERIC's face)*** that leaves you!

DESK CLERK: ***(busy shuffling papers, stapling things, moving stuff around, but always paying attention to the action)*** Nope. He was down here with me.

OFFICER: Doing what?

CLERK: Complaining about Patrice.

WIVES: God rest her soul.

CLERK: He wanted her back. She wanted to move for a career change, and he insisted they stay here because ***(ultra masculine)*** he was the man of house. ***(pouty)*** Now he feels baaaaaad.

KATIE: We all hated her.

OFFICER: Why?

KATIE: Because he loved her. ***(dramatic, out of her character)*** He never loved me.

ERIC: I did, too, Katie!

KATIE: You never showed it.

ERIC: In my own way.

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KATIE: **(they all get up, surrounding ERIC)** No flowers.

SHERRI: No romance.

LEANN: No affection.

LOBELIA: No ring.

LATONYA: **(still seated)** Really? I got all that! **(to LOBELIA)** And your mother's China.

LOBELIA: **(crosses to stand behind LATONYA)** Did you find my daughter? She kind of got lost in the divorce settlement.

LATONYA: **(snooty, but sexy)** Somebody's kid turned up six months later. We sent her to boarding school. Straight A's. Head of the drama club. Homecoming queen. **(looks up to LOBELIA)** She calls me Mother.

OFFICER: Looks like this is a case of the wrong corpse.

LEANN: I'll say.

KATIE, SHERRI, LEANN, and LOBELIA: After her!

ERIC: Ladies! Settle down.

OFFICER: **(taking control)** Well that's it!

LEANN: **(sits down, pouting)** I hate when he calls us 'Ladies.' It's so demeaning!

OFFICER: **(to CLERK)** Alert security! Nobody in or out until we find out first of all who killed Patrice...

WIVES: God rest her soul.

OFFICER: ...and second, where she is! And will you all stop that?

SHERRI: Maybe.

LOBELIA: Maybe not. It's the only thing we agree on – that God should rest her soul.

CLERK: **(paging, into a phone, a bit over the top)** Security alert! Security alert! No one in or out of the building until we find out whoooooooooo killed Patrice! God rest her soul! **(ends the page, then thinks for a bit)** What about Texas Tech?

LOBELIA: We don't agree on Texas Tech either.

LATONYA: I love them.

LOBELIA: I think they suck.

OFFICER: What does Texas Tech have to do with Patrice?

WIVES: God rest her-

OFFICER: Stop it!

LEANN: Soul. **(giggles)**

CLERK: They're here for the big game.

OFFICER: I guess they'll have to forfeit. After all, there's been a murder. Clue number two! Feigned indifference followed by a communal mourning. A conspiratorial cover up! You're obstructing my investigation.

CLERK: Clue number three is we'll have 46 very large angry young men tearing up our hallways if they can't get to the big game.

OFFICER: (*that just provides more leverage*) Then I guess whoever did it is going to have to fess up.

CLERK: And the Women's Garden Club is going strawberry picking today. They're at their peak (*HE staples something loudly for effect*) of ripeness.

OFFICER: The women or the strawberries?

CLERK: The strawberries, I believe. The women have long since gone rotten and squishy. But they find nothing more irritating than missing strawberry-picking day.

OFFICER: If they're wandering the halls with the boys from Texas Tech, they'll have plenty ripe to pick from.

KATIE: (*trying to get back on track*) We were all playing poker until eleven o'clock. Patrice lost. Finally.

ERIC: It didn't matter. It's all my money anyway.

LEANN: Patrice...

LOBELIA: (*slipping it in*) God rest her soul.

LATONYA: (*also slipping it in*) Lord have mercy!

LEANN: ...stole my chips.

OFFICER: At a poker game? That might have angered you... provoked you.

LOBELIA: She means potato chips. Patrice had an eating disorder.

KATIE: Actually, she had no trouble eating whatsoever.

SHERRI: (*snippy, more to ERIC*) She also dropped hints that she was getting more alimony than the rest of us.

LEANN: And she was using the living room couch that I picked out.

SHERRI: Sleeping in my bed.

LATONYA: Reading my classic novel collection!

*(no one can believe it)*

LOBELIA: (*to ERIC, salty*) I'd fess up, hubby, or next year we're inviting our mothers.

OFFICER: Five mothers-in-law.

ERIC: At least. I'd rather go to jail. The companionship would be less criminal.

OFFICER: (*to CLERK*) Will you call the cleaning crew, please?

CLERK: (*apprehensive*) They're not allowed into the lobby.

OFFICER: (*insists*) Call them into the lobby.

CLERK: I don't think you want to bring Grunge Boy into the lobby. He scares the guests.

OFFICER: As if a murder and a missing corpse isn't scary enough already.

*(sound effect: shrieks of horror offstage)*

CLERK: See?

OFFICER: (*insists*) Call them down.

CLERK: (*into a phone, paging*) Grunge Boy and Slime Woman to the front desk, please! Grunge Boy and Slime Woman to the front desk, puh-leeeeeeeze!

LEANN: Slime Woman?

ERIC: Your cousin, Leann. Obviously.

LEANN: At least she cleans. Like you'd know the first thing about turning down a bed.

ERIC: You know plenty about turning down the bed. Now Lobelia? Never!

OFFICER: Clue number four! Jealous! And motivation. While they don't want Eric to themselves, they don't want anyone else to have him.

LATONYA: (*to OFFICER*) Clue number five is that you don't have a clue!

SLIME: (*Enters with GRUNGE BOY. They're both pretty crass and filthy. They wear cleaning uniforms which are torn and filthy, GRUNGE BOY might have a baseball cap on backwards, his uniform too short in the sleeves and legs. HE's got a hanky in his back pocket that HE wipes his face with a lot. SLIME WOMAN carries a mop or a duster that lets dust loose every time SHE shakes it.*) What? I have some cleaning to do.

OFFICER: I'll say.

GRUNGE: (*to SLIME, chortling*) Did you see how much stuff they left in 306?

SLIME: 306 hasn't checked out yet.

GRUNGE: I thought they did. All the towels were missing, and so was the TV.

ERIC: (*to OFFICER*) See, officer, why don't you investigate *that*?

OFFICER: Theft? That's pretty petty compared to murder.

SHERRI: Patrice, God rest her soul, was pretty petty.

OFFICER: Does anyone know where she is?

SLIME: Laundry.

OFFICER: Laundry?

ERIC: That's a first.

SLIME: Well, maybe not.

GRUNGE: We cleaned up her room. (*waves around his handkerchief for all to see*) Well, at least what we call clean.

SLIME: There was something nasty on the bed.

OFFICER: What was that?

SLIME: We don't know.

LOBELIA: Perhaps it's clue number six!

OFFICER: Bile! Green, slimy bile. Perhaps Patrice was poisoned and she puked up bile.

ALL THE WIVES: Gross!

GRUNGE: It was just something nasty. It was green and goopy. And not the usual green and goopy. It was a green and goopy we'd never seen before.

CLERK: They don't call you Slime Woman for nothing.

SLIME: They don't call me Slime Woman for much. **(to OFFICER, taking the spotlight)** It's minimum wage around here. We have to do a certain number of rooms an hour or we get written up. There's already a novella about me in the manager's top drawer. **(sarcastic)** So I don't have time to "properly dispose of a corpse."

GRUNGE: We took it to the laundry.

OFFICER: Was there any evidence?

SLIME: Just this! **(pulls out a dirty and torn piece of paper, hands it to OFFICER)** Clue number eight, perhaps?

OFFICER: This says Leann did it. Now that's quite a clue!

LEANN: **(overreacting)** I did not do it!

GRUNGE: **(comes to OFFICER and looks at the paper too; OFFICER notices HE smells)** Yes you did. That's what it says.

KATIE: **(authoritatively, standing)** Take her away!

LATONYA: **(giggling)** Oh, I put that there.

LEANN: Latonya!

LATONYA: It was a joke.

OFFICER: You saw her dead?

SHERRI: Well, we all did.

LOBELIA: Everyone went to her room.

CLERK: I'll say!

POLICEMAN: **(miffed)** But no one bothered to report this!

LATONYA: She had another night booked here. So what's the rush?

OFFICER: So! You *all* have motivation. **(to SLIME)** Go to the laundry room and bring her here. We'll get to the bottom of this.

SLIME: That's where she is. At the bottom of it. Go on, Grunge Boy. Wheel in "Corpse Woman."

GRUNGE: **(doesn't like this assignment)** Okay. But if that green slime stuff didn't wash out you're doing it next time. **(HE exits)**

SLIME: **(shouting after him)** That green slime stuff is my cleaning fluid. **(to everyone else)** It's old. **(explains)** He used to put it on his oatmeal. That's how he got that way.

GARDEN LADY: **(Enters, agitated, SHE's wearing a typical but perhaps over the top Garden Club outfit: a spring floral dress and a loud hat and shoes to match, with purse and picnic basket, which SHE can put down if it gets in the way. SHE starts off very genteel)** Excuse me. I'm the president of the Women's Garden Club. We've heard all about this... situation. One husband, six wives, one

of them dead, God rest her soul. (**demanding**) Will one of you please confess so we can get out of here?

LOBELIA: I will!

GARDEN: Good. Not only is it strawberry-picking day, but my orchid needs to go out for a walk.

LOBELIA: (**gets up, grandiose, arms outstretched**) I'll confess. (**takes an outstretched arm and points to KATIE**) She did it.

KATIE: Lobelia! The note says Leann did it!

LEANN: (**grabs the paper from the OFFICER and starts to tear it up**) Not (**rip**) any (**rip**) more. (**rip, and tosses it on the floor**) So I'm off the hook. (**starts to leave.**)

OFFICER: Get back here, ma'am. (**grabs her and pulls her back to her seat**) Or you vault to prime suspect.

LEANN: Really? I haven't vaulted since high school gym. (**sits back down**) But I still say I didn't do it.

GARDEN: Ok, that narrows it down. (**about ERIC**) I'll say *he* did it. To avoid paying alimony.

ERIC: I didn't pay alimony.

KATIE: Patrice said you did!

GARDEN: (**to ERIC**) Cheapskatel!

ERIC: I didn't! She just says that to annoy you.

KATIE: That liar. God rest her soul.

ERIC: She made more money than me. (**mocking**) Especially after her career change.

GARDEN: Loser.

ERIC: Loser? Hold it a minute! I married *up*!

GARDEN: My orchid can't hold on a minute! (**shakes him**) Confess!

ERIC: I'll confess to *your* murder in a minute.

OFFICER: Clue number nine! Again, jealousy and motivation. You killed Patrice to avoid humiliation and alimony!

ERIC: Clue number nine forgets something: (**regarding his wives**) They're lying!!

TECH BOY: (**enters, agitated, HE wears jeans and a football jersey and sandals, or perhaps bunny slippers**) Please! Someone has to confess or we'll forfeit the big game!

OFFICER: A woman has forfeited her life, Tech Boy. (**serious, like on a TV show**) There'll be no big game for her.

TECH: (**mocking OFFICER's tone of voice**) Oh! It's police talk! "Where you're going they don't have a big game."

GARDEN: I get it! "Where you're going they don't have any orchids."

ERIC: (**to GARDEN LADY**) "Where you're going, they don't have chicken-salad box lunches."

TECH: (**approaches ERIC**) Just confess, man. (**to OFFICER**) You can figure out who *really* did it later!

LATONYA: Yeah, come to think, I have fifty bucks on Tech by 14.

SHERRI: I have 25 on State by 10. (*leisurely, to OFFICER*) So as far as I'm concerned, you can investigate all night long.

LOBELIA: (*re GARDEN and TECH*) I think they want us to confess because *they* did it!

GARDEN: Us? Me and him? Together? (*scandalized*) After he stole my ice bucket?

TECH: (*self righteously*) You were going to water the orchid with cold water. Ice cold water! Why don't you just lock it in a dark room and play it some Iron Maiden?

CLERK: (*appalled*) Ice water on an orchid!

SLIME: (*similarly appalled*) Barbarian!

KATIE: Heathen!

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